

ARTICLE

Aurally enhanced media promotion: Music and sound in Greek television commercials

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The sonic dimensions of modern media—including speech, sound effects, and music—play a significant role in communicating signs, meanings, and messages through multimodal channels of audiovisual connotations. Each feature can be regarded as a discrete unit; however, the overall framework is established through an orchestrated “interaction” of these components. Receiving information through televised advertisements is a cognitive process that requires critical analysis. This study examines the functions of music and sound in television advertising, emphasizing the collaboration between visual and audio material. Our objective is to equally investigate optical and musical conventions in selected TV commercials. We will also analyze how meaning emerges through visuals, sounds, and music in correlation to the product, branding, and the purpose of advertisements as short, concise audiovisual narratives. The data for this study were collected from a series of food and drink ads shown on Greek television between 2015 and 2020. The research draws upon contemporary culturally informed, musicological, semiotic, and interpretive methodologies, applying both textual and contextual analyses to examine how these techniques captivate audiences and effectively communicate messages. Understanding music’s psychological and pragmatic effects in advertising is crucial for recognizing its role as a powerful tool that influences consumer behavior and perception.

Keywords: Television commercials; Greece; Audiovisual analysis; Music and sound; Music and meaning; Music and image

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1. Introduction

Sound has always been integral to human nature, and its analysis is crucial for understanding both the world and the individual. In this study, sound is defined as any stimulus that the human auditory system can perceive. When organized in complex patterns, sounds become what we recognize as “music.” Since the advent of sound films, music, and sound have been inseparable from moving pictures. Modern media, such as television and mobile phones, have enhanced the audiovisual experience, both as a complementary and unified creation. A common example of this relationship is television advertising, where music and images collaborate closely. Music in ads ranges from a simple chime to catchy melodies or jingles – short, distinctive songs or tunes that

mark a brand or product. Sound effects and music create unique identities for ads, directing the viewer's attention toward the product. Thus, musical accompaniment not only serves esthetic purposes but also reinforces the advertising message and persuades the audience to act.

Furthermore, the market – whether international or local – shapes consumer norms by promoting specific advertising models, musical choices, and directorial approaches. This study delves into the elements that shape advertising, focusing on the interplay between visual and auditory components. Building on a well-structured theoretical foundation, this study examines the role of music and audio in commercials and their effectiveness in delivering the message. The analysis applies the frameworks of scholars such as Michel Chion, Claudia Gorbman, Nicholas Cook, and Tagg to investigate the elements of audio and music in advertising. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of music in commercial and semantic promotion, the study explores how music influences both the process and outcome of advertising toward consumers.

This study offers a musicological analysis of audiovisual material in Greek television advertisements, examining how these components relate to the product, branding, and overall objective of the ad. Specifically, it analyzes television advertisements for food and beverages aired in Greece between 2015 and 2020. The material was sourced from the official YouTube platform, and the findings have the potential to inform future advertising strategies and practices. These insights are crucial for understanding consumer patterns, influences, behaviors, and the impact of sound on human nature. By presenting this information, the study aims to inform readers of these trends and raise awareness of their potential implications.

2. Music and meaning: Cultural symbols and interpretations

To understand how sound and music communicate advertising messages, we must first examine whether music inherently possesses this capability. One of the fundamental questions that have been engaging scholars in sound studies in recent decades is whether music can serve as a carrier of messages and meanings. This philosophical question has given rise to two opposing currents of thought. The first perspective views music as an absolute art, whereas the second perspective views it as a product of social actions, interactions, and activities.

The first standpoint posits that music is a self-contained entity, expressing nothing beyond its own intrinsic qualities.¹ This view emerged from Western institutional musical esthetics and asserts the superiority of purely

instrumental compositions.² The notion that music exists as a pure, independent construct devoid of external meaning implies that it is unrelated to everyday life and, consequently, is considered “above” it. However, this view fails to acknowledge the integral communicative nature of music and its deep-rooted connection to cultural and social contexts, refuting any theory of autonomy and self-sufficiency.¹ The concept of music as an autonomous art form likely emerged in the 19th century, a period marked by a significant shift in music's societal role as composers were gradually liberated from the constraints of aristocratic patronage, religious function, and textual dependence.³ For the first time in history, musical composition and performance arose primarily from an intrinsic desire for creative expression, rather than being driven by external demands or bound by “authoritative” constraints.³ Although this newfound independence allowed for greater artistic freedom, it also promoted the misconception that music was an entirely self-contained entity.

Nevertheless, the need for independence is defined and experienced by the subject, not the object. Thus, the concept of absolute music remains a powerful historical illusion. Over the years, musicologists and ethnomusicologists have argued that the structures, practices, and concepts of music are culturally determined and their meaning can be understood only through study within specific cultural contexts.⁴ Accepting the cultural dimension of music acknowledges the human contribution to it and highlights the importance of the sounds, attitudes, values, and behaviors associated with it.⁵ Concepts alone do not drive music; behavior, whether musical or otherwise, is directly related to culture as a result of the respective cultural environment and should thus be evaluated according to the social context.

Music's power as a communicative medium and its profound influence on society is further evidenced by its intrinsic connection to cultural change. As cultures transform, their musical expressions undergo parallel alterations, reflecting and often driving societal shifts. As a meaningful part of the social structure, music adapts to change and is redefined through an adjustable process called “reinterpretation,” a process where old concepts are applied to new elements or where new values modify the cultural significance of older forms. This process involves blending elements from two or more cultures, as exemplified by African American music during the First World War.⁵

Therefore, an important factor in studying the nature of music is its communicative properties. Unlike speech, which relies on linguistic content, the communicative dimension of music is based on musical

sounds and is innately multifaceted. Music's extraordinary communicative power can be exemplified by its ability to serve as a cultural mediator, emerging as a dominant and unifying element when diverse societies intersect. It acts as a non-verbal bridge, transcending linguistic barriers and fostering understanding between two or more distinct cultures. This unique capacity of music to facilitate cross-cultural communication underscores its universal appeal and potential to forge connections where words alone may fall short. Music follows a different path that transcends cultural boundaries through rhythm, melody, and harmony, enabling shared experiences and mutual appreciation even in the absence of a common spoken language.⁶ Music represents culture in two ostensibly contrasting ways: (a) As a common form of expression on a global level and (b) as a distinctive expression highlighting the differences between cultures.⁶ As we explore further, this aspect becomes particularly significant when examining the use of music in ads for products that belong to multinational corporations or are intended for mass consumption.

Music plays a crucial role in shaping our internal experiences, emotions, and identity. Its communicative power lies in the emotions it evokes. Active listening guides the listener through the "movement" or "articulation" of the music (whether slow, fast, staccato, flowing, and so on). Musical symbols direct the listener to experience and imagine through an internal dialog. This process involves a complex interplay among musical symbols, emotional responses, and cognitive functions. These internal experiences can also lead to physical responses, as emotions are expressed through bodily movements.³

This internal dialog reveals how music, as a powerful means, empowers individuals to engage in self-expression and introspection. It allows them to recognize their deepest emotions and thoughts, exploring and engaging with them in a deeply personal way. People construct their personas based on their feelings, visual and auditory experiences, and regular interactions with their environment.⁷ The mind shapes forms of personal identity, with music playing a significant role in this cognitive process. Individual identity is the cornerstone of one's self-concept – a complex, multifaceted construct that encompasses how a person perceives, defines, and characterizes themselves. These intricate self-perception functions as a cognitive framework that delineates the individual's understanding and recall of their attributes, experiences, and values and influences how others identify and interact with them.⁸ Music is a part of the self-concept and communicates emotions, identities, and behaviors.⁹

Advertisers exploit this inner dialog to persuade the public and create an identification pattern between the

object and the subject. In other words, the impact of music on identity formation extends beyond external communication between sender and receiver. It involves a profound internal process where individuals process musical information, analyze its content and context, and create mental images and emotional responses. Across this dialog, music contributes significantly to fostering and refining one's personal identity.

An intriguing formulation of the meaning of music in relation to the cultural context is given by Cook.¹⁰ He assumed that music had meaning, following the standards of the interpretive approach. However, what he does not take for granted is the communicative dimension of music. He emphasized that the issue is not whether music has meaning but how it is communicated. According to Cook, the influence of music is undeniable, and he distinguishes between effect and meaning through the lens of communication – a uniquely human factor. In other words, he argues that the proof of music as an interconnected and dependent activity – both on the overall cultural context and on individual experience – lies in its communicative function. Music has meaning, whether it is an artistic expression or a "tool" of mediation.¹⁰

There is no definitive answer to whether music conveys meaning and how it does so. The conclusions drawn largely depend on the perspective from which music is studied, highlighting the multifaceted nature of musical interpretation. Despite varying esthetic perceptions of musical meaning, a common thread persists: music is described and analyzed by living, sentient beings.¹⁰ Thus, following this line of reasoning, a significant and challenging question arises: How can scholars effectively interpret the powerful properties of music?

One effective approach to understanding complex ideas is through the interpretation of symbols, a process known as semiology, and the art of interpretation called hermeneutics. As Tagg explained, semiology is the study of signs and symbols, especially the relation between written or oral signs and their referents in the physical world or the world of ideas.² Following ethnomusicology, sociology, and semiotics practices, he argued that symbols are interpreted based on the cultural and social contexts to which they belong. Ethnomusicology connects music with people and their culture, the sociology of music correlates music with society, and semiotics studies music and the dynamic relationships between structure and perceived meaning in music.²

For Tagg, the word "signification" conceptually includes both the notions of "sign" and "meaning."² Musical signification (icons, indices, and significations) includes notes, keys, staves, and all elements that signify

and represent musical performance. In musical notation, certain elements serve as iconic representations of auditory phenomena. For instance, the upward and downward movement of notes on a staff visually depicts the rise and fall of a melody (from higher to lower pitch). Indices are signs that bear a connection to what they represent based on spatiotemporal proximity or causal relevance. A corresponding representation for musical composition could be the common perception of minor scales and chords as conveying sadness or melancholy, whereas major scales and chords are frequently interpreted as expressing happiness or joy. All types of musical signs (indices, icons, and notations) can be considered indicative.²

In other cases, music has been organized to follow conventional patterns and genres in which notation, either iconic or indexical, is always clear. For example, the monophonic sound of four French horns in a relatively high position above the middle range of the register has been associated with a sense of heroism, although the sound of horns was initially used in hunting or other male activities in the European countryside. The association with male activities may have been lost in modern times, but the general attribution of heroism through the sound of horns has persisted as a remnant of a stylized social convention.²

In our practical, analytical approach, we will treat musical symbols and semiotics as a unified whole, interpreted through the logical progression of audiovisual material. Combined with imagery, music becomes an indicative symbol that is both read and heard in the present moment, with notations presented in real-time, without the need for translation into sheet music. This approach is particularly relevant in our current context. The intertwined forces of globalization and technological advancement have fostered a global landscape of unified communication systems and standards, primarily through the proliferation of media, the Internet, and social networks. Our interconnected world has created an unprecedented opportunity for emerging scholars, as the task of decoding evidence is no longer rooted in entirely unfamiliar contexts, particularly in Western civilization and its far-reaching influence.

Until the 19th century, in the Western world, sheet music was the primary method for reproducing acoustic material, which was quite restrictive. The symbols had to convey the “meaning” in musical representation. However, from 1900 onward, with the invention of the gramophone and the possibility of recording, the actual reproduction and transmission of sound became possible.² Recordings and sheet music are tools of study and interpretation that can be used “after the fact” and not in real-time creation.

This capability proves that music is multidimensional and polysemic. The ability to capture and reproduce sound directly has transformed our understanding and analysis of music, allowing for a more immediate and comprehensive approach to musical semiotics and interpretation.

The correlation between language and musical structure is a common scientific practice for analyzing the influence and function of music. Music, like language, follows a specific syntax to convey meaning from performer to listener. That musical meaning extends beyond the sequence of notes, encompassing elements such as genre, esthetics, tonality, and instrumentation. For example, just as a speaker chooses specific words and syntax to communicate his thoughts, music follows “harmonic syntax” to transition from performance to listening.¹¹

Furthermore, the concept of the “musical work” is crucial in understanding musical meaning, significantly amplifying human contribution and engagement. This term connects music to the world of commerce as an economic product, giving it objective characteristics beyond subjective interpretation.¹⁰ This objectivity differs from that of absolute music as it attributes to music qualities that can be analyzed scientifically by humans, similar to other positive sciences, rather than treating it as a self-existing product that implies an element of randomness. The economic dimension also highlights the intentionality behind music. Musicologist Oscar Hernandez Salgar expanded on this idea, asserting that music has always been intertwined with society, religion, and economics.³ He proposed a three-category model for the interdisciplinary analysis of music:

- 1) Cognitive/bodily: This category examines the conditions under which the listener/receiver encounters music, along with their bodily reactions. These conditions include space, time, cultural context, content, individual knowledge, and the type of music. Finally, it considers individual characteristics of the music and the emotions it evokes.
- 2) Social/interpretive: This category focuses on the structural material of the musical genre, such as tempo, timbre, and instruments, while highlighting the impetus and motivation for creating or listening to music in relation to extramusical elements and social conventions.
- 3) Cultural/political: This category investigates how music genres contribute to cultural meaning and potentially challenge existing norms to create new ones.

Salgar’s model is a common analytical tool for various disciplines, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of musical meaning and its impact on human experience. In essence, the meaning of music extends beyond its internal

structure to encompass its role in society, its economic value, and its ability to evoke emotions and create shared experiences. Adopting this comprehensive approach helps in understanding musical meaning by acknowledging both its subjective and objective aspects, as well as its power to shape and reflect human culture.

Consequently, every musical analysis must begin with a clear understanding of the communicative framework within which “meaning” occurs. The interpretive approach finds the significance of music through the subjective understanding of the text. The music itself, whether heard in a concert hall or on the radio, does not inherently pose questions of “meaning.” These arise from the human cognitive approach and recall.¹⁰ Of course, to fully understand the communicative framework within which music and its meaning exist, their historical and cultural context must be studied.

Music is a form of communication because it evokes emotions that transcend linguistic codes. However, musical experience is subjective and depends on the respective society. Although musical practice is universal, its analysis and understanding must be based on a specific framework.¹² Shifting the focus from music’s cultural context to the properties of sound as a physical phenomenon, we can refer to its internal structure – symmetries, patterns, and directions (e.g., ascending or descending movement of melody). This approach moves from analyzing the music itself to considering listeners’ reactions, leaning toward a psychophysiological analysis.¹⁰ The science that analyzes the individual, objective characteristics of music – tone, melody, time values, symbols, score, and so on – and assigns meaning to them is known as musical semiology or semiotics.

In conclusion, musical meaning emerges from the interplay between subjective experience and the objective substance of music. The objectivity of music lies in its structured system of symbols, which functions as a metalanguage carrying “meanings.” These meanings are deeply embedded in Western musical practices – composition, performance, and listening – and act as codes that unlock emotions, intentions, and concepts. Musical performance, in turn, is a human psychological and cognitive process that expresses, reinforces, and establishes collective identity and a sense of “self.” The subjective dimension is evident in how individual and collective experiences are mirrored through internal dialog and the expression of personal views. As a product of social, cultural, and economic life, the music reflects and influences human actions, values, behaviors, and thoughts, thereby communicating identities. The concepts of “self” and “belonging” are unique to each individual, just as

the musical experience. Both individual and collective identities are parallel and dynamic, rooted in the past, alive in the present, and evolving into the future.

3. Music and (moving) image: Relations, practices, and functions

Since the end of the 19th century and throughout the 20th century, motion pictures began to make significant inroads into the long-standing dominance of writing. From their beginnings, researchers were keen to inquire about the purpose and covert messaging of sound within motion pictures. What became apparent was that moving images could convey ideas and sentiments that extended beyond their visual dimensions. The acoustic functions of audiovisual media, including human speech, sound effects, and music, play a significant role in communicating underlying messages. Each function is an indicative item, with the overall meaning emerging through their orchestrated interaction. Music aligned with imagery in cinematic art became integral to telling a cinematic story by helping define era, time, and language. Even before the advent of synchronized sound and color in cinema, filmmakers recognized the power of music to enhance visual storytelling. The adoption of background music in silent films underscores music’s importance and its unique ability to transcend technological limitations and convey emotion and atmosphere.

A motion picture’s natural result and coherence arise from the collaboration and synchronization of visual and audio material. Chion identified three important sound functions in collaboration with moving images.¹³ The first role of sound (voice, music, and sound effects) is to support films’ need for time framing. Its second function is to enhance the image’s credibility and enrich the viewer’s immediate experience. Finally, the third function underscores the critical importance of audio overlay, dispelling the misconception that sound is merely an ancillary or dispensable component in relation to visual content. On the contrary, audio plays a pivotal role in the co-creation of meaning, working in tandem with visual elements to form a cohesive and multifaceted narrative.¹³

The added value of musical overlay in film is apparent when music creates specific emotions in relation to what is displayed. This is achieved in two main ways. First, music actively heightens the feeling of a scene, following its rhythm, tone, and phrasing. Chion calls this “empathetic” music since it “awakens” the responsiveness of the audience, placing the viewers into the emotional sphere of the protagonists.¹³ Empathetic music aligns with the emotional atmosphere of a scene, reinforcing the audience’s connection to the story by complementing the

mood of the characters or situation, such as through the use of suspenseful music to heighten tension. This type of music relies on cultural codes related to emotions, allowing the audience to identify with and experience the actors' feelings. In other words, the audience empathizes with the actors. The second type of film scoring in Chion's theory is "anempathetic" music, which is neutral or passive; its progress is stable and usually unrelated to the events. This technique is not intended to freeze emotions but to intensify the scene, especially the feeling of tragedy.¹³ Anempathetic music is indifferent to the emotions on screen; it creates a sense of detachment or irony by contrasting the sound with the action, such as by playing cheerful music during a disastrous scene. Generally, filmmakers choose empathetic music to amplify emotions, whereas anempathetic sound is used to evoke reflection or highlight the indifference of the world to personal events.

Visual and auditory rhythms are distinctly different. The difference between them, according to Chion, is that sound presupposes action or motion from the beginning.¹³ The ear analyzes and processes information faster, whereas the eye perceives information gradually as it analyzes many elements simultaneously. The ear isolates one detail of the auditory field and continues to process it from that point on. Thus, when it comes to audiovisual stimuli, the eye is spatially specialized, whereas the ear is temporally specialized.¹³ What makes sound particularly important is its ability to influence the perception of visual temporality in three ways: (a) It attributes time flow to the image, (b) It favors a succession of images with temporal linearity, and (c) It dramatizes or concretizes moving images by orienting them toward a goal, an expectation, or an emotion.¹³ One of the most important features of sound directly related to temporality is rhythmic treatment. For example, a fast tempo grabs attention immediately, making the message simpler and easier to remember.¹⁴

Sound and image work mutually to produce added value. Sound underscores the image so that the scene does not appear the same when silenced. Similarly, images make the music sound different. For example, sounds can make what the audience sees on screen feel different or more impactful. If someone were to watch the same scene without any sound, it would not feel the same or have the same emotional impact.

Gorbman distinguished two basic properties of music's function in relation to moving images: Diegetic and non-diegetic functions.¹⁵ When characters hear the music and it exists within the realistic spatiotemporal framework of the cinematic action, the music's function is diegetic. When the soundtrack is not part of the action's reality, it is called non-diegetic. For Gorbman, music in film guides

the viewer's vision both literally and figuratively, rescuing the image from dry realism.¹⁵

Music punctuates films through audio codes that result from the collaboration of music, broader culture, and cinematic norms. A well-known example is the leitmotif, a musical theme found in opera, film, and theater, accompanying a character, location, situation, or emotion associated with it.¹⁵ Television eventually adopted this same tactic. As will be explored further, the same applies to commercials, where each advertisement for a specific brand or product features a characteristic melody that often helps the product or company stand out.

The most fundamental audio element in the film is arguably voice. Sound in cinema is primarily phonocentric, making language the dominant variable for viewers. If a film's language is familiar, the audience first seeks word association and interprets the remaining compilation of sounds afterward. Dialog is the primary tool for conveying meaning, aided by the actors' expressions and movements. The voice is part of human constitution and behavior, successfully attracting the audience's attention more than any other audio medium.¹³

It is worth mentioning that narrative music in mass media is one of the most significant sources of musical experience in everyday life. Viewers become accustomed to and familiarize themselves with television's audio preferences. Narrative music can also help to describe a story. Wingstedt *et al.* proposed categorizing narrative music based on its functions as these functions appear in cinema and other audiovisual media. In their study, they identified six key roles: (a) Emotive, (b) Informative, (c) Descriptive, (d) Guiding, (e) Temporal, and (f) Rhetorical.¹⁶

The characteristics that define the functions of sound concerning the image are applicable across all audiovisual media. Television programming started as an experiment, closely mirroring radio in terms of timing, demographics, and maintaining a continuous stream, along with inserting commercial breaks between programs. Television also imitates cinema in terms of esthetic and artistic structure, integrating both images and sounds and presenting this synthesis on screen, allowing the final work to be analyzed and interpreted by the audience.¹⁷

According to Rodman, five sensory channels of cinema are also found in television, including visual elements (moving images), written text, speech, sound effects, and music.¹⁷ Similar to cinema, television exploits cultural codes to convey meaning. The audience is not merely passive but actively engages with the social content projected through image, sound, and speech. This training assists the audience in reacting to a message in the desired

direction. However, a key difference between television and cinema is that television offers reproducibility and continuity in programming and musical expression. This repeatability aids in familiarizing the public with television's operations.¹⁷ Music may serve various roles: as part of the narrative, background music, an emotional intensifier, a source of relaxation, or as a neutral element. In any case, viewers actively contribute to framing the final meaning, whereas the creator's intention influences and directs the result. The audience analyzes the information in a sociocultural context on a case-by-case basis, resulting in a polysemic product with multiple interpretations.¹⁷

According to Eco, the projected object is a representation created by the interpreter's perception, resulting in unlimited semiotic considerations. With a vast television audience, interpretations of each code or project are virtually endless. The objective or collective understanding of a signal does not stem from an absolute principle but from conventions that link a product to a specific interpretation.¹⁷ Music acts as a "melodic ambassador" for a program's style, employing musical markings that artfully blend familiar harmonic practices and standardized melodic patterns.¹⁷ Musical language denotes style and era, as well as space and time, not only in terms of the music itself but also concerning extramusical elements.

Music can imply extramusical phenomena in at least two ways. First, music can mimic sounds, such as birds chirping, streams flowing, or storms brewing. Second, music can signal social conventions or predetermined cultural codes.¹⁷ In the first case, music functions as an indicative index. In the second case, a specific genre of music, such as jazz, is used to represent a city or urban environment. This approach leverages musical styles based on social knowledge and often exploits the musical preferences of viewers.¹⁷ Thus, a soundtrack associates a TV series or show with a specific effect, training the audience each time on what to expect.

In short, the primary function of music in relation to multimedia content results from the synergy between visual and auditory material. These elements work together to create a rich, multifaceted experience for the audience – a polysemic outcome, as the audiovisual process generates several interpretations. Each viewer acts as a receiver, processing the combined visual and auditory information within a sociocultural context, leading to a diverse range of possible meanings and emotional responses. This combination allows for a more immersive and engaging experience, where audio enhances the visual narrative and vice versa, resulting in a more impactful and memorable presentation of ideas and emotions. Music can be part of the narrative, serve as a background layer, intensify an

emotion, provide relaxation, or remain neutral. In all cases, viewers actively contribute to shaping and interpreting the final meaning, whereas the creator's intention influences and directs the outcome.

4. Music and television advertising: Poetic and rhetorical dimensions

An advertisement is a short, self-contained audiovisual narrative that draws on features from the art of filmmaking and aims to capture public interest, evoke consumer sentiment, shape beliefs, and prompt actions, such as purchasing a product. Therefore, a television commercial is a complex creative entity that combines verbal (ad copy, slogans, narration, and song lyrics), visual (images and plot), and audio (music and sound effects) elements. According to the American Marketing Association, advertising is "any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor." Advertisers employ a marketing tactic known as branding – a strategy primarily used by multinational companies to strengthen their position and dominance in the international market. The goal of branding is to create a "personality" for each product or company, allowing consumers to identify with its values when making a purchase. The promotional message is often associated with movements such as social equality, environmental protection, and anti-racism, projecting values and norms beyond the mere promotion of products.¹⁸

The strategic advertising approach, which integrates product promotion with a broader social context, sets the stage for understanding how advertising shapes and is shaped by mass culture and consumer behavior. Advertising derives from mass culture and the "ideology of consumption;" it presupposes and reinforces it. Mass culture is directly related to mass production and the mass availability and distribution of goods.¹⁹ The role of advertising both supports and perpetuates the culture of consumption, which, in capitalism, is seen as evidence of progress and a means of satisfying human wishes.¹⁹ Although some of these necessities are essential for survival, advertising often creates desires for specific products. Many of the needs portrayed in advertisements are artificially constructed and deliberately designed to affect consumer behavior.

The product's "personality," as conveyed through meticulously designed audiovisual elements, aligns with the consumer's own personality, creating a powerful emotional and communicative connection. This emotional association influences the psychology of the audience, initiating a perceived sense of "need." Companies employ a structured approach to product promotion, following a

linear sequence through which the advertising message progresses. Initially, the source of the message establishes contact with the potential customer. This initial reach-out is crucial, setting the stage for all subsequent interactions. Once contact is established, the recipient embarks on a complex psychological and cognitive journey. This process unfolds hierarchically, with each step building upon the last: Exposure – Attention – Comprehension – Interpretation – Attitude Formation. The goal of this carefully crafted journey is to inspire action, which could manifest as a purchase or even advocacy for the product. The new or reinforced attitude serves as a bridge, connecting the cognitive processes to tangible outcomes.¹⁴

The impact of music and its extramusical attributes has been shown to manipulate various psychological variables, such as mood and purchase intention, either positively or negatively. The musical elements may include tempo, speed, rhythm, and tonal function. Extramusical elements – those aspects beyond the inherent properties of the music itself – usually pertain to the approach of advertising, its duration, brand recall, and how the advertising message is processed.¹⁴

To better understand these two properties regarding sound and advertisements, Dyer suggests two types of analysis: (a) Non-textual and (b) Textual.²⁰ Non-textual analysis relates to the meaning that the creator and the viewer's attribute to the work, whereas textual analysis is usually conducted by an analyst or expert who tries to signify particular content. The primary step of this practice is to define the topic of the commercial, which will then lead to uncovering its overall meaning.²⁰

Finally, Anisimova *et al.* in their research on popular music and lyrics in audiovisual advertising identified four main functions: (a) Focusing on emotion, (b) Highlighting the protagonist's relationship with the company or product, (c) Emphasizing the narration, and (d) Portraying the protagonist's central image.²⁰ These findings provide valuable insights into how audio elements can be strategically employed to enhance marketing effectiveness in television and similar media.²¹

Following this rationale, studies have demonstrated that incorporating popular music into advertising campaigns can profoundly influence viewer engagement and shape brand perception. An important theme that emerges is that popular music attracts more attention than an original instrumental piece, especially when it includes variations of well-known verses to promote the sponsor.²² Viewers experience a sense of security through familiar sounds or songs, fostering trust between consumers and producers while strengthening product association.¹⁴ In this way, the public helps shape what is considered popular music and vice versa.

The role of music in advertisements can vary widely. Sometimes it serves as a subtle backdrop (background music) that enhances the overall atmosphere without drawing attention to itself. At other times, it is prominently featured (foreground music), commanding the viewer's attention and becoming a central element of the commercial's impact. Foreground music directly influences emotions and makes the ad more memorable, but it risks overshadowing the main message. It often reinforces the narrative through tone or lyrics. In contrast, background music enhances the mood of the ad without distracting viewers' attention from the visuals or dialogue. Both approaches can effectively shape audience engagement, but their use depends on whether the goal is to evoke a strong emotional response or subtly complement the ad's content.²¹

The processing of advertising information is an inherently cognitive process that requires critical analysis of its meaning. The aim is to encourage the audience to engage with the content and persuade them of the product's value. An emotional reaction to a product helps establish a basis for communication. As a strategic tool, music stimulates and amplifies these emotions, playing a crucial role in both the execution and effectiveness of advertisements as it significantly influences and fulfills their promotional objectives.

Building on these theoretical insights, this paper explores the function of music and audio in television ads and their contribution to the overall impact. It systematically examines these elements based on established analytical standards, providing a comprehensive understanding of their role in TV advertising.

5. Data and methods

This study forms part of a broader research project that progressed through stages of theoretical foundations, analysis, and interpretation. It employs a systematic approach to examining advertisements, utilizing a custom analytical table of elements. The insights derived from this comprehensive data breakdown have been integrated into the commentary section, enriching the analysis of the case studies. By applying this interpretive model, the study yielded critical findings regarding the commercials under examination.

As previously discussed, the theoretical framework draws on fundamental concepts from renowned scholars on musical meaning and music as a cultural practice. The empirical section applies these concepts to Greek television advertisements, analyzing them in chronological order. A primary limitation of this chronological analysis is the inadequate access to archival material; many older

advertisements are not readily available online. This lack of accessibility hindered the comprehensive evaluation of the advertisements over time; moreover, it restricted our ability to contextualize these advertisements within their historical and cultural frameworks. However, we compiled a substantial body of empirical material comprising a considerable number of advertisements. Each advertisement underwent a thorough musicological, interpretive, and semiotic analysis structured around 10 key questions, as presented in [Table 1](#).

The main points establish a sophisticated foundation for textual analysis and create an internal dialog between the researcher, as viewer/listener, and the data. These methodical “steps” lay the groundwork for a comprehensive examination of the commercials’ content, structure, and impact on the audience. This methodical approach illuminates how music and sound interact with the visual narrative in advertisements, revealing insights into their cultural significance and persuasive strategies.

6. Music and advertising in Greek television: Exemplary cases of analysis

Over the past 50 years, the advertising industry has played a crucial role in shaping the contemporary Greek economy. Although the first advertising agencies emerged in Greece during the 1870s, it was the post-war era, between the 1950s and 1970s, that marked the rise of advertising as a dominant promotional force in the country.²³ The industry’s growth accelerated with the advent of private television stations and the increased number of national and local channels. Consequently, television airtime became highly valuable; it’s worth determined by viewership metrics and broadcast sponsorship, both essential for sustaining and expanding these channels.¹⁹ Advertisements, in turn, both influenced and were influenced by this television landscape.

Table 1. Key questions for analyzing the television advertisements

#	Key questions
1	Theme and subject
2	Setting (place, time, duration, space, and context)
3	Characters and their roles
4	Socioeconomic and cultural elements
5	Relationship between visual, verbal, and other elements
6	Symbolic content and significance
7	Function of musical accompaniment and sound
8	Characteristics of music and sound
9	Cognitive function of consumer (central or peripheral)
10	Techniques employed

Greek advertising has long been embedded within the cultural norms and societal stereotypes of its time. Early television commercials often reinforced these stereotypes through both visual and auditory cues. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s, women were also exclusively depicted as housewives using advertised products to solve domestic problems.¹⁹ Advertisements would often include catchy jingles and slogans that reflected these gender stereotypes, making them memorable and pervasive. A well-known example from this era is a detergent commercial that showed a woman in a woman happily singing about the product’s cleaning power in a kitchen setting, reinforcing the notion that domestic chores were a woman’s primary responsibility.²⁴

The social impact of these stereotypical representations was multifarious. On one hand, they reinforced traditional gender roles and societal expectations, potentially limiting the aspirations and opportunities for women beyond the domestic sphere. On the other hand, they also created a sense of nostalgia and familiarity for some viewers, which advertisers exploited to build brand loyalty.²⁵ As Greek society evolved, so did the representation in advertisements, with the 1980s and 1990s gradually introducing more diverse portrayals of women, such as career-oriented professionals. However, this transition was slow and often met with resistance from more conservative segments of society.²⁴ In recent years, Greek society has experienced significant changes, becoming more inclusive and shedding many of the stereotypical norms that once defined it. This evolution has resulted in more diverse representations within Greek culture.

An examination of Greek advertisements unveils a nuanced interplay between tradition and modernity in portraying Greek identity. Although traditional Greek values remain prevalent in many societal and cultural norms, there is a discernible shift toward more contemporary representations. Modern televised Greek advertisements increasingly reflect an evolving national identity that balances time-honored customs with cross-cultural, global, and progressive ideas. The balance between tradition and progress in advertising offers valuable insights into the ongoing transformation of Greek culture and society. By taking a socially aware approach, marketers aim to create resonant and persuasive product promotions that speak to consumers’ social realities rather than relying solely on product attributes or rational arguments.

Greek advertisers recognize the importance of sound in enhancing imagery and messaging. This section presents case studies focused on the visual and audio content of advertisements on Greek television from 2015 to 2020, selected from the available material on YouTube’s platform.

The analytical part of the research highlights the structural analysis of the audio, verbal, and visual material and their relationship with the message and purpose of the advertisement. The two main categories are image and music analyses. Within these two categories, smaller units emerged such as the directorial approach to advertising, the general context, social values and standards, the interactions of the individual elements to show the final meaning, distinct symbols, and signs, and the role of the cognitive approach to advertising, considering the aforementioned theories on the relationship between moving images and sounds.

The qualitative research utilized an analytical table with its main columns/categories being scene, time, music, image, and comments. The term “scene” refers to changes in scenes, actions, or images. “Time” was related to the duration of each part of the commercial, whereas “music” covered all the audio elements. Anything related to the visual aspect belonged to the “image” column. In the “comments” section, additional observations were included, which were helpful in the detailed review of each advertisement.

The emotional tone of the plot is essential and was, thus, separately analyzed in each advertisement. Advertising is a simplified form of art, much less complex than the art of cinema, so the emotional context is usually quite distinct. The interdisciplinary approach proposed by Salgar forms a basis for analyzing the commercials under consideration.³ The selected advertisements were created by both multinational and well-known domestic companies in the Greek market. Aired during prime-time viewing hours on major private channels, the advertisements targeted a broad audience by associating commodities with everyday needs and emphasizing happiness, quality, and status, which would resonate with households across the nation. Presented below are six case studies, spanning from 2015 to 2020, that illustrate both the symbolic interpretations of the commercials’ content and the methodology of the audiovisual analysis used.

6.1. Case study I: Bring it home to me by Coca-Cola – “Better together” (2015)

The advertisement for the renowned multinational soft drink company Coca-Cola is a succinct and emotionally rich narrative lasting approximately 29 s. This ad presents five main scenes depicting the progression of family life. In particular, it visually narrates a child’s development from taking their first steps to achieving independence during adolescence. Each step of development features different characters, creating an impression of a parallel timeline, although the storyline itself is linear. The main message

of the ad is “Better together.” Across a combination of visual, auditory, and textual elements, the advertisement emphasizes family unity and Coca-Cola’s role in facilitating these connections.

Carefully chosen musical elements accompany the five distinct scenes. The opening scenes feature a brief introductory piece with a tempo of 80 BPM in a 12/8 blues style, set in G major. The instrumentation, presumably digital, includes keyboards, drums, and guitars. This musical introduction establishes a nostalgic and emotional tone for the narrative.

The visual storyline begins with images of parents observing their child’s early developmental milestones, such as crawling and taking their steps. These scenes are accompanied by captions that highlight the challenge of maintaining close relationships with children as they grow up. The opening scenes evoke feelings of joy and parental pride. The third scene depicts a mother smiling as she sends her child off to school, continuing the joyful tone. However, the fifth introduces a shift in emotion, showing a teenager entering the house without acknowledging his mother and isolating himself in his room. This visual progression is mirrored in the background lyrics (Table 2), which transition from “laughed” to “left,” symbolizing the emotional distance between parents and their teenage children.

Each image evokes a range of emotions, from joy to anguish, with the primary purpose being to move the audience. The emotional charge adds depth to the advertisement and contributes to the dynamic development of its plot. Musically, the commercial follows a linear and dynamic melodic course, building to a gradual climax. This technique gives the music both expressive and temporal functions. The powerful combination of visual and auditory elements taps into viewers’ instincts, leading them to respond emotionally rather than logically. The ad’s argument (“Better together”) carries social significance and

Table 2. Bring it home to me by Coca-Cola – “Better together” (2015)

#	Original lyrics
1	<i>You know I laughed, ha ha?</i>
2	<i>When you left</i>
3	<i>But now I know</i>
4	<i>I only hurt myself</i>
5	<i>Bring to me</i>
6	<i>Bring your sweet loving</i>
7	<i>Being it home to me</i>
8	<i>Yeah</i>

implication. Coca-Cola was among the first companies to actively promote social values through advertising.

In terms of thematic structure, the commercial's first scenes are interrelated. From a couple watching their baby crawl to witnessing the baby's first steps, a caption appears stating: "You know, the older kids get, the harder it is to keep them close." This phrase introduces the underlying theme of the commercial: parents must adapt to each stage of their child's development. The initial scenes show happy parents during their child's infant and toddler stages, followed by a growing sense of detachment as the child starts school and engages in other activities. This sense of parental detachment reaches its peak during teenage years. However, the persistent mother in the final scenes finds a way to reconnect with her reclusive son. The caption states: "Luckily, you know all those little secrets that bring him back to you." That secret is none other than a bottle of Coca-Cola. The child's departure is temporary, but Coca-Cola accompanies all moments and feelings.

The advertisement resolves through the mother's reaction: preparing a family meal accompanied by Coca-Cola. This action is portrayed as the "secret" that reunites the family, aligning with the caption "Because where you feel happy, you always want to return." The musical accompaniment reinforces this theme with the lyrics "Bring your sweet loving, bring it home to me." The advertisement concludes with the Coca-Cola jingle and the slogan "Better together, open happiness," effectively positioning the brand as a significant facilitator of family bonding and shared contentment.

Advertising design often focuses on values and concepts beyond the purchase itself. In this case, Coca-Cola connects its soft drink with the value of family and the concept of "Together, we are better." On a psychological level, purchasing a product linked to social values fosters a subconscious connection between the product and the projected value. That is why the revelation of Coca-Cola takes place at the end of the advertisement.

Undoubtedly, the cover of Sam Cooke's well-known song "Bring it home to me" plays a central role in Coca-Cola advertisements. The song drives the narrative, with its lyrics serving as the sole vocal element. The lyrics accompany each frame harmoniously, building step by step toward the product's unveiling and culminating in the singer's emphatic "Yeah, yeah, yeah" at the finale. This crescendo affirms the emotional and positive association with Coca-Cola. The lyrics function to evoke emotions and support the storytelling, as the characters remain silent, expressing their feelings through facial expressions. The combination of lyrics, captions, and subtle verbal symbols delivers the advertisement's message.

Coca-Cola aimed for the ad to resonate on a global scale. Although Greek captions "localized" the ad for specific viewers, the overall scope was international. As noted earlier, popular music is a common tactic for reaching a broad audience. The familiarity and comfort of popular music draw listeners in, making this emotional aspect more engaging.

Musically, the ad is structured in G major, providing a seamless connection between the scenes and contributing to a harmonious flow that culminates in the Coca-Cola branding. Sound effects add realism to the visuals, whereas the music itself remains non-diegetic. The rhythm of the imagery and the movements of the protagonists align with the singer's performance. However, the musical accompaniment's rhythm is more intricate, creating a counterpoint textual against the visual flow. Although the voice follows a harmonic progression, the music develops contrapuntally. The tempo of the track is approximately 10 BPM faster than the original version, maintaining a 12/8 blues feel. Although 4/4 is a more typical time signature, the compound time structure of blues gives the track a unique sonic identity. The track's danceable pulse emphasizes the interplay between the "downbeat" and "upbeat," with the words falling on the upbeat creating a circular, uplifting motion that can be "stimulating."

Despite the moderately fast tempo, the distinct rhythm stands out, drawing the viewers' attention to key moments in the ad. The commercial concludes with Coca-Cola's well-known jingle. The transition from the 12/8 rhythm of the song to the 4/4 rhythm of the jingle is particularly interesting. The 12/8 rhythm divides into four main pulses that naturally lead into the 4/4 time, with a rubato moment at the transitional point (00:26) seamlessly guiding the listener to the jingle. This creates a smoother progression to the finale, which presents Coca-Cola's signature slogan: "Better together, open happiness."

6.2. Case study II: Nespresso double coffee capsules – "What else?" (2016)

For over a decade, George Clooney has been Nespresso's most renowned and credible ambassador. The brand has become intrinsically linked with the actor's name and sophistication. In the 2016 commercial for the double espresso capsules, Clooney co-stars with the well-known actor Jack Black. This short TV ad, lasting just 20 s, revolves around the phrase "What else?" and encourages viewers to consider the unique qualities of Nespresso coffee. Clooney, in a rural courtyard, prepares a cup of Nespresso. When the coffee is ready, Black attempts to impress a woman by using Clooney's catchphrase, "What else?" in his own style. Clooney is surprised by the alteration and wishes to correct

him. Black experiences a moment of realization as the true meaning of “What else?” dawns on him.

Nespresso coffee serves as catalyzes for dialog between the protagonists and the elegant woman. Her attractive presence stimulates peripheral cognition. However, logical processing is when invoked through the protagonists’ dialog, encouraging the audience to consider the high quality of Nespresso. Thus, both routes of cognition operate simultaneously for maximum impact.

The music is divided into two main ideas: one with light melodic mobility and the other with a more stagnant flow. The musical sequence provides a sense of space and time and is descriptive. When the music is sparse and composed of few notes, there is a deceleration in time and intensity. In contrast, when the theme resumes, the passage of time seems to go unnoticed. The main motif of the melodic line is based on note A. The musical composition is built around a short phrase. This sequence of notes forms the characteristic melody that has become synonymous with the Nespresso brand and mirrors the movements associated with its coffee.

The commercial opens with a brief musical introduction featuring an A minor chord and a bell-like keyboard sound. This sets the stage for introducing the protagonists, George Clooney and Jack Black, through a concise exchange. As the scene progresses, the music develops, maintaining a tempo of approximately 72 BPM. The visuals alternate between close-up shots of the coffee machine and the protagonists preparing their favorite brew. The absence of dialog and minimalist music during this scene implies that the product speaks for itself.

At the 5-s mark, the music fades, returning to an A minor arpeggio or broken chord. A stylish woman enters the scene, initiating a brief conversation about Nespresso. The dialog is punctuated by musical notes that correspond to the action, such as a double A note when the protagonists exchange glances, and two F# notes in succession as the woman takes two coffees and leaves.

The commercial then shifts focus back to Clooney and Black, with a chromatic slide from G to G# to A in the background. Their dialog is brief and pointed, culminating in Clooney’s catchphrase, “What else?” accompanied by a gesture signifying perfection. The ad concludes with the signature Nespresso musical theme. The final frame displays a black banner with the company’s logo, the campaign slogan “What else?” and an invitation to learn more on the Nespresso website.

The sparse notes match the protagonists’ movements. The concept of duality is reflected in the product title, and the music embodies this duality with double notes where

appropriate. The double notes rhythmically highlight the protagonists’ actions and dialog. The repetition and enhancement of the basic melody give the image a distinct identity, aiding in the easy recall of both the brand and the product. Although the melody is perfectly synchronized with the visual movement, it does not serve as a realistic reference but functions as indicative punctuation for the ad’s key verbal messages. In other words, the music is non-realistic but aligns with the brand and product.

Throughout the commercial, the music and visuals work together to create a sophisticated atmosphere that aligns with Nespresso’s brand image. The minimal dialog and precise musical cues underscore the product’s quality and the brand’s confident market positioning. Notably, the protagonists’ attire is relatively formal, and suited for a corporate environment. The advertisers intend to show that coffee is an everyday luxury, stylish, and suitable for both before and after work. Finally, the setting reinforces the “authentic” Italian origin of Nespresso coffee.

The commercial capitalizes on George Clooney’s star power and charm as the central character, creating immediate appeal and recognition. While promoting coffee, the ad subtly emphasizes themes of quality, authenticity, and the social aspect of coffee consumption. The use of carefully crafted visuals and a distinctive musical score enhances the storytelling and solidifies a memorable brand identity.

6.3. Case study III: Croissant Molto Cool – “Being with friends is cool” (2017)

In the vast, frozen expanse of the Arctic, an unexpected scene unfolds, blending classical music, wildlife, and the simple pleasure of a Molto croissant. This captivating narrative is meticulously crafted through a series of scenes, each rich with imagery and sound, creating a surreal yet heartwarming experience that combines fantasy with reality.

The story begins with the timeless elegance of Johann Strauss II’s *Blue Danube* waltz, played in D major at an approximate tempo of 96 BPM. This classical piece sets a serene and majestic tone, perfectly complementing the image of a frozen landscape, possibly in the Arctic. An indigenous Arctic dweller (Inuk), isolated in this icy wilderness, is seen fishing. Amidst this solitude, he decides to take a break and opens a package of Molto croissants. The sound of the package opening is surreal – a scratch that pierces the silence – adding a touch of the extraordinary to the mundane. This scene, though simple, is laden with symbolic elements. The presence of penguins and polar bears, though geographically inaccurate (penguins inhabit the South Pole, whereas polar bears roam the North)

serves a greater purpose. It underscores the theme that Molto croissants bring everyone together, transcending boundaries and uniting disparate elements in harmony.

The package's opening at 00:14 creates a distinguished noise that gives depth to the image and breaks the tranquil, frozen setting. Similar to the sound of breaking ice, the noise attracts various animals of different shapes and sizes to the Inuk's location. The distinctive sound thus serves as a guiding point. After the pause at 00:18, the music resumes with a more melodic and less rhythmic style. The scene captures a friendly gathering of participants; their faces alight with genuine pleasure in each other's company. The caption "Being with friends is cool" at 00:32 elegantly underscores the moment. Suddenly, the music ceases, drawing attention to an unexpected detail: A seal continues clapping enthusiastically, seemingly in appreciation of Strauss's classical masterpiece. The advertisement draws an indirect comparison between the music and the sound produced by opening the package. The distinctive crinkle of unwrapping a Molto snack is presented as a classic, familiar sound that resonates with consumers on a nostalgic level. This auditory cue cleverly links the product to positive memories and emotions, enhancing its appeal beyond mere taste. The ad subtly suggests that enjoying a Molto croissant is a multisensory experience by equating the package's sound with music.

The narrative of the commercial exploits two parallels: One visual and one auditory. The word "cool" in the caption coincides with the frozen landscape, whereas the sound of the packaging relates to the sound quality of the waltz. "Cool" cleverly ties the emotional warmth of friendship to the literal cold of the Arctic setting.

Finally, at 00:36, the Molto packaging and the word "cool" dominate the screen, accompanied by a woodwind sound ending on a half cadence at the fifth note of A major. This cadence leaves a sense of incompleteness, implying there is more to come and instilling anticipation, as the melodic phrase ties to the product packaging. The marketers aim for this feeling to lead to the purchase of the product. The final image shows the Molto logo and croissant packaging set against the Arctic landscape, suggesting that the story – like the enjoyment of a Molto croissant – is never truly over. It continues, inviting us to savor its simple pleasures repeatedly.

Although the auditory function of music in relation to the visuals is non-diegetic, its role within the storyline is descriptive. The production incorporates music and sound effects as integral elements of the narrative, enriching the representation of both time and space. The commercial appears to have been filmed in a studio, with digital tools to

create a realistic setting. Every sound added is essential, as it enhances the authenticity of the images and adds value.

Molto's parent company, Chipita, is a well-known Greek food firm with exports reaching European countries, the Middle East, and beyond. Since 1996, the company has been promoting its products internationally. The choice of Johann Strauss's waltz *Blue Danube* is deliberate. This renowned classical piece imparts flow, value, and quality to the imagery. Strauss's composition beautifully illustrates the Danube River through musical mastery, and the creators of Molto's commercial sought to adopt this descriptive capacity and apply it to the visuals. No other genre of music would have fit the frozen landscape and the depiction of rare Arctic animals as appropriate.

The storyline, woven through music and imagery, transcends everyday life to deliver a powerful message of unity and joy. The Arctic, with its breathtaking beauty and silent expanse, serves as a backdrop for a universal story that resonates with warmth and togetherness, all brought to life by the delightful taste of a Molto croissant.

However, the advertisement's message extends beyond mere consumption, emphasizing the value of friendship. The ad's core message is that the Molto croissant unites people and overcomes loneliness. In this case, though, the Inuk's friends are animals. This creative decision possibly serves multiple purposes. By featuring animals instead of humans, the commercial captures viewers' attention and piques their curiosity. The juxtaposition of the written message with unexpected visuals creates a subtle tension that prompts viewers to process the information more deeply. The contrast between textual and visual elements activates different cognitive pathways, leading to enhanced retention and understanding of the ad's central message. This approach guides viewers to focus on the theme, as they subconsciously differentiate between what is written (the words) and what is shown (the images).

Finally, another unrealistic element of the commercial is that although Inuk's primary source of food appears to be fishing, he still has a croissant on hand. This symbolizes the product's wide appeal and accessibility across the globe. By inference, Molto croissant's theme blends reality and fantasy, allowing the peripheral route of cognition to take precedence over the central route.

6.4. Case study IV: Loux orange juice – "I like to Loux-out dancing" (2018)

In the competitive landscape of soft drink marketing, companies often employ innovative strategies to capture consumer attention and build brand loyalty. In this case, the Loux soft drink commercial, set on the Greek island of Naxos, presents a vibrant and energetic portrayal

of summer fun in just 36 s, blending traditional Greek elements with modern pop culture.

The ad opens with a young tourist holding a map and camera, searching for a Loux orange juice. As a bottle of Loux is opened, the distinctive sound triggers a lively bouzouki-led dance-pop arrangement in a C minor scale, setting the tone for an island-wide celebration.

The presence of a 20-year-old young man symbolizes the target demographic of adventurous, enthusiastic consumers. His initial confusion—holding the map of Naxos upside down—sets the stage for a journey of discovery. This narrative device engages the viewer by creating a relatable protagonist. As the story unfolds, a diverse cast of characters is introduced, including a blonde woman dancing, an elderly gentleman, a shepherd, a little girl, and a fisherman. This eclectic mix of individuals represents various aspects of Greek culture and lifestyle, effectively broadening the appeal of the product across different age groups and social backgrounds.

The music guides the audience through a series of colorful vignettes that display the diverse inhabitants of Naxos embracing the Loux spirit. In front of a cafe, a blonde woman dance, while an elderly gentleman in traditional black attire sways his cane to the rhythm, sipping Loux orange juice instead of the more typical Greek coffee. This scene cleverly juxtaposes old-fashioned and contemporary features, highlighting how Loux brings together different generations. As the catchy refrain “I like to Loux-out dancing” kicks in, the commercial shows various islanders caught up in the Loux fever.

A shepherd dances on a hilltop, surrounded by goat – a nod to Naxos’ cheese-making tradition. A little girl in a diving mask performs in front of a school adorned with sea-life murals, emphasizing the island’s connection to the sea. A barefoot fisherman grooves to the music from his transistor radio, blending traditional island life with modern Loux vibes. The protagonist’s journey through Naxos becomes a quest to find the source of this infectious energy. He encounters twin girls on the beach in summery outfits, blending traditional and freestyle dance moves. Bottles of Loux bounce to the beat on stone terraces, and oranges leap in rhythm, visually representing the drink’s vibrant flavor.

The commercial cleverly fuses the words “Loux” and “dance,” creating a new idiomatic phrase (“Loux-out dancing”) that encapsulates the vitality and well-being associated with the drink. This wordplay is emphasized when the tourist finally reaches a Loux stand, takes a sip, and immediately starts “Loux-out dancing” with newfound energy. The ad concludes with a montage of

all the characters enjoying Loux, reinforcing the idea that the drink unites people of all ages and backgrounds for a shared experience of summer joy. The final tagline, “I like to Loux-out summer,” solidifies the brand’s association with fun, energy, and the Greek island lifestyle.

Throughout the commercial, there’s a seamless blend of traditional Greek elements – such as the bouzouki (a traditional Greek instrument), the island setting, and the elderly man in traditional dress – with modern pop culture references and dance moves. This fusion creates a unique identity for Loux as a brand that honors Greek traditions while embracing contemporary fun. The use of the well-known song *I like to move it* by Reel 2 Reel as the base for the Loux jingle provides a familiar hook for viewers, while the Greek lyrics (Table 3) and setting give it a distinct local flavor. The commercial effectively positions Loux not just as a refreshing drink but as a catalyst for joy, dance, and community spirit on the beautiful island of Naxos.

The advertisement’s soundtrack plays a crucial role in creating a cohesive and memorable experience. The audio begins with the distinctive sound of a bottle opening, then shifts into a dance-pop arrangement featuring the bouzouki. This fusion of modern and traditional components in the music mirrors the brand’s positioning as a contemporary product with strong cultural roots. Using a cover version of the famous song *I like to move it* with altered Greek lyrics to create an instant connection with the audience while establishing a characteristic brand identity.

Table 3. Loux orange juice – “I like to Loux-out dancing” (2018)

#	Translated lyrics
	(Give it!)
1	<i>I like to Loux-out dancing</i>
2	<i>I like to Loux-out dancing</i>
3	<i>I like to Loux-out dancing</i>
4	<i>Do you like to Loux-out?</i>
	(Give it!)
5	<i>I like to Loux-out summer</i>
6	<i>With a Loux in hand</i>
7	<i>I like to Loux-out summer</i>
8	<i>Do you like to Loux-out?</i>
	(Give it!)
9	<i>I like to Loux-out summer</i>
10	<i>I like to Loux-out summer</i>
11	<i>I like to Loux-out summer</i>
12	<i>Do you like to Loux-out?</i>
	(Give it!)

The Loux beverages advertisement exudes a strong summer vibe, reinforcing the brand's association with fun and good times. The jingle begins with a few notes played on the bouzouki, a long-necked string instrument with a distinctive sound that is instantly recognizable to Greeks of all ages. This traditional culture quickly transitions into modern composition, reflecting the blend of heritage and contemporary flair that defines the brand. The lyrics, adapted for advertising purposes and sung in Greek, emphasize the connection between the consumer and the product. Both the lyrics and the music are central to driving the action, as the visuals align perfectly with the audio, making sound the primary driver of the narrative.

The young protagonist is portrayed as a tourist searching for an orange grove on the island of Naxos, likely on vacation, as suggested by his attire and the camera around his neck. The map of Naxos clearly signals the location to the viewer. From the outset, the protagonist realizes he does not need the map to find Loux; instead, he follows the musical cues guiding him toward it. The music and sound serve as navigational tools, with the visuals confirming that these auditory signals are leading him in the right direction. At every turn, the color orange is prominently featured, referencing the orange soft drink. The dance moves of the people he encounters also serve as part of the "acoustic map," reinforcing the lively, energetic theme of the ad.

The new phrase "Loux-out dancing" embodies the concept of passionate movement. If people were static or reacted differently, they would likely not align with the theme. The rhythm, music, and dance moves are integral parts of the ad's thematic puzzle. The music is realistic and plays a crucial role, reflecting the vibrancy of Loux orange refreshment. This is why everyone engages in the Loux dance. By the end, the protagonist reaches his destination, tastes the orange soft drink, and begins dancing enthusiastically, emulating the dance moves of the people he encounters along the way.

The movements of the characters convey intense excitement. The viewer is led to believe that this is an original type of dance and bodily motion. This approach makes the promotional campaign itself stand out and establishes a unique identity closely tied to the trademark. The brand-new wording is distinctive, memorable, and effectively supports the slogan. Finally, the final frame displays all the flavors of Loux soft drinks, and the metallic sound of the bells, heard simultaneously, matches the glass packaging. Glass produces a crystalline sound when struck, whereas plastic sounds hollow. Although this detail may seem minor, it aligns seamlessly with the visual elements. Moreover, although the ad highlights the classic orange

flavor, it also includes seven other flavors. This strategy efficiently reminds the audience of the product's variety while saving time and space.

6.5. Case study V: Fage Total yogurt – "Simply captivating" (2019)

The advertisement for Fage Total yogurt is a sophisticated blend of visual and auditory elements creating an attractive narrative that transition from an imaginary representation to everyday reality. Fage employs cinematic sound effects to draw a parallel between the classic total yogurt and a snow-covered landscape.

The ad begins with a surreal, digitally manipulated 7-s sequence featuring crystalline sounds reminiscent of soft skating on ice, accompanied by distorted effects. This auditory landscape is complemented by metallic chimes and dreamcatcher-like sounds, creating an ethereal atmosphere. The visual representation mirrors this otherworldly soundscape, depicting the yogurt as a snow-capped mountain with cereal flakes falling like snow.

Following the "explosive" strawberry flavor, cereal flakes descend upon the white yogurt, reminiscent of snowflakes. At 00:08, the scene transitions, bringing the viewer back to reality. A young girl, seated at the kitchen table, samples Total's "captivating" flavor. Her mother is visible in the background, engaged in household tasks. The expressions and realistic settings are notably quotidian, devoid of any palpable enthusiasm. The ad's underlying message is that classic Total yogurt, with a fruity topping, adds a pleasant element to daily life, using the peripheral route of persuasion.

The crystalline resonance sounds like a gentle glide on a cymbal with a distortion effect, caressing the frozen yogurt and highlighting the brightness of its white hue. Then, the explosive red color of the strawberry is accompanied by the sound of wind chimes and the gradual acceleration of a propeller. These auditory effects evoke the element of air, giving depth to the image's spatial dimension. Finally, a harmonious keyboard accompaniment provides a foundation for the unfolding auditory overlay. After tasting the yogurt, an auditory decompression occurs, leaving only the authentic sound of a fan audible. The previous sound effects musically describe the sensation evoked by the yogurt's flavor.

As a result, the music remains a non-realistic narrative element, yet it plays a crucial role in communicating the commercial's message, making it descriptive in nature. The narrator echoes the slogan "Simply captivating" as the final scene shows the classic Total 5% yogurt packaging. The ad concludes without musical accompaniment, with the final image integrated into the scene. The absence of music at

this point allows the viewer to focus exclusively on the visual element and the advertising message.

To summarize, the narrative arc of the ad can be divided into three distinct phases. The opening scene (00:00–00:07) establishes a symbolic connection between the yogurt and a winter landscape, using digital sound manipulation and visual effects to create an immersive, dreamlike experience. The transitional sequence (00:08–00:11) features a gradual crescendo of propeller-like sounds, signaling a shift from the imaginary to the real world. This transition is visually represented by zooming out from the spoon, revealing that the entire “frozen” sensation is contained within it. The final segment (00:12–00:20) shows a domestic setting with a young girl eating yogurt at the kitchen table while her mother performs household tasks. The color palette shifts to cool blue tones, grounding the scene in everyday reality.

The ad uses various symbolic elements to convey its general message. The initial fictitious sequence symbolizes the sensory experience of consuming Fage Total yogurt, presenting it as an extraordinary, “captivating” pleasure. The transition to reality – from fictional scenery to the mundane domestic scene – suggests that this exceptional experience is accessible in everyday life, sparking the audience’s intrigue. The contrast between the narrator’s enthusiastic proclamation and the conventional household backdrop is not only a subtle tension but also an entrancing one, implying that the product adds excitement to routine activities. The Fage Total yogurt ad effectively uses cinematic sound effects and visual metaphors to elevate a common dairy product to an extraordinary sensory experience. It suggests that this yogurt can bring a pleasant note to daily life by juxtaposing illusory elements with commonplace conditions. Ultimately, the message “Simply captivating,” reinforced both by the narrator and on-screen text, encapsulates the product’s promise of bringing excitement to the ordinary.

6.6. Case study VI: Vitam Soft Butter – “Taste and proper nutrition” (2020)

The advertisement for Vitam Soft Butter is brief (lasting just 11 s) and has a relatively simple structure. The virtual presentation of Vitam Soft Butter is primarily informational and showcases the “transformation” of its packaging. The goal is not to promote the product or offer a special deal, but to highlight the shift from the classic yellow packaging to its new white design. This serves as a reminder of the product’s quality and taste. The ad seeks to persuade through the central route of cognition, focusing on informing viewers about the packaging update and the nutritious nature of Vitam Butter.

The round-shaped packaging transforms into a drum as two butter knives strike it. The distinctive, introductory

sound of a circus drum roll is heard. This musical opening is accompanied by the announcer’s phrase, “Welcome your favorite Vitam” as if presenting the next act of a show. The drum sound culminates with a cymbal crash, emphasizing the word “new.” In this instance, the sound is realistic and central to the action. The auditory components convey the advertisement’s message, and the visuals become part of this musical presentation.

After the drum introduction ends, the packaging changes. At 00:04, the new packaging appears in white and gold hues. The music transitions to a carefree, relaxed, and pleasant melody in D major that sounds familiar and emphasizes the final message: “Taste and proper nutrition.” The transitional music, with a tempo of around 84 BPM, is non-diegetic and features MIDI sounds and a distinctive whistle. The moderate speed alleviates the intensity of the drum sound for the audience. The whistle enters toward the end of the advertisement and complements the light-hearted mood. This auditory element, along with the music, concludes on an A note, deliberately avoiding a perfect cadence. This musical choice creates a sense of openness and continuity rather than finality. Such a technique engages the listener’s cognitive processes, potentially enhancing the advertisement’s memorability and effectiveness. The unresolved musical ending subtly encourages the audience to remain engaged with the brand, activating both auditory and mnemonic pathways in the brain.

The advertisement serves an instructive purpose, reassuring the audience that only the packaging is changing, while the content remains the same. As in previous advertisements, the dynamic evolution of the product is observed over time. Whether it involves new flavors, innovative shapes, or simply new packaging colors, it appears that companies aim to demonstrate constant evolution, suggesting that goods and services are modernizing while quality and values stay true to tradition. This short Vitam Butter advertisement effectively communicates its message of packaging change while maintaining product consistency through visual transformation, strategic sound design, and concise narration. The commercial employs both central and peripheral routes of persuasion, appealing to consumers’ rationality regarding product quality and their emotional connection to familiar branding.

7. Discussion and conclusions: Interpreting music in Greek television commercials

Music and sound are integral parts of the television advertising experience, functioning as essential promotional tools for both large multinational corporations

and local enterprises. In this study, it was observed – based on the principles of musical structure – that pieces composed at fast tempos aim to convey action, excite the audience, and create an uplifting mood. These are typically associated with pop/rock songs and dance music (e.g., the Loux orange juice ad). Music with a relatively fast to moderate tempo is often accompanied by lyrics and serves a descriptive role.

The tonal range of the human voice plays a crucial role in creating melodies that are accessible, appealing, and easy for the audience to sing along with. The music accompanying advertisements can be simply reproduced by listeners. Commercials aim to support positive audience psychology rather than challenge musical or artistic abilities. It is worth noting that, in most cases, the voices were predominately male. However, this alone does not allow for conclusive insights into the role of gender in advertising voiceovers. A larger body of material and advertisements would need to be analyzed to draw more comprehensive conclusions. This study represents a limited sample and should be considered a starting point for further research.

The duration of an advertisement affects how its music will be designed and adapted to make a greater impact. The shorter the advertisement, the more cleverly the composer must manage time. The Vitam yogurt commercial is an outstanding example of this. In this case, the product itself becomes a musical instrument, showcasing how the creators of the audiovisual material collaborated with exceptional dedication to produce the best possible outcome. This ad also highlights the dominant role of sound and music in the promotional campaign. In other advertisements, such as the Molto croissant commercial, where the duration is the longest among the examples, the plot allows for greater development and narration, with the music following a slow and steady tempo. Finally, Loux's ad skillfully integrated a multitude of images within its 36-s duration, ensuring that the music not only captures all the essential characteristics of the product but also complements the local cultural ambiance with an upbeat rhythm. Nonetheless, the most notable management of music tempo and timing is exemplified by the Coca-Cola advertisement.

The harmony in the ads' music largely utilized major scales. Minor scales were observed in cases where commercials referenced the company's exceptional value or conveyed a sense of progression. Their dominant pitch-related center is placed around note A (440 Hz)—a frequency that serves as the basis for tuning a group of musical instruments to resonate harmoniously. The curators of the musical components may have chosen

this tonal focus to achieve a similar “tuning” with their audience, generating a familiar and homogeneous acoustic framework.

In certain instances, the absence of music or the strategic use of pauses accentuates an ad's meaning and overall atmosphere, as seen in the Nespresso and Fage commercials. Many advertisements typically conclude by presenting their final message and product display alongside music. Interestingly, some ads incorporate unique musical techniques to enhance their impact. For example, in the Molto croissant commercial, the music does not resolve to the tonic scale but instead ends on the dominant chord. Similarly, in the Vitam Butter advertisement, the music – written in D major – fades out on the fifth note of the scale rather than concluding with a perfect cadence. These varied approaches to scoring advertisements are designed to emphasize the promotional message and capture the viewer's attention, leaving a memorable final impression.

The same principle applies to the opening sections. Music typically begins with an introductory melody based on the tonic chord, establishing the harmonic and acoustic framework of the commercial. This technique, which precedes other sounds, aims to focus the audience on the verbal message by providing a moment of reduced sensory input. This brief respite allows for easier processing and memory retention, especially when transitioning between advertisements or from other content. In fact, these musical strategies serve as short auditory breaks between streaming videos or television programs, providing a moment of cognitive reset for the audience.

The constant influx of information on TV can be overwhelming, making moments of entertainment and enjoyment essential. Television programs often provide a respite from this data overload. In advertising production, many commercials incorporate unique and original audio and visual elements to capture the audience's attention. A standout example is the Loux advertisement, which cleverly combines speech, music, imagery, and movement, seamlessly encapsulating the entire plot within a single pun. This multisensory approach demonstrates the power of integrated marketing communications. Another notable example is the Nespresso coffee commercial, which skillfully blends dialog, action, and music.

The added value of music in image and television advertising is evident in Greek commercials, where sound actively shapes the final impression of the marketing message. It is no coincidence that many commercials often conclude with music. The intentional absence of music, though rarely used, can powerfully amplify the core idea by creating a striking contrast that captivates the audience. The strategic use of music at the end of an advertisement

underscores its importance in the overall promotional plan. Most companies, if not all, have their trademark jingle as part of their branding strategy. These musical symbols become an integral part of the product or label identity, enhancing audience recall. The elevation of sound as a primary feature in TV advertising demonstrates its immense value. Just as individuals respond to their unique names, companies have their own auditory identifiers—their own jingles. These melodic snippets are often heard throughout the commercial or at its conclusion, reinforcing brand recognition.

A successful example of building up a musical identity in advertising is Coca-Cola's 2015 campaign, which seamlessly incorporates Sam Cooke's track, transitioning from a 12/8 rhythm to the 4/4 time signature of the company's famous jingle. This integration demonstrates how music can unify an entire advertising concept.

Television commercials have evolved to target both broad and niche audiences. A representative example of this approach is Loux's advertisement, which vigorously employs the distinctive sound of the traditional Greek bouzouki, deeply rooted in the country's musical heritage and cultural identity. The incorporation of bouzouki music in Loux's advertisement serves multiple purposes. It immediately forges a strong connection with Greek culture, resonating with the local audience. As the commercial is set on the Greek island of Naxos, the music helps establish a vivid sense of place and ambiance. Finally, by incorporating this traditional element, Loux strengthens its position as a Greek company, catering primarily to the local market.

Loux's mindful use of music demonstrates how advertisers can effectively focus on specialized audiences by integrating culturally significant elements. By aligning the auditory experience with the visual and contextual aspects of the commercial, Loux delivers a more immersive and relevant message for its Greek audience. Such targeted approaches in TV advertising allow companies to connect more deeply with specific demographic groups, increasing the likelihood of their engagement and brand recall. This method of niche targeting through cultural and musical cues can be especially powerful in markets where local identity and traditions play a significant role in consumer behavior. The blend of tradition and modernity resonates particularly with Greek consumers, who value their history and cultural heritage. Anything that aligns with these principles tends to elicit a positive response.

On the other hand, in international advertising campaigns (e.g., Coca-Cola, Molto, Nespresso), the music tends to be popular, foreign, or simplistic, often omitting Greek cultural elements. Some brands targeting the international market, like Molto, capitalize on visual media more extensively to

stand out. Most commercials employ non-diegetic music and merge realistic elements with imagination. Advertising messages typically use positive reinforcement and appeal to consumers' psychology, employing techniques that rely on peripheral cognitive processing to achieve their key promotional objectives: (a) Undermining competition, (b) Reminding consumers of product value, (c) Strengthening the brand through new packaging, flavors, or complementary products, and (d) Combining tradition with modernity to boost product and brand credibility.

The digitization of media is evident in both the aural and visual aspects of Greek advertising. Musical instruments used are primarily digital, likely due to cost and time considerations. The main instruments featured are keyboards (producing various digital sounds), guitars, and drums. Between 2015 and 2020, Greece was still grappling with the financial crisis, which impacted all media sectors. Digital sound design and production provide a more cost-effective and time-efficient alternative to creating original live music while maintaining high cinematographic standards. The shift toward digital methods resulted in significant savings for advertisers in terms of both effort and money. Finally, companies aiming for maximum profit often strive for mass consumption, requiring frequent production cycles. By employing digital technologies, these companies could efficiently produce and distribute content on a large scale, meeting broad audience demands and maximizing revenue potential.

Advertisements aim to create a seamless fusion of sounds and images, presenting a unified, cohesive product to the viewer. This synergy is crucial in crafting a compelling final product that engages multiple senses. The chromatic palette in advertisements is often cleverly prearranged, with visual hues reflecting the colors of the product packaging, creating a cohesive and recognizable optical brand identity. This pictorial harmony serves as a form of "market personalization," making the advertisement an extension of the product itself. Characters in advertisements bring a human, everyday dimension to the product's narrative, acting as conduits that shift the audience's experience from perceiving the product as an object to recognizing it as a relatable subject. This approach helps potential consumers imagine themselves using the product in their own lives.

Advertisements primarily depict scenarios that appeal to the middle class, showing attractive homes, spacious environments, healthy and beautiful people, family gatherings, social interactions, smiling children, and enjoyable activities. These elements collectively create a picture of an aspirational lifestyle.

Another important observation is that though ads rely on repetition, convenience, mass production, information

retrieval, and imitation of other media – such as cinema and radio, which are considered “superior” – they leverage the rhythmic dimension of music to distinguish themselves from competitors. Notable examples include the blues vibes with a 12/8 rhythm in the Coca-Cola commercial, as well as the rhythmic treatment of swing and the 3/4 waltz pulse in Molto’s advertisement.

In short, there is an effort to integrate television’s promotional material into a broader, socially acceptable context. However, corporate firms often use subtle—sometimes deceptive—elements to make their ads stand out and capture the attention of the spectators. Analysis reveals that music and sound in Greek television advertising serve as primary tools for culturally contextualizing representations while simultaneously adding a unique touch to each commercial. Music is an integral component in both big and small screens, occasionally acting as the main conveyor of the advertising message or, at other times, supporting the commercial’s overall objective.

The principles established by academic scholars and theorists have been shown to be applicable to the audiovisual media landscape of Greek television. These principles underscore the importance of investing in music to enhance advertising in TV broadcasting. Music brings coherence to visual material by unifying scenes and action while highlighting key plot points. It can play a leading role by signaling climactic moments or periods of relaxation. It also has the power to create contrasts in a nuanced and easily understandable manner. This multifaceted functionality of music in advertising not only enhances the viewer’s holistic experience but also strengthens the broader impact of commercials, making music an indispensable element in crafting engaging television ads.

The notion of meaning is inherent in music, with its frequencies being manipulated and interpreted by humans. Although some might challenge the cognitive and psychological findings of this study, the objective principles of music, grounded in social and cultural conventions, are deeply ingrained and difficult to refute. This study highlights the importance of conducting a complementary examination and extensive analysis of the power of music and its application in advertising to derive comprehensive conclusions. Furthermore, it raises an ethical question regarding the responsible treatment of music in marketing promotion: To what extent and in what manner should this potent tool be employed in advertisements to engage audiences effectively while respecting their autonomy and avoiding any subtle “brainwashing”?

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Not applicable.

Availability of data

The audiovisual data used in this study are publicly available on YouTube and have been referenced throughout the text.

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