

INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

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AGING, SCIENCE AND COSMETICS ADVERTISING. ETERNITY IN A DROP OF CREAM

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ABSTRACT

In this piece of research we deal with discourse about aging that is promoted in anti-aging cosmetics. Using the methodology of the Ground Theory and specific software for content analysis, we analyzed the advertising discourse of the largest consumer products in this market of beauty. As a result of our work, we identified the structure of the advertising discourse and we can conclude that the promotion of non-aging makes heavy use of metaphors related to Science and Nature as contemporary ideology.

KEYWORDS

Advertising – aging - communication – science - cosmetics

Envejecimiento, ciencia y publicidad de cosméticos. La eternidad en una gota de crema

RESUMEN

En esta investigación nos ocupamos del discurso sobre la vejez que se promociona en los productos cosméticos anti-envejecimiento. Utilizando la metodología propia de la Ground Theory y software específico para el análisis de contenido, analizamos el discurso publicitario de los productos de mayor consumo en este sector del mercado de la belleza. Como resultado de nuestro trabajo identificamos la estructura del discurso publicitario y podemos concluir que la promoción del no-envejecimiento hace uso intensivo de metáforas asociadas a la Ciencia y la Naturaleza para su conformación en ideología contemporánea.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Publicidad - envejecimiento - comunicación - ciencia - cosméticos.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aging and disintegration of any organism is just a natural biological process that involves the progressive loss of homeostatic capacity of organs and ends with its disappearance. However, death, and the mythology associated with the promises of transcendence of our biological limits, is a historical and cultural product that complies with the rules and habits of coexistence of all societies. Fear of death is inherent to any person at all times and civilizations, but the current form to address it and how aging is dealt with is typical of our times and the result of postmodern culture.

To characterize our contemporaneity, and in this particular paper, we find the theoretical positions departing from historical materialism and defining it as an era of emptiness with predominance of individualism and narcissism (Lypovetsky, 2003) driven from the cultural industry (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1994) to be interesting. The promises of the liberation of Myself intended to mitigate the permanent discomfort caused by the tension between Eros and Thanatos in culture (Freud, 1930), are no longer formulated by promoting humanism but by consuming and with the support of techno-science (Habermas, 1984). Our postmodern culture (Lyotard, 1989) promotes the increasing systemic risk (Beck, 2002) within a society of the spectacle (Debord, 1999) that prints its own identity codes (Castells, 1997) and its regime of truth about life and death (Foucault, 2001). And the mythic discourse of advertising is its form of representation and legitimation par excellence.

Obviously, concern for physical degradation and maintenance and management of beauty and appearance is nothing new and is part of the history and culture of any civilization. Body ointments and makeup products even accompanied the deceased in pharaonic tombs to be used in eternity (Hardy & Rollinson, 2012) and medical-cosmetic industry was well developed already at the time of the pharaohs and during the Greek-Roman period. The sale of mineral and organic products for the care and beautification of the skin, treating wrinkles or imperfections or simply highlighting beauty have always been a very profitable business and a vanguard industry (Oumeish, 2001), with great influence on the cultural codes and ontologies and promises associated with death and eternal youth.

In our contemporary culture, there are prevailing narratives of decrepitude and limiting stereotypes associated with aging, which are assigned negative values, while the positive values are focused on promoting health and active participation in life. Older people are imposed to manage the risks associated with old age from all areas, and strong advertising pressure forces them to do everything possible not to look as old as they are. And if the dominant cultural paradigm that promotes the extension

of youth throughout life is not assumed, tensions to maintain self-esteem against the pressure of the stereotypes of the media to tackle vulnerability, redefine the meaning of sexuality, plan retirement, etc. are huge (Calasanti & King, 2005; Katz & Marshall, 2003).

Today, looking young or mature determines someone to be labeled as a healthy or sick person (Holstein & Minkler, 2003). In the era of post-capitalism, the new paradigm of successful aging is based on control and freedom of choice of individuals to shape, mold, design and choose their bodies (Giddens, 1994). Becoming more successful today means to delay slow down, the natural process of physical and mental decay, and aging nowadays is treated as a pathological problem, as a disease (Coupland, 2009, Mykytyn, 2008; Vincent, 2006; Casalanti, 2005), and the elderly are blamed, and even made ashamed and punished, for not aging well, which forces them to take a youthful attitude to the enormous pressure exercised by the media (Perry & Wolburg, 2011). And promoting successful aging and non-aging as an ideology (Binstock, 2004; Katz, 2000) shapes our everyday metaphors within this new contemporary cultural discourse resulting from the convergence of the medical-scientific knowledge and technology with the advertising and public communication of science and pseudo-science.

Aging, femininity and science in advertising.

As was noted by Barthes (1983), advertising tends to address the depth of being, in an operation of turning the body into a subject proper to our time and that, in what we are dealing with, understands people and especially women as a germinating circuit to be treated from the roots with scientific technology, and whose rhetoric is simply designed to sell products (Barthes, 1977). And it currently operates in a close alliance with science, essential to be a strong competing sector where you constantly need to differentiate products, which is proving very profitable and fruitful in the specific case of anti-aging products.

The discourse of advertising products for skin care and beauty has been, for some time, indissolubly uniting cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries and causing differences to dilute more (Giacomoni, 2005), promoting a multimillionaire and expanding industry (EMBO Reports, 2008) which is now expanding its business horizons with the creation of what is now known as "cosmeceutic" products (Smirnova, 2012), operating at the limits of legality knowing that cosmetic products are subject to much less stringent legislation (in Europe and Regulation EC No 1223/2009 and amendments) than pharmaceutical ones, which need a costly and lengthy clinical trial process and quality control before they can be marketed. It is also significant, in this regard, the strong promotion that is being printed by some multinationals that have merged such as Nestle and L'Oreal to market the newly created "nutricosmetics", nutritional supplements that promise cosmetic effects and certainly acquire soon much more presence in the consumer market and in contemporary cultural discourses.

Aging is associated with appearance, especially the perception of appearance (Guthrie et al. 2008) and a significant gap has been found between perceived and biological age, reaching up to 11 years in American women (Gunn et al, 2015), considering that 38 years is the height of their beauty, as resulted in the macro-survey carried out on a large group of Americans who were asked about their attitudes toward cosmetic and plastic surgery and their perceptions of beauty (AARP, 2001). That is, although you can identify common traits of age related to sun exposure, smoking, or dental care, aging, like death, is a cultural product (Muisse & Desmarais, 2010; Vincent, 2008; Gullete, 2004).

As determined in some studies, the alliance between advertising and science is evident in promoting cosmetic and anti-aging products (Ten Arroyo, 2014; Ringrow, 2014; Yllane et al 2009; Dodds et al, 2008; Chen, 2006), and all business strategies are aimed at women as preferred consumers. In this sense, pressure being exerted on aging in women is very significant, women being also instilled a great deal of moral guilt by associating maturity to loss of femininity and, therefore, loss of sexual interest and reproductive viability, unlike the case of men who still have certain maturity associated with positive values for experience and wisdom (Furman, 1997). Femininity is associated with youth, firmness, sweetness and body wellness, a characterization strongly answered in feminist literature (Murnen & Smolak, 2009; Rubin et al 2004; Negrin, 2002) and, unfortunately, still being far from improvement. In an alleged global and multicultural "study" recently developed by the multinational McCann and shamelessly entitled "The Truth About Beauty", the purpose of which is to serve as a manual for establishing successful advertising strategies, among other niceties it defines women archetypally depending on whether they are "Powerful Peacocks", "Seductive Foxes," "Social Butterflies", "Graceful Swans" or "Comfortable Cats" and warns of the dangers of skepticism "Whilst every woman has an inner dreamer that desperately wants to hope and dream when it comes to beauty, she has an inner cynic past. Fuelled by a more transparent online conversation, the inner cynic has become a little noisier in recent times. "Totally unacceptable, but these are the times we live in, and is the speech that the alliance of the cosmetic industry with advertising and techno-scientific discourse promotes and which unfolds its power of cultural influence.

And it is in this context, in this new biosocial order (Katz & Gish, 2015) proper to late-capitalism in the medical and cosmetic industry dedicated to the treatment of the supposed pathology meant by aging, and directed especially to women as consumers and objects of consumption, it has the farming field ripe to promote sales of treatments and products that can achieve the miracle of eternal youth, and science and advertising are its allies in the construction of contemporary discourse about aging and death.

We understand, in this sense and following Ellen (2011), that advertising a product by using science as an argument can be understood as a "boundary object" (Star and Griesemer, 1989) as a mediator between different worlds susceptible to specific

interpretations within it (Latour, 2005). Thus, the description and advertising marketing strategy of anti-aging products using the terminology of science can be treated as a liminal object, and genuine vehicle for public communication of science and pseudoscience as the use of scientific discourse in advertising is far from being adequate. In a comprehensive analysis of advertisements using medical-scientific terminology developed by the UK Advertising Standards Authority in 2007, it is determined that cosmetics, and more specifically skin and anti-aging creams, argued or promised falsehoods mostly such as skin regeneration, repaired with the use of collagens, their ability to neutralize environmental damage with the use of antioxidants, or promises to improve circulation and strengthening immunity. The study concluded with a view to future advertising to promote anti-aging products that could be boosted by the cosmetic industry that "future problems with skin creams could revolve around claims referring to DNA stress, environmental damage, the delaying of wrinkles, cell renewal, cell regeneration, and stem-cell-derived products. Ads for new products seen since the survey included such claims." (ASA, 2008).

Ellison (2014) identifies visions that promote advertising discourse on aging in its study on the US market. According to the author, and following Williamson (1978), many advertisements characterize aging from the essence of nature as an impulse contrary to life that, with the help and the purity of science, can be enhanced to limit or make visible age marks disappear and get absolute beauty and undying youth and primal eternity, promoting consumption with activation of narratives associated with the desire for immortality.

In this discursive strategy, the use of scientific terminology takes advantage that, from common knowledge, Science is still addressed from the positive philosophy and is considered an instrument of control over nature, a neutral and sterile source of truth and a precision process and it facilitates progress in general rather than interpret it as a problematic and complex object (Kuhn, 1962; Feyerabend, 1975). Thus, when a product is classified as a result of scientific activity it is automatically labeled with those values and credibility, while they spread a type of seemingly intelligible discourse that is familiar to anyone but that very few people understand in its full extent and most people do not know well what it means, but we believe we know as they are so common, everyday terms.

2. OBJECTIVES

Ultimately, advertising is promoting commercial public communication of science and very specific cultural habits using a metaphorical speech that is shaping our everyday lives (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the era of technological innovation, femininity is negatively built against aging and science as a positive agent capable of treating this disease that means getting older. For our part, and in this sense, we want

to address the metaphorical discourse that promotes advertising of new anti-aging cosmeceutic products.

3. METHODOLOGY FOR ANALYSIS

In our paper, we have selected a total of 22 products, 19 of which are vanguard cosmeceutics marketed as anti-aging solutions, 14 out of which correspond to high-end lines of multinationals and 5 are products at an affordable price. Also, we have analyzed three nutricosmetic products which are also marketed as anti-aging (Annex I).

For analysis, we used MAXQDA12 software and the methodology proper to Grounded Theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) in which there has been a first compilation of terms used in the texts in order to, from them, form a set categories. After standardizing the terms actually present in the analyzed texts, we codified them and, after thorough review of the obtained, categories, they have been readjusted to form a coherent discourse that can ultimately result in a theoretical model.

4. DISCUSSION

In the round of initial analysis, in which terminology standardization and an initial coding have occurred, a set of discursive categories impinging upon all the symptoms of aging as an argumentative procedure and placing particular emphasis on aspects related to the essence of Nature (essence, biology) have been obtained, with a significant presence of terms related to Science and (chemical, compound, efficiency, complexity, vanguard). We also found a persistent ontological metaphor (brightness), all framed in a mechanistic discourse (cause) with results that affect the idea of immortality based on appearance (appearance, regeneration).



Figure 1. Discursive categories

In a more detailed analysis, we show the type of speech with which the aging process becomes pathology from the identification of the alleged symptoms determining it. Although sometimes shown as a general symptom of an aging face, it especially affects specific symptoms. Wrinkles are the most worrying sign of this supposed pathology, but also the contours and lines, stains, expression, tone, firmness, irregularities or pores. there are also some more metaphorical terms as opacity, dirt or impurities.



Figure 2. Symptoms

The use of nature-related values is clearly shown with the use of many terms involving the products in speeches of authenticity validated by a supposed natural primal purity (essential extract), combining natural ingredients with a few doses of exoticism (soybean, oil, alga, ginkgo, shi).



Figure 3. Nature

However, the essential nature is only an effective pretext that works well as a magical and mythical speech but reaches its effectiveness in collusion with the discourse of science, the use of which is very significant and extended to the whole of the analyzed texts. Thus, treatment of cells, use of collagen and vitamins, knowledge of DNA or creating chemical compounds in fashion such as hyaluronic acid, are shown as achievements of science and technology that serve as an effective business strategy.



Figure 4. Science

As a strategy to alleviate symptoms, they use procedures that, with the help of technology, address the issue by using a metaphorical warlike speech (combat, fight) that must be persistent and durable (hard, continuous), besides encouraging the natural essence of the body (stimulates, potentiates, frees, interior) and be flexible and effective (adapts, quickly melts, global).



Figure 5. Procedure

With the help of Science and the conclusive form of action, to return to the essence of Nature and to promote the idea of Eternity seem accessible, making easier to obtain benefits that combine the concrete results on symptoms (appearance, firmness, strength, density, elasticity, smoothing) with different metaphorical speeches, some of an ontological nature (brightness) and others targeted to return to the natural essence (regeneration, reduction, repair, restoration, balance, vitality), masking the really tested effects of these products (hydration, sensation).



Figure 6. Benefits

Especially in this sense, it is interesting how science is used to hold the discursive strategy with particular emphasis on the values associated with research and expert knowledge and, above all, clinical testing and statistical results.

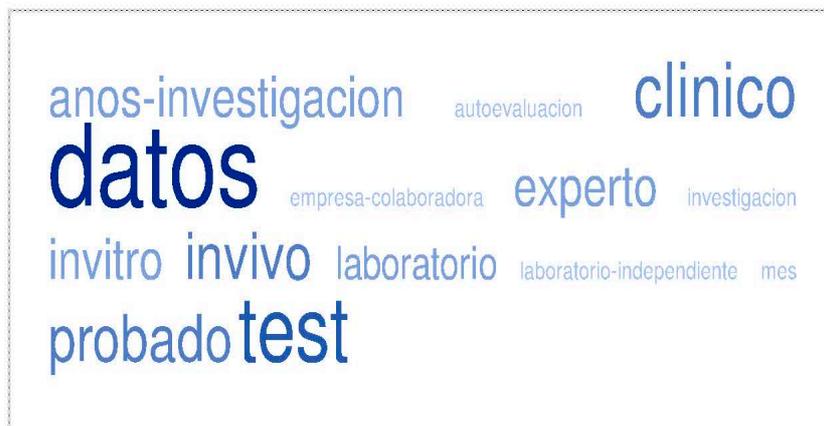


Figure 7. Efficacy test

5. CONCLUSIONS-RESULTS

Product advertising is displayed as a relevant object of study to determine the contemporary discursive models. As our research shows, the narratives associated with aging as a disease and the promise of eternal youth and immortality can be clearly identified in advertising speeches of all cosmetic anti-aging products that were analyzed, which are the most consumed in this sector of the beauty market. Similarly, you can see the persistent use of mythical discourses associated with the essence and purity of Nature, and the participation of Science as an instrument of control and domination that can transcend the natural process of biological degeneration. The use of technology and scientific terminology is recurrent, and the use of discursive metaphors of warlike character is also common, in line with what has been shown in other papers in this regard (Ten Arroyo, 2014; Ellison, 2014; Chen, 2006).

In this sense, the result of the applied methodology based on the Ground Theory as a result of this, we can draw some theoretical conclusions about it. In the aging process, there is prevalence of narratives about decrepitude and stereotypes of limitation associated with old age, to which negative values are assigned, while positive values are focused on Nature and Science, promoting a discourse of total war against anything that does not represent youth and promotes immortality.

In short, and in conclusion, the promotion of successful aging and non-aging as an ideology shapes our everyday metaphors within this new contemporary cultural discourse resulting from the convergence of medical-scientific knowledge and technology with advertising and public communication of science and pseudo-science.

No significant differences have been found in those strategies promoting different products, despite there are substantial price differences between them. But if we believe that in the near future we will see a greater association between cosmetics and pharmaceuticals and intense promotion of nutricosmetic products as a new business line to be developed by the competing multinationals that are positioning in the emerging sector. In this new discursive trend in cosmetics advertising, they are already promoting the internalization of both the symptoms and the procedures and benefits of the products having these characteristics, so that the exterior becomes a problem of overall health, not just of a physiological but also psychological nature, grounded in the mythical discourse of natural essence and scientific control.

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Annex I. Analyzed products.

high Gama

Biotherm - Blue Therapy Accelerate

Chanel - Le Lift

Clarins - Multi-Intensive

Clinique - Repairwear Uplifting Firming

Collistar - Magnifica Plus

Dior - Capture Totale
Estee Lauder - Resilience Lift
Guerlain - Abeille Royal
La Colline - Lift & Light
Lancaster - Total Age Correction
Lancome - Absolue Night
Sensai - Ultimate
Shiseido - Avanced Super Revitalizing
Sisley - Global Anti-Age

Low cost

Bella Aurora - Splendor 10
Loreal - Revitalift Laser X3
Nivea - Vital Multi-Active
Olay - Regenerist
Ponds - Age Miracle

Nutricosmetics

180TheConcept - Antienvejecimiento rv6+h1+h6
Inneov - Firmeza +45
Phergal - E'Lifeixir Essenciall

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