

## A DIACHRONIC VIEW ON MEAT ADVERTISING – THE CASE OF SISSI PRODUCTS FROM CAROLI FOODS GROUP

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### Abstract

Advertising plays a significant role in raising consumers' awareness regarding the emergence and existence of products on the market. Meat advertising may set various reception trends nowadays due to a constant emphasis on adopting sustainable farming and consuming practices. The present study focuses on a diachronic analysis of the commercials for Sissi products from Caroli Foods Group covering the time span between 2016 and 2024. Special attention has been given to the semiotic and rhetoric elements and their fluctuations over time due to the shortening span allotted for commercials as well as to the intended effect on the prospective consumers. The conclusion is that despite the changes in the amount of information delivered by the commercials, there is a constant unwavering focus on the quality of the products which boast a very strict nutritional standard and cater for the needs of the most sophisticated consumers who may favour a certain cultural and social input.

**Key words:** meat advertising, meat commercials, diachronic analysis, semiotic elements, rhetoric devices

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Advertising is a key component of marketing since it is the means by which knowledge of a product, its qualities and benefits, reaches the potential consumers. The rate of responding to advertising depends on the skills of the advertisers to use all the linguistic and artistic elements that may converge to the same aim – that of persuading. Diachronically, the language used in advertising is reflective of the social and cultural trends at a certain point in time as well as the audience's capacity to favourably and accurately process the linguistic input: "It is important to note that the language of advertising is a source that reflects the lexical means available in the national language, shows the scale of the social meaning of the language, and determines the ways of its development. [...] Undoubtedly, the clarity and comprehensibility of the elements of simple, fluent, coherent language, which exist within the language of advertising, testify to the importance of its place in social relations." (Shirinboyevna M. D., 2020)

The present study focuses on a diachronic analysis of the commercials for Sissi products from Caroli Foods Group covering the time span between 2016 and 2024 and streamed on YouTube since one can get a better grasp of the number of views online as well as the number of likes accumulated which may be telling regarding the enthusiastic reception of the commercial by the

consumers. Special attention has been given to the semiotic elements and rhetoric devices and their fluctuations over time due to the shortening span allotted for commercials in general, as well as to the intended effect on the prospective consumers.

The emergence of meat products on the market is always accompanied by an element of surprise. In the case of Sissi products from Caroli Foods Group the name itself – 'Sissi' – surprises, being familiar to only a certain category of consumers. The fame of Empress Elisabeth of Austria may have been augmented due to the various film adaptations. Her image on various products is either the one captured by various artists of her time or one that resembles her and sends the viewers on a path of recollecting all memories they might have of the qualities of this historical figure. The commercials analysed tend to adapt the features of the female character playing in the spots either to the screening from 1955 – the commercials before 2021 – or to the more recent series from 2021 – the one from 2024. This portrayal may be reflective of the complex personality of the Empress herself, who seems to transcend history and mark the present thanks to her being "the ideal conflation of these two seemingly contradictory ideals: of nobility/ quality and of natural and modern femininity." [Hametz, M. E., Schlipphacke A., 2018]

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## MATERIAL AND METHOD

A number of eleven commercials (TV commercials included) streamed on YouTube have been analysed paying close attention to the semiotic elements and rhetoric devices used. The texts of the commercials have been translated into English in order to offer a better insight into the progression of the message across the years. The key words have been highlighted so that the readers may be aware of the intention behind the message.

The commercial from 2016 *Sissi, sunca din ce in ce mai fina* /Sissi [1], an even finer ham launched on October 13, 2016, having more than 130,000 views and 60 likes immerses the audience in a story that preserves some historical truths from the life of the real Sissi princess:

*“There once was a princess who cared so much about her figure that she refused to honor what she called a heavy supper that steals the night's sleep and the beauty of dawn.*

*‘She hasn't come again.’*

*The Prince gave orders for the preparation of the finest product. From the carefully chosen pork, only the most tender ham was selected, and every last bit of fat was trimmed away to make a very tender ham.*

*‘A fine girl like her deserves my appreciation...’*

*At Caroli Foods out of appreciation for women, we strive to produce an ever finer ham. Sissi, 1.5% fat ham.”*

The commercial is accompanied by the following message: “Inspired by the story of Princess Sissi, we at Caroli Foods strive to produce a ham that gets finer and finer. From carefully selected meat, every last speck of fat has been removed for Sissi ham, resulting in a very fine ham with 1.5% fat. Thus, the new products in the Sissi portfolio are suitable for the modern woman who is concerned about an active lifestyle, but figure-conscious at the same time. Out of appreciation for women. Sissi, ham that's getting finer and finer! With 1.5% fat.” The story is set in an aristocratic dining salon with people replicating the code of dress and manners typical of higher classes.

In the same year 2016, close to Christmas time – December 19 – the company launches another commercial: *Povestea printesei Sissi – arata-ti aprecierea din ce in ce mai des/ The story of Princess Sissi - show your appreciation more and more often* [2] which preserves the same story pattern. With more than 25,000 views and 140 likes, the story of Sissi told in one minute and 21 seconds focuses on some key issues related to the real Austrian princess, highlighting her role and impact. This time the commercial starts with a book opening while the voice is telling the story of the Princess and a chorus is singing in the

background, transporting the viewers into the atmosphere of cathedral music, usually heard on Christmas days:

*“Behind every successful woman is a man who always supports and appreciates her. Princess Sissi...”*

*Some considered her a rebel, others an innovator, but her husband considered her a princess like the empire had never had before. Probably the most beloved and appreciated princess.*

*The first princess to have a gymnasium in the palace. The first princess to go on a diet. A princess who helped the empire evolve.*

*Today, inspired by the story of Princess Sissi, we at Caroli Foods strive to produce an ever finer ham with 1.5% fat. From carefully chosen pork, only the ham has been selected. Every last speck of fat has been removed for a very fine ham.*

*Sissi encourages you to show your appreciation because we truly believe that women who feel appreciated can change the world!*

*Show your appreciation as often as possible!*

*Behind every success there are more gestures of appreciation.*

One year later, December 2017, *Sissi – Gestul tau de apreciere / Sissi - Your gesture of appreciation / TV commercial* [3], with almost 89,000 views and more than 30 likes, wraps the advertising message in the form of a longer song that revolves around the idea of appreciation – which is already established as their slogan – and highlights the vision and the mission of the producers and their commitment to the customers:

*“I haven't told you enough how much I love you.*

*How I appreciate.*

*What is fine, we value.*

*What's sublime, we love.*

*When you feel and believe, you appreciate.*

*What is dear to you is dear to me, too.*

*You lure me, I lure you.*

*It's real, I'm not dreaming, I appreciate.*

*Sissi – ham with 1% fat.”*

One year later, *Sissi – Gest de apreciere la pranz/ Sissi - Lunch appreciation gesture / TV commercial* [4] with almost 17,000 views and 60 likes was launched exactly on Christmas day, December 25, 2017. It reminds people of those who have supported them and helped them in time of need and encourages them to show their appreciation. The setting is a combination of home and work premises. The loving husband and daughter bring Mum lunch and a flower resembling the diamond edelweiss hairpins Sissi used to wear. The message is a slight reversal of the cliché role of women: the woman is the busy one making a career and the father fulfills the domestic chore of cooking for her.

The commercials from July 2018: *Salată cu Sissi șuncă de curcan și ananas/ Sissi Turkey ham and pineapple salad* [5] (1 minute and 34 seconds, 587 views) and *Bruschete cu Sissi șuncă de pui și pastă de măslinel/ Bruschetta with Sissi chicken ham and olive paste* [6] (1 minute and 25 seconds, 574 views) offer the audience recipes instead of pure commercials, indirectly advertising for the product and incorporating the information in a useful context.

The commercial from December 20, 2019: *Sissi specialitati crud-uscate afumate/ Sissi raw-dried smoked specialties* [7] (368,074 views, 27 likes) was already reduced to 20 seconds. On the same musical background from 2017 and preserving only some key scenes from the old one with the fashion designer, the voice announces that: **“Out of appreciation for you we have created the new raw-dried specialties: ham, tenderloin and pastrami, carefully smoked with hardwood.”** In the same year and month, a commercial reduced to six seconds only: *Sissi specialitati crud-uscate afumate/ Sissi raw-dried smoked specialties* [8] (with more than 5,000 views and 13 likes) presents only the three new products and encourages the prospective consumers to **“Indulge yourself with the new Sissi raw-dried and smoked specialties: ham, tenderloin and pastrami.”** The song playing in the background has been significantly reduced to: **“What is fine, we value. What’s sublime (fading song)”**.

The time span between 2019 to 2023, coinciding with the time of the pandemic was interrupted by a commercial in the spring of 2021 promoting a kind of bonus for the loyal consumers: *Cu Sissi, TU ești prințesa!/ With Sissi, YOU are the princess* [9] (more than 1,100 views, 4 likes) with the voice announcing: **“Sissi rewards you with a picture in your own image or daily with a personalized present.”**

The media commercial from January 2023 announces that: **“Sissi brand receives the title of Supplier of the Royal House of Romania!”**:

**“The noble taste of Sissi products has always been given by their fine texture, low fat content and the quality of the ingredients, attributes appreciated which have brought us the title of Supplier of the Royal Household of Romania. Delight in the new fine ham without E [additives]!”**

It is followed by the commercial from October 31, 2023: *Sissi fără E-uri/ Sissi without E-additives* [10] (over 1,022 views, 6 likes) which preserves the same theme and song in the background. The long fashion designer clip is reduced to 20 seconds. The message changed: **“When mornings start like this and the lunch break is short, you can always count on Sissi. Try the new specialties from the range without E-additives: Sirloin, bacon and neck fillet. Sissi, out of appreciation for you!”**

The last commercial launched on August 29, 2024 – *Sissi: Gusturile fine cresc odată cu tine*

*Sissi: Fine tastes grow together with you* [11], with almost 539, 000 views and 2 likes brings a completely new perspective: the family depicted is a totally new one while the setting sheds a new light on another habit of Princess Sissi: taking care of her beautiful hair. The song in the background is in English making thus the message accessible only to those who understand this language: **“In this place we call home/ That we built stone by stone [...] And the smiles up ahead/ They will be alright.”** The commercial is attempting a kind of passing on the fine aristocratic habits related not only to a neat preservation of one’s look, but also to the fine tastes in eating: **“Fine meats from carefully selected raw materials using only very tender meat. Sissi, fine tastes grow with you.”** The little girl figure present in the commercial has switched from a previous member of the family that contributed to her mother’s joy by creating something beautiful for her (the hairpin) to a partaker in a kind of initiation in the art of keeping oneself beautiful and that of learning fine manners and acquiring fine tastes from an early age.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The commercials analysed revolve around some key elements. From the diachronic perspective, there are some aspects that have undergone a surprising change. While the setting in the commercials from the year 2016 aims to replicate an aristocratic background and tell the story of Princess Sissi retaining core aspects from the habits of the historical character, the commercials from 2017 to 2023 set the scene in a more familiar context, that of our present time, in which the focus is on the female character – a fashion designer with a slender figure who is caught in the hectic preparation of her fashion show, while the husband prepares her a snack with Sissi products and the daughter herself, following in the steps of her mother, creates flowers resembling the famous diamond edelweiss hairpins of Sissi. The commercials aim to preserve the aristocratic tastes and the desire to eat healthy food in order to stay in good shape.

The symbols related to the domestic context – from royal salons with princes and princess to more modern dwelling places exuding a similar air of aristocracy – reveal the intentions of the advertisers to direct the preferences of the audience towards embracing a sort of social sophistication.

The diachronic fluctuations are obvious when it comes to the female character. From the princess’s white gown to the casual clothes worn while working, the stage black clothes for a fashion show, and finally to a red dressing gown and a red evening dress in the final commercial are telling of the intentions of the producers.

From the semiotic point of view, all the elements present in the commercials tell a story beyond the one that is being verbalized. The colours themselves need decoding from the point of view of their role in advertising. The switch from the white gown from the initial commercials, which can be easily connected with the typical dresses Sissi appeared donning in most paintings and which conveys a message of purity, safety and creativity, to the simple black one in the fashion show sending a message of strength, authority and stability, and finally to the bright red gowns in the most recent commercial, which is associated with passion and excitement, may be an indicator of the readiness to align with subtly evolving social trends. The consistency is revealed by the fact that these are also the colours on the packaging of the products from the Sissi brand. From a marketing perspective, black is usually used by brands that offer luxury products, white invites to a consideration of the essence of the products while red is closely related to passion and is said to stimulate appetite.

The language suffers a sort of limitation due to the shortened time span allotted to commercials. However, the rhetorical devices, especially the rhyming words in the song that acts as an echo slogan relying on the force of rhyming in Romanian (*Nu ți-am spus îndeajuns cât te iubesc/ Cât apreciez./ Ce e fin, prețuim./ Ce-i sublim, iubim./ Când simți și crezi, apreciezi./ Ce ți-e drag, mi-e drag./ Mă atragi, te atrag./ E real, nu visezi, apreciez.*) acts as an activator of cognition and emotionality, possessing in its simplicity the force of being memorable precisely due to the short, resounding emotional states it conveys. The slogan “consists of a word, syntagm, or sentence that completes the main ad text, repeating the main motive and rationale” and acts as an “echo phrase” (Shirinboyevna M. D., 2020). “Apreciaza” / “appreciate” emerges like a constant impetus for a society who does not know how to do that or who does not do it very often. The word acquires an educational value as it positively incites the consumers to embrace an attitude of appreciation and of manifesting it practically by offering what is best to the loved ones, being confident and convinced that people can achieve more when they are encouraged. The words that consistently appear in the commercials belong to the same semantic field: *fine, finest, sublime* referring both to the product as well as to the people that consume it. Similarly, the verbs revolve around the same semantic sphere of positive feelings: *appreciate, love, lure, value, care, support* turning the entire advertising discourse into a motivational one able

to restore core values in the society while persuading people to consume the finest of products.

## CONCLUSIONS

The meat commercials advertising Sissi products focus primarily on presenting a product of the finest quality, appealing mainly to women, especially to those who may have a model in the Empress Sissi and favour a slender figure while being socially active. In line with the philosophy promoted is the information regarding the nutritional value of the products: lean meat, 1.50% fat content, and no E-additives, which anchors the message into a continuing social trend of keeping fit and tuned to the changing consumption trends. The reduced time span brings the products into limelight while sacrificing the narratives that add life and mystery to their promotion.

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