TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO
LA INTERACCIÓN ENTRE CONSUMO, MERCADO Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA IDENTIDAD
The Construction Of Masculine Identity Through Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This research is focused on the idea that marketing conditions identity by using a series of gendered images based on different portraits of bodies. Taking as a point of departure the construction of masculinity through these constructed images; this work intends to build a cultural analysis of advertisements which have the male body as the focus of the camera. When developing this cultural analysis, it has been necessary to select thematic aspects which connect the construction of masculine identity with some other categories different from gender, such as race and social class, in order to demonstrate how marketing is constantly influenced by the clash of identities in conflict. The aim of this paper is to show how mass media and advertisement use the male body to create different stereotypes of being a man in the contemporary world.

KEY WORDS: Masculinity, marketing and identity, language of advertisement, muscular bodies, masculinity and social class, masculinity and sports, masculinity and black race.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo se centra en la idea de que la publicidad condiciona la identidad por medio del uso de imágenes determinadas por el género y basadas en diversas representaciones del cuerpo. Tomando como punto de partida la construcción de la masculinidad a través de esas imágenes construidas, el trabajo pretende crear un análisis cultural de los anuncios publicitarios con cuerpos masculinos como centro del objetivo. Al desarrollar este análisis cultural, ha sido necesario seleccionar aspectos temáticos que conectaran la construcción de la identidad masculina con otras categorías diferentes al género, tales como la raza y la clase social, para demostrar cómo la publicidad constantemente viene influenciada por el choque de identidades en conflicto. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es mostrar cómo los medios de comunicación y los anuncios usan el cuerpo masculino para crear estereotipos diversos de cómo ser un hombre en el mundo contemporáneo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Masculinidad, publicidad e identidad, el lenguaje de los anuncios, cuerpos musculados, masculinidad y clase social, masculinidad y deporte, masculinidad y raza negra.
1. INTRODUCTION:

What does it mean to be a man nowadays? I am not a man so it is rather difficult for me to give an answer to such a profound question. The responses may vary from people from different genders, cultural backgrounds and social status. If there is something that can be assured with no doubt is the wide variety of statements that different people would make in trying to give an accurate answer. But one of the most definitive pressures in those differing answers may be linked to the role of marketing in such different contexts. And I wonder how marketing does influence the construction of the male identity and how it frames the conception masculinity is viewed both by men and women.

The construction of identity is a widely explored topic within the fields of Sociology, Humanistic, Philosophy and Cultural Studies, but it is not that common in English Philology as a field of study itself as far as marketing is concerned. Marketing is indeed a crucial tool in the construction of different categories of identity and manliness is perceived in different ways by the spectators of different epochs and backgrounds, and especially in today’s Western world where visual images in consumer culture remarks the significance of the physical appearance. Thus, masculinity might be conceived as a combination of various culturally framed performances.

In this paper I will explore how marketing helps to shape and construct the masculine identity intertwining aspects of gender, race and social class. In order to do so, I will use tobacco ads to show how the idea of manliness has been built over the dichotomy between male and female genders and their respective roles within the Western society. Then, I will move on to the field of sports, and more precisely basket, to explore how masculinity has been framed within the boundaries of a divinized muscular body of the black male bodybuilder by means of differentiation from the white male body; to finish with the development of the idea about the spornosexuals filling the screens of everyday life (in television, magazines, advertisements…) to assert masculinity on the basis of the macho image as object, target and projection of desire, aim for which I will use adverts from the footballer Cristiano Ronaldo’s underwear brand.
To explore the issue with such variants, I will relate social and cultural theories from various sociologists, philosophers and philologists who have been acclaimed critics and activists such as:

a) Michael Foucault and his ideas about cultural identities;
b) Teresa De Lauretis and her concept of gender separated from sex;
c) Louis Althusser and his approach to Anthropology;
d) Edward T. Hall and his theory of invented categories;
e) Stuart Hall and his approach to Sociology and Cultural Studies;
f) Edward Said and his theory about ‘otherness’ in the construction of orientalism;
g) Laura Mulvey and her argumentation about the gendered gaze;
h) Steve Neale and his ideas about the exhibition of male bodies;
i) Todd Reeser and his studies of the masculine identity.

And I will mention too the works of some salient journalists like Suzanne Moore, Mark Simpson and Randolph G. Potts and their developments in social and cultural fields.

Contemporary fitness discourses tend to redefine conceptions of masculinity and femininity by stating what the desirable looks of the human body are. A new framing of the men’s bodies is being created and men are at the same time invited and inviting to offer a desiring look. The novelty of the “new man” opens a debate of what is considered masculine and marketing plays with this changing discourse to offer the spectator a whole concept that fits their expectations.
2. THE MASCULINE IMAGE BUILT UPON TOBACCO MARKETING.

To explain how marketing influences the construction of gender, it is necessary at first instance to define what we understand by gender. In order to do so, I would like to take Teresa de Lauretis’ study on gender (DE LAURETIS, 1987: 2) in which she suggests that the sexual difference relies on the difference of women in respect to men, of the feminine in respect to the masculine. For De Lauretis, the difference in gender is not a result of the natural biology or socialization but of the effects that cultural discourses and different levels of signification have upon a society.

Hence, the author considers that gender is not a particular feature of the bodies whose existence is bound to the human being, but a game played on the bodies, beliefs and social relationships through a complex political technology. Foucault (FOUCAULT, 1978) calls this interconnected system ‘Technology of sex’ and explains that the concept of gender is the product of combining various social technologies (such as cinema and advertisements), institutionalized discourses and daily practices.

De Lauretis argues that gender is a mere representation, not just a biological fact but a representation with significant social and subjective implications that shape the material lives of individuals. Thus, the representation of gender is its own construction, which evolves parallel to the evolution of History. And that construction is built among media, schools, government policies and families. It is what Althusser called the ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’.

Hence, if the term gender implies a relationship built between one individual and various entities, and if it does not represent only the individual appearance, it does imply a social relationship that is subject to the constant influence that we receive from the social media surrounding us. A media in which marketing performs an important role in the construction of the gendered identity, playing as well with the different categories of male and female within the very concept of gender.

1 In his Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation) (ALTHUSSER, 1977) Althusser examines the way in which certain realities presented as institutions (religious, educational, political, legal, cultural, trade and communications apparatuses) conform a body that is not immediately visible and that functions ‘by ideology’, spreading the ideology of ‘the ruling class’ among the citizens of a State.
In this chapter, I will explain how marketing helps to shape different categories of masculinity using the once widespread belief that harmful attitudes were a ‘guy thing’. Smoking is a good example of those men’s wickedness and it is clearly seen in tobacco ads from the last decades of the twentieth century. No matter the man’s profession, his social class or whereabouts, a virile man is one who smokes and drinks alcohol. As male bodies are stronger to bear the harmful effects of these drugs, marketing used this stereotype to exploit the masculine trend of wickedness.

The best example of this virile image is that of the cowboy’s: brimming with testosterone and self-confidence, the indomitable cowboy was a tough wild guy that fought against the savages that threatened to destroy the order of the city. Marlboro, a mark previously focused on women, used Leo Burnett’s images to advertise its cigarettes in 1954. Its distinctive and colourful red packaging ended up by defining a whole universe around a myth, the Marlboro Man; myth that lasted 50 years until the restrictive advertising laws of the 1990s. Those were the times in which the cowboy series razed on television and Western movies did the same on the big screen. Marlboro took the most of the cowboy boom and it turned to be the most sold mark of tobacco during the 1950s.

Figure 1: The indomitable cowboy’s virile image

Source: Adimensional.com.mx
The *Marlboro Man* stands for the safari-man who is able to overcome any obstacle. For the American society, the cowboy is like the knight in the European tales: the national epic hero who frames the construction of his nation, America. In his figure it is embodied the ideal of a very strong and virile masculinity: the strong man, resistant to any sort of attack, a man of action who is only worried about labour concerns, which were no others than to chase the bad guy, to put in jail the criminal and to save the good ones.

These cowboy ads that are portrayed in Figures 1 and 2 show the rudeness of the man of law who works hard to keep order. The marketing of that time used strength, passion and power, masculine attributes par excellence, to launch the image of the tough guy with the harsh look and constrained face, as if they were in constant vigilance.

Figure 2: *The Marlboro Man*

Edward T. Hall uses Jeffrey Weeks’s concept of invented categories to define masculine identities and claims that “they are the product of the cultural meanings attached to certain attributes, capacities, dispositions and forms of conduct at given historical moments.” (HALL, 1990: 301). Thus, one very influential role model that created another mythic resource for dominant conceptions of masculinity during the 1940s and 1950s was *film noir*, a Hollywood genre film popularized by Humphrey Bogart and his detective roles. Its conventions include a compromised protagonist and a *femme fatale* with whom he becomes involved. The man shown is a tough hero with a flawed character, sometimes neurotic, alienated or shabby, but with a number of
redeeming qualities. He is attractive, but certainly not the ideal model of masculinity. With a sloppy appearance and no other ambitions in life but to solve terrible crimes that sometimes carry him into situations of extreme danger, it is difficult to interpret such a discordant conception of masculinity.

Though the Lucky Strike’s advert that appears in Figure 3 is from 1970, it uses the slogan “the flavour of the best times” with a sense of nostalgia about the past, referring to that era in which the controversial hero stood as the ideal of the attractive man. A Lucky Strike’s marketing renewed the concept of manliness, a sensitive man who cannot resist the cunning skills of the *femme fatale* and whose harmful attitudes are the only way to escape from the anxious reality. But the main male attributes are still the same: the mighty man with a deep look, for whom emotions are to be kept inwardly and whose concerns focus on chasing the criminals and maintaining order by applying the law.

Figure 3: Humphrey Bogart’s detective role created a new representation of manliness.

Source: Articulo.MercadoLibre.com.ar
Humphrey Bogart serves as the representation of the male gender. The marketing around his figure assigns meaning to the sociocultural construction of the men of one era. His character in movies and ads gives identity, value, prestige and status to the men of certain social classes and helps to establish the social hierarchy and the dominant position of men over women.

According to De Lauretis, for someone who is represented and who represents himself as masculine or feminine, the gender representation implies the assumption of the combination of the meaning’s effects. Thus, Lucky Strike’s label uses Humphrey Bogart’s image to give meaning to its product, indirectly giving meaning to the process of identification of man with certain manly values and attributing other features to women.

Related to the manly attributes embodied by Humphrey Bogart and his attachment to the *femme fatale*, it is interesting to take a look at the following advert in Figure 4 in which the label Tipale clearly sets a difference between men and women.

Figure 4: Tobacco and sexual dominance

Source: DailyMail.co.uk
The slogan ‘blow it in her face and she’ll follow you anywhere’ is a firm assessment that smoking is such a mannish thing that any woman will fall head over heels for the man who blows the smoke at her. Moreover, the verb ‘to blow’ has sexual connotations and the act of ejaculation entails turning the woman into the object of possession and dominance. In this advert, the figure of the woman is clearly objectified and sexualized, totally dependent on the superiority of the man and his will.

Eva Victoria Lema Trillo, in her thesis The Masculine and Feminine Models of Gender in Hollywood (LEMA TRILLO, 2003) explains how Hollywood films only offer a position for the male spectator, being the masculine perspective the motor of the look. He is the one who controls the events and the woman is a passive presence, a mere decorative element. The woman, who is exhibited in a passive position, makes the function of the stimulus and the decoy. Marketing contributes to this sexualized gender role of the woman, whose eroticism is bound to the male protagonist, by making the male spectator identify himself with the protagonist, and hence he indirectly possesses the woman too. Let’s take a look at Figure 5 to analyse how this possession takes place in a symbolic level:

Figure 5: The sailor and the dichotomy between men and women

Source: Pinterest.com
Figure 5 shows a Lucky Strike’s advert in which the brand uses another profession, the sailor, different from the man of law and the actor, to expose a different kind of masculinity, though it is as well built upon the dichotomy between men and women.

The advert is related to the idea mentioned above of the man as a possessor of the power over the woman, objectifying the female figure as an item of sexual pleasure. In it we find a sailor smoking and looking at a woman placed at his feet. The lightness of her clothing indicates that she may be a woman of a low morale, and thus she might be out of the social rules and mores. Thus, she is presented too with a cigarette. Her feminization is only built upon her sexual value, pointed out by her heels and short jumpsuit. The advert plays with the ideal of the sailor having one woman at each harbour, a man whose masculinity is defined by his independence and freedom over his sex.

Marketing plays with the position of the sailor sitting and the woman laying down beside him, being the object of the sailor’s glance. The slogan ‘do you inhale?’ has a clear sexual overtone. Just as the previous Tipalet’s advert turns the man into the creator of the puff and the transmitter of the message of dominance, this Lucky Strike’s publicity turns the woman into the recipient of the man’s exhalation.

The continuation of the slogan ‘Certainly… 7 out of 10 smokers inhale knowingly… the other 3 inhale unknowingly’ reinforces the construction of the male identity upon the sexual domination. It suggests that those 7 conscious smokers are men while the other unconscious ones are women. The woman in Figure 5 smokes in a double sense being aware of what she does, but it doesn’t matter as long as she is an outsider of society. The rest of the women ‘smoke’ unconsciously, that is to say, they ‘inhale’ without being aware of what it really means: they are in a subordinate position toward men, whose masculinity in this case is not built by aims of their physical strength and their irresistible and intimidating glance but for the security they have on themselves and their reproductive system.
Hall also highlights the anomalous feature of mass culture by which there is a cultural space designated explicitly as ‘women’s’, while there is barely parallel category for men:

“Feminists argue that this is because in western society the norm of what counts as human is provided by the masculine and only women’s culture needs to be marked as specifically gendered. Gender only becomes an issue if women as a specific category are in question, when they become discussible as a deviation from the norm.” (HALL, 1990: 345)

Moreover, it is interesting how male characters in media and advertisements are usually shown as archetypes that tell the rest of the world how a man should be. The ideal of the tough guy in the 1950s shifted to the family man during the 1960s, figure that changed again toward the disco boy in the 1970s, where the exhibition of the male body started to be an erotic spectacle. Later on, the ideal would change during the 1980s to see the rebirth of the rude man, a masculine model that would give way to the shabby and informal man of the 1990s, which would again evolve, this time to the metrosexual of the 21st century.

This gendered distinction and evolution of the different masculine models can be appreciated in the next advert of Lucky Strike’s label. Except for the woman of easy virtue, who is considered to be out of the social constraints, the smoking trend was not meant to be enjoyed by women, who were seen as pure fragile entities whose concerns were mainly focused in the household and raising the children.

Figure 6 shows another Lucky Strike’s ad of 1960 in which we can see how Lucky’s marketing sets again a clear distinction between male and female roles: in a hard-working afternoon in the garden, the man stops for a while to enjoy a time-out, resting in a shady place, with a cooling drink; a break in which ‘Luckies taste the best’.
By contrast, the woman has not stopped her work. She is placed behind him, arms in her hips, her expression makes it clear that his attitude is totally reprehensible. She wears gloves because her hands are too delicate to work in the garden without protection, while the man’s strength lies in his nude arms and his relax and self-confident posture.

Masculinity is once again built upon the superiority of the man over the woman: he has the authority to enjoy a spontaneous moment of auto satisfaction, he is allowed to stop working to lay and rest, he is happy in that precious moment of oblivion that a cigarette can give to him; whereas the woman stands at a second level, probably wondering why she has been left alone in that tedious duty.

Moreover, the interconnection the colour red establishes among various elements within the advert helps to make it clear that smoking is a guy thing: the slogan of the firm and the drawing on the cigarette packet are red, just like the lawnmower and the man’s t-shirt. The colour red becomes a symbol for the man domination, just like in
the first two adverts of the *Marlboro Man* it was related to the ideas of strength and power.

Hall states that “middle-class men’s masculinity was not only different from middle-class femininity but was also defined in a position of dominance over it” and he goes further, asserting that the power relations mediating gender relations point to a recognizable system of patriarchy (HALL, 1990: 300); patriarchy that is clearly shown in the following Camels’ advert of Figure 7 in which the spectator is shown the family man. Just like in Figure 6 the woman is placed behind the man, reinforcing her non-importance in a position of inferiority; Figure 7 marks the power relationships of control, the sexual division of work, and the patriarchal authority, practices that are realized from the point of view of the gendered roles.

Figure 7: Marketing in the patriarchal society.

Source: LaMagaComunica.com
Like in the precedent adverts, smoking is meant to be for men. Thus, there is no better gift for the father’s day than a packet of Camels cigarettes. The man appears in a suit, holding his jacket with a gesture of self-sufficiency. His glasses and tie are representative of an important social status, a man with class. His facial gesture shows determination: he is secure of meeting his obligations in respect to the family sustenance. The woman appears at a second level with the children, clearly her role as a housewife is less important. As in previous ads, the red colour helps to create the atmosphere of power surrounding the male figure.

The social context in which cultural productions are inscribed is crucial to shape the concept of masculinity. Each historical epoch defines what it means to be a man, representing and constructing masculinity in different ways. As Hall points out, to examine how the gender relations work in the construction of identity, we also need to explore the relations operating between different formations of masculinity.

“We need to move away from a picture of the field of gender relations as always divided in the same way around the poles of masculine domination and feminine subordination. Rather, a more plural model of power relations is needed – one which grasps the multiple lines of power which position different masculinities and feminities in relation to each other at different times.” (HALL, 1990: 300)

Marketing is indeed a crucial tool in the construction of different categories of identity. Manliness is perceived in different ways by the spectators of different epochs, and the way marketing sells a harmful trend, smoking, as the manly thing that unites different categories of masculinity is proof of its manipulative power over the consumer society.
3. HOW DOES MARKETING HELP TO SHAPE A RACIAL IDENTITY?

The construction of identity does not only have to do with gender but also with race. Stuart Hall\(^2\), in a lecture called *Race: The Floating Signifier* given at the Goldsmith's College in London, defines race as a discursive construct which helps to organize the main classification systems of human societies, including gender and class. Hall argues that, despite the fact that scientists have agreed that biological race does not exist, race thinking of all sorts persists. Hall (HALL, 1997) states that, as there are no fixed identities, any cultural practice plays a role in the construction of identity.

In this chapter I want to focus on how marketing plays an important role in the construction of racial identity as far as it sends messages intended to be read by certain groups of people embedded in a certain culture. To do so, I want to extrapolate Said’s theory of Orientalism to the black race, using Afro-American sport men as examples, to develop the idea of how marketing influences in the shaping of the masculine identity by projecting an “other” to the spectator – an “other” that, in this case, shows an asserting personality that frightens and attracts at the same time due to the strength that emanates from a sharpened glance and a firm body, like stones that have suffered the beats of generations but have remained standing and moving on and that now are shown as heroes for their tireless fight against racism and stereotypes.

In the Introduction of *Orientalism*, Said (SAID, 1977: 25) defines the term ‘orientalism’ as a discourse, as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’”. He explains that it is a systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Though Said’s *Orientalism* is mostly centred in Egypt, the same otherness is projected toward Afro-American people in Western societies as the same discursive power is applied and ruled over them by

\(^2\) Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-born visionary race theorist who made profound contributions to the fields of Sociology and Cultural Studies. He lived and worked in the United Kingdom from 1951 until his death in 2014 where he founded, along with Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, the school of thought known today as British Cultural Studies.
linking the slavery of colonial times to their being black and thus attributing fixed sets of meanings to their bodies.

Hence, black people are considered to have sound bodies and no intelligence, with a tendency to barbarous behaviour, and to be very expressive, strong, passionate, good at sports and dancing. The classification of race put them into a different biological level from white people, linking the colour of their skin to physicality and projecting into their blackness the mark that highlighted whiteness. Black bodies are seen thus as primitive and hypersexualised, while white bodies are related to rationality.

As a way of discourse, marketing plays an important role in depicting the black male body as physically exceptional so that the identity of non-white men is built by publicity upon the over appreciation of physicality. Since black bodies are seen as athletically superior in sport, many sport brands use them to advertise not only their products but an entire concept of worth. I will use Nike basketball adverts from 2012 to 2015 to show how marketing influences in the construction of the racial identity by changing the views in which black men were seen until the last decades of the 20th century, when they were related to barbarian images, in opposition to the heroic figures that are shown nowadays.

In chapter 1 I explained how marketing helps to shape the masculine identity in respect to gender differences that are constructed within a patriarchal way of thinking. In Who da man? Gamal Abdel-Shehid (ABDEL-SHEHID, 2005) explains how the very same idea of patriarchy is related to sports: men are essentially patriarchal and sport provides them with the realm where they can distinguish themselves from women. For that reason, sports are more than a simple game: they entail a gender performance in which athletes attempt to demonstrate in their practice that they are men, that is to say, not women.

Figure 1 shows the basketball USA team for the Olympic Games held in London in 2012, a team christened by Nike as ‘The Dream Team’. The image portrays the heroes that are to perform their ability in front of the world; the very name of the team already shows their nature: the perfect athletic male bodies which everyone dreams of. As a national team, this group of black men embodies the idea of a strong nation, the United States of America, in front of other teams that would appear as weaker.
Nike’s campaign for the Olympic Games positions the black male stars as the vital members of the fighting team, nothing to do with the publicity they made for the female team in which the female players stand with a less aggressive look and a very artificial pose. The message of the advert is clear: “here we are, men with balls whom you must be afraid of”.

Discourse may provide the male body with few choices in hairstyle, clothing and other variables. Hence, the black sporty male body might be composed of signs like a certain clothing style, a specific haircut, a specific look and certain gestures that are easily legible to anyone. For Said, the discourse has to do more with the people who create the discourse than with the people it is referred to, as it is produced and exists in the exchange of various powers (political, intellectual, cultural and moral) within the Western world. So the image of the black sporty male body might be constructed within those specific patterns to fit the social ideas of the white people.

Reeser (REESER, 2010) explains how the black bodies have been related to concepts of criminality, leaving the white male body to discipline and control the other’s fate. The author argues that power operates through the body and it fabricates
not only ‘docile bodies’ but also ‘resistant bodies’ that resist dominant representations of male corporeality.

Since blackness has been related to criminality by institutionalized discourses and within the media symbolic systems, the black male body regularly appears representing criminal elements. Nowadays it seems not to have changed much, as actual marketing presents black men as fearsome, burdened with a long history of negative or primitivist representations. Hence, white bodies enjoy a neutral position as universal while black bodies might find themselves not just as men but as racially coded bodies. We can see how the black male identity is constructed in relation to the white man in Figure 2, where the basketball player Isaiah Thomas is sitting at the top of the hoop in a defiant attitude as if he were willing to say: “you can’t beat me”.

Figure 2: Isaiah Thomas and the black male bodies as criminals.

Source: Imgkid.com

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3 In his *Discipline and Punish* Foucault explains how the body becomes the target of power. He employs the notion of ‘docility’ to illustrate how individuals within their bodies are subjected to institutional regulation. By using the ideal of the soldier in the 17th century as an example, he shows how the easily recognizable body becomes a docile body which is subjected, used, transformed and improved.
Figure 2 shows the arrogant street criminal embodied in the Afro-American sport star. It reminds me of many American movies in which a gang of black kids is playing basketball in a marginal quarter and there it comes a gang of white pretentious youngsters that mock and insult them with racist comments. But basketball has always been a black-guy-thing and hence the figure of Isaiah Thomas in Figure 2 is almost divinized: being in an out of reach height for common people, his challenging look is a call for the white people who try to impose themselves. His gesture tries to launch a message of self-reassurance: “If I’ve gotten where I am today is not thanks to you but my own, so get out because there is no place for a white skinny boy here”. Nike’s marketing plays with the image of the always criminalized black male body and turns the views upon it by placing it at the highest level of the Afro-Americans’ field par excellence, basketball.

In the article The Social Construction and Social Marketing of the “Dangerous Black Man”, Randolph G. Potts explains how the marketing of the dangerous black man has been a profitable enterprise as gangsta images appear in the marketing of products such as liquors, action films, television programs or home security systems; but he goes further in stating that the possible consumers of those products are those who would want to emulate the menacing image “due to fascination with the image as entertainment, or out of fear of the image” (G.POTTS, 1997: 2). It is interesting how the construction of a racial identity is made up through fear and fascination at the same time and how marketing helps in the definition of such identity by using certain slogans and certain images.

Those subconscious images are present in daily life and many non-white people find themselves being the target of discriminative discourses. In an article for the National Public Radio, Sam Sanders shows the responses of some black men to the question that gives title to the article: What Does It Mean To Be A Black Man In America Today? The poll was held in August 2014 and most of the men questioned talk about racism and how people fear them just because of their being black:

“Put yourself in my shoes. Imagine you walking down the street, and someone crosses the street just because you're black man. Imagine you walking down the street, and a police officer stops you and frisks you just because you're black man or just because of how you're dressed. Imagine that being your son. Imagine that being your nephew, your
uncle, your brother. Imagine that and then, you know, try to process what we go through because, like I said, it's tough. It's tough.” (SANDERS, 2014)

The idea of the dangerous black man relates to Figure 3 in which the American Rajon Rondo is positioned as a black performer at the centre of the action narrative. His blackness has a symbolic centrality entailed in Nike’s slogan “we are all witnesses”. Witnesses of what? It seems that we still need a renegotiation of the concept of blackness, which is still encoded in terms of marginality and danger.

The black body becomes a more visible figure in the popular culture thanks to sports and entertainment. In these Figures the black men become the centre of the action and in a world that values homogeneity and order, the body of the black male sport star clearly values difference and impulse. We all are witnesses of the path Afro-American people have had to undergo in their fight for the human rights within a white culture that has mistreated them since colonial times. Now marketing uses the macho temptation to rebuild the image of those people by depicting them as heroes and thus attracting consumers who want to be identified as advocates of that renewed image of determination and perseverance.

Figure 3: Rajon Rondo and the value of difference.

Source: NikeBasketball.com
Keeping the idea of the discourse in mind, Hall’s position is that what matters are the systems of thought and language we use to make sense of the difference. Since differences exist in the world, the human being uses the term *race* to make nature and culture correspond to one another: once you know where a person fits in nature, you can know where they fit in culture. By linking blackness to physicality, black people are seen as hypersexual, physically strong, athletic and rhythmic. Figure 4 is another example of how discourse images influence our way of thinking by putting together an encouraging slogan and four basketball stars in a rhythmical composition.

Figure 4: Black sport men as heroes.

![Figure 4: Black sport men as heroes.](Source: NikeBasketball.com)

However, analysing the image further, I get the impression that we take it for granted that a white man is going to succeed, whereas it becomes a legend if it is a black man who does so. Language in marketing is central to the construction of identity as it can spread racist ideas of black masculinity, sport and sexuality; or it can set arguments against those. I see here how black masculinity is presented as the essence of masculine aggression by presenting the blacks as superior athletes and thusly as heroes.
Like Abdel-Shehid says: “Often black sporting heroes have represented the wishes of entire populations who have been marginalized both politically and economically”. Sports serve as a place to make political sense of the world and heroism is often linked to non-white sport men:

“One element to consider when we attempt to unravel black masculinity is the question of heroism. It is not surprising that the quest for heroes and the desire for a heroic black masculinity, particularly in athletics, has been a constant in black popular culture throughout the twentieth century.” (ABDEL-SHEHID 2005: 56)

In Abdel-Shehid’s words, sport is seen as a mythical sphere related to nature, outside any cultural, political or historical constraint. As a consequence, in what should be a simple state of nature, an apolitical and egalitarian space, sport becomes a source for mythical creations that shape the black male identity in respect to the inability of the white people who need heroes to reassert their place in society.

Figure 5: John Wall and the mythology around black sport stars.

Source: Istesecht.com & Greek-Gods.info

Figure 5 plays with light and colour to highlight the black body of the basketball player who, set between the too visible and the not visible enough, indicates the self-sufficiency of the hero who will survive with little or no help. His position reminds me
of the Greek Titan Atlas\textsuperscript{4}: just like contemporary misrepresentations of Atlas present him as holding the Earth on his shoulders, the basketball star strikes me as if he were carrying the weight of an entire encoded race.

As the white Western culture has often projected its fears and desires onto the black body, now the hyper-sexual figures of the black bodies are presented as spectacles that frame the formulation of a heroic male identity. No wonder that such a brand as Nike uses the beautiful appearance of the mythical Greek gods to make a parallel between the masculine muscular anatomy of the sport men and the divine glorious figures that haunt everybody’s dreams: Nike’s own name comes from the Greek Νίκη, which means \textit{victory} and was the original name for the goddess of victory. Hence, I find really interesting how Nike uses the own symbolism of its name to create a whole marketing around the concept of manliness as heroic and inherent to sports and so creating an entire life style.

This idea is strongly related to the way sport works in popular imagination. The masculine anatomy characterized by the firm body and the values of the virile macho so well-known are nothing less than exhibitions of the male action hero. In this way, the black male body is transformed into an object of fascination, pleasure and even fear, an object that is raised to the level of obsession and therefore transformed into a sort of divinity.

In the already mentioned Sam Sander’s poll about what does it mean to be a black man in America there is one man who recognizes and ironizes that fascination towards the black body:

“ANTHONY CHERRY: What a black man means to me is just basically this - wherever I go, I'm feared and I'm revered. And that is the stuff of kings. And I'm going to be king.” (SANDERS, 2014)

\textsuperscript{4} In Greek mythology, the Titan Atlas of Astronomy and Navigation, was condemned to eternally hold the sky after losing the Titanomachy - the war between the Titans and the Olympian gods.
Figures 6 and 7 are representative of this obsessive view in which the basketball players are portrayed as myths, gods that are over the heads of everybody else. Both Figures are very similar to that of the Greek god Poseidon launching his trident. The deity of the sea and the storms was referred to by Sophocles as ‘The Agitator of the Earth’, and many conceived him as stirring both land and sea with his trident. Just as the Ancient Poseidon⁵ would cause earthquakes and tame horses, the contemporary black sport men would shake people inside and cause a mass of agitated and euphoric supporters to follow and admire their qualities, just like a herd of wild horses that have been broken in and now follow blindly and loyally their tamer.

Figure 6: Lebron James and the myth of Poseidon.

Source: FreeWallpaper4.me & Nam.culture.gr

Let’s picture in our minds the image of Poseidon with a ball in his hand, the similarity with this Nike’s campaign is striking. Moreover, what is remarkable in these Figures is not the fact that they present the male black body flying over the heads of their faithful ones, but that those believers are all white people.

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⁵ In Greek mythology, Poseidon was brother to Zeus and Hades. The three gods divided creation among them and Poseidon was given all water. Hence, he became the god of the sea, earthquakes and horses.
Marketing offers a new heroic perspective for those non-white men who see in their sport stars a re-construction of the male identity. Nevertheless, this male bodybuilder who is projected to the spectator as a movie star carries within a whole history of myths and stereotypes. The body is thus constituted through myths written through terms of sex, class and race. The masculine black male hero who has now succeeded as a cultural icon might be considered as a place for the re-inscription of difference. The masculine identity is therefore constructed over the female body and through the dichotomy between the black and the white body.
4. CRISTIANO RONALDO: THE NEW MODEL OF MASCULINITY FOR THE HIGH SOCIAL CLASS?

Cristiano Ronaldo became famous when he entered the Manchester football team in 2003 and since then his career as a footballer would rapidly grow. Sport brands like Nike took profit of his fame and started to use his figure to promote their products, and then a whole marketing around his persona begun. What happens when the bound between the product and the person is blurred? What happens when the person itself becomes the product? In the modern world in which social classes don’t exist anymore as long as the individual is a consumer before being a person with a social class consciousness, the consumer society has transferred the social mark to the brands. In this way, if you have an Audi that means that you enjoy a high social status whereas if you have an Opel Corsa people will identify you as a labourer; and if you wear a pair of Nike’s sport shoes that means you are wealthy enough to spend your money on those shoes. Hence, Cristiano Ronaldo (hereinafter referred to as “CR”) is not only selling a certain brand’s product related to a specific social class but he is selling a whole new concept of manliness based in the well-fitted body of the sporty-wealthy man. It is important to highlight the fact that the football players have conquered a high social status thanks to famous figures such as David Beckham who has gained a wealthy position that allows him to consume luxury items and thus has become a symbol of high social class. Hence, CR and his virile identity are the products itself of marketing.

Nike and other sport labels are representative of high social classes: their products are told to be of a high quality at a reasonable price, and wearing or using them means economical wealth. As a result, a psychological connection is made between sports, CR and the labels he has been a model for. From little school boys to adult men who love football and think of CR as a star, they all want to identify themselves with CR in wearing a Nike’s t-shirt or in playing football with a Nike’s ball, and in doing so they are projecting to others an image of a high social status.

And now not only is CR a Nike’s model but he has developed a brand by his own, CR76, an underwear firm in which he is his own model. CR has built a whole

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6 The acronym CR stands for his name Cristiano Ronaldo. When he joined the Manchester United in 2003 he was first assigned the number 7 that had been left free by the ex-captain, the English midfielder David Beckham.
marketing around his own figure and he sells not only the products under his mark but an entire concept of manliness in which his role as a football player and his muscled body are linked to a certain type of behaviour within a specific social class. Health and wealth are thus related: this new concept of masculinity entails the idea of the wealthy man who spends his money in shaping a muscular, and hence healthy, body that anybody will notice. The physical appearance is sold itself as a sign of wealth.

The Greek mythology of the shaped muscular bodies I talked about in chapter 2 is now embodied in CR as well but differently because of the race: the body, because of its being white, is not racially marked though it is indeed creating a mark of wealth. In Figure 1, CR resembles the Greek god Ares\(^7\), who is usually represented with the same posture and holding a shield with his hand. CR here holds a ball, which emphasizes his virile attitude in launching the message of being ‘a man with balls’, a conception that would be applied to Ares too in his standing for violence and brutal force. No doubts about the type of masculinity he is trying to convey.

Figure 1: Cristiano Ronaldo’s resemblance to the Greek god Ares.

\(^7\) Ares is the Greek god of war who represents the physical or violent aspects of the battle in contrast to his sister Athena whose intelligence includes military strategy.
But no matter how virile he wants to appear, the new aesthetics CR stands for is an effeminate one called ‘the new man’, which is the antithesis to the muscled action hero mentioned in chapter 2. The figure of the ‘new man’ is a product of new ways of marketing that begun in the 1980s when Capitalism brought about new material necessities and feminists pursued changes in regard of gender representation.

In addition, the ‘new man’ was also a product of the ‘body buildings’ in which the representation of an exaggerated virility was accompanied by a high dose of narcissism. Furthermore, the body appears as the only means of experience since one can only have contact with the world through the bodily sensations. Thus, masculinity can only be acknowledged corporally. Nevertheless, the body building itself may not construct a man’s masculinity but his own perception about it\(^8\). It is the very struggle to transform the body that actually defines masculinity:

“From this movement-centred perspective, it is not the case that the bodybuilder simply embodies or represents masculinity: rather masculinity would be defined by the bodybuilder’s constant striving to make the body correspond to some image that the psyche has of it, and to make and then keep that other body” (REESER 2010: 103).

Voyeurism and body building go hand in hand. Freud\(^9\) associated voyeurism with the fact of looking at persons as objects, subjecting them to a curious and controlling glance. Laura Mulvey (MULVEY, 1985: 6), whose study was based on cinema, explains that the very act of looking is already a source of pleasure, tied to the presence of an object as the source of excitement. Mulvey states that the gaze is chiefly masculine because it is the man the subject who stares. But with all these manifestations or representations of male-sexualized bodies, this concept is now changing as long as both women and men are objectifying the male body:

- Gay men, feeling homosexual desire, direct their glance at CR turning him into a sexual object;

\(^8\) This process of becoming a man through the body’s perception is adopted from the same process created previously by the codification of femininity under the patriarchal ideology. In this sense, the adoption seems to point to the phenomenon of the masculine crisis.

\(^9\) Considered the father of Psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud’s revolutionary theories about sexuality helped to rethink the human nature at the beginning of the 20th century.
heterosexual men experience a narcissistic desire by which they identify themselves with the manliness embodied in CR’s exhibition of his body;

and heterosexual women who have freed their heterosexual appetite are not anymore dominated or subjected to the men’s will but they now exert their power too by objectifying the male body and converting it into an object of sexual pleasure even though that pleasure was merely visual, so CR may be for them the source of excitement.

In figure 2, CR exhibits his naked torso as the principal placement of his virility. The water splashed around his thorax remarks his well-defined pectoral and six-pack and entails sexual connotations since it brings to the spectator’s subconscious the sensations and the memories of the body fluids, thus provoking desire in the viewer. Hence, CR’s marketing sells his own masculine figure as the product of his brand, making the male body become the fetish target of the look. In doing so, CR offers the spectators an opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of looking at the male beauty.

Figure 2: Cristiano Ronaldo as the voyeuristic object.
In his “Masculinity as Spectacle”, Steve Neale (NEALE, 1983) claims that masculine figures are not only subjects who look but they are as well targets of the look, and he explains that male bodies have been exhibited to be contemplated. Suzanne Moore¹⁰, in a 2014 article for The Guardian, claims that “it is clear that not only do women look at men, but men look at men too”. Moore explains how men who self-objectify their bodies are “the very knowing objects of both male and female desire” (MOORE, 2014)

Those men whose displays of vanity are the oil that moves them are what Mark Simpson¹¹ has termed as ‘spornosexuals’. The man who coined the term ‘metrosexual’ in the 1990s talks now about a new type of men who strive to look like sportsmen or porn stars. In his article Sporno for the Out Magazine (SIMPSON, 2006), the journalist explains how those men try to emulate their success in a postmetrosexual era by pursuing a sex-object status. Therefore, we have a new concept of masculinity in what seems to be, in Simpson’s words, “an increasingly pornolized world”:

“Sport is the new gay porn. Sportsmen on this side of the Atlantic are increasingly openly acknowledging and flirting with their gay fans, la David Beckham and Freddie Ljungberg (…) both have welcomed the attention of gay fans because they have great taste. More than this, they and a whole new generation of young bucks, from twinkly soccer players like Manchester United’s Alan Smith and Cristiano Ronaldo to rougher prospects like Chelsea’s Joe Cole and AC Milans Kak, keen to emulate their success, are actively pursuing sex-object status in a postmetrosexual, increasingly pornolized world. In other words, they’re not just sports stars, but sporno stars (…) that acknowledge and exploit the voyeuristic, usually homoerotic, thrill that fit male bodies throwing themselves against other fit male bodies.” (SIMPSON, "Sporno". Out Magazine)

Following those theories, for me it seems that nowadays it is impossible to present a male body as an object of pleasure without bounding that pleasure with a narcissist and autoerotic discourse. In Figure 3, CR’s posture strikes me as that of the

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¹⁰ Nowadays an award-winning columnist for The Guardian, Suzanne Moore is an English journalist who has strived for years for feminist and political issues, and her articles have been published in newspapers such as Marxism Today, Daily Mail or The Independent, among others.

¹¹ English writer and journalist, Mark Simpson has been described by some sociologists as the world’s most perceptive writer about masculinity. Simpson has written several critically-acclaimed books including: Male Impersonators, Sex Terror and Metrosexy: A 21st Century Self-Love Story.
Greek god Dionysus, waiting for the wine to work and the big orgiastic party to take place. CR exhibits himself just like an immortalized Greek sculpture. But beyond that mythical appearance there is CR’s ego and the pleasure of knowing himself as the target of desire, a fact that is interestingly remarkable by the fact that, by contrast to other advertisements, his gaze in this particular one is focused on someone else who is not inside the composition, as inviting and seducing that other person.

Figure 3: Cristiano Ronaldo’s resemblance to the Greek god Dionysus.

By inviting the spectator to use his image as an object of sexual stimulation through the glance, his narcissism fuses with reality as the male gazer projects him to the advert. Thus, the male observer would think that, by wearing CR7 underwear and by adopting CR’s attitude of arrogance (or even his hairdo), he would be identified by others as a standard high-class man:

“Masculinity has been commodified, and team sports (…) is the biggest market for it. After decades of being fetishized by fags, jocks are now fetishizing themselves. Because of the spurting, fantastical potency of sporno, millions of nongay boys and men around the world are excitedly buying clothes and underwear because they are worn or endorsed by their hero.” (SIMPSON, "Sporno". Out Magazine)

Dionysus was the Greek god of fertility and wine, considered too the patron of the arts. He had a dual nature: he brought joy and divine ecstasy or brutal and blinding rage, thus reflecting the dual effects of wine.
A sporno star has everything any man would want: youth, strength, sex appeal, wealth, fame... In CR’s exhibition of his own vanity, he is selling a kind of manliness that is perfectly desired by everyone in our consumerist society: men want all of those qualities for them to be desired, and women want those qualities in the men they are with. Not only is CR embodying the sporno star but he is as well selling his own figure as the manly model to pursue.

This idea is linked to the eternal ideal of beauty of the white man and the boom of gyms: by idealizing the perfectly proportioned body, our culture attempts to recreate the beauty ideal of the Ancient world, the Renaissance or the Classicism, building a male body that seems to be out of time and change. Hence, the marketing industry of the past decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and today in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century has played with the men’s insecurities and has influenced the tendencies of consumerism of beauty products over men.

Figure 4: The boom of gyms: the body builders and the spornosexuals.

Source: Digitalspy.co.uk
The ‘body builder’ and the ‘spornosexual’ are for me representations of the male identity in crisis: while the overvaluation of the body reinforces traditional values such as strength and rudeness, this kind of images present a desperate cry of those men who seek to construct their identity upon their physical appearance, a kind of men whose lack of emotional intelligence doesn’t allow them to value otherworldly matters behind their earthly existence. Their over exposed masculinity seems a parody of the concept of being a man, just like Todd Reeser states:

“Over-repetition of masculinity: a man who acts too often in a way perceived as masculine calls attention to his masculinity as something performed. If masculinity is too present, it may end up appearing as comic” (REESER, 2010: 89)

Following Reeser, the revealing of the muscular body can simply reaffirm masculinity’s status not as a real-life embodiment but as an imagined one. In the actual Western culture the eroticizing of the male body is becoming a commonplace, maybe because of the liberation of homosexual men and female heterosexuality. Thus, marketing nowadays tries to appeal both to female and gay male consumers at the same time by using the male body as the hook.

Figure 5: The ideal beauty of the white man.

Source: *Hola Magazine*
Figures 4 and 5 are good examples of the desire to transcend the gender positions within a ‘post-gender’ era in which the rigid conceptions of sexuality are being questioned. The spornosexual CR of the adverts try to catch both feminine and masculine audiences by showing an attractive image to public of any kind of sexual orientation. The narcissistic attitude of CR entails a strong masculinity with a high level of self-security.

This new marketing is nothing but another strategy to construct the male identity in a new society in which the homosexual men and heterosexual women offer a huge field for consumerism as I have already pointed out. Thus, in these adverts, there is a fetishizing and erotizing of the male body. But for me this marketing is still more directed toward a masculine audience since it presents the male ideal of beauty that high social class men should pursue as a sign of physical and economical wealth.

It is interesting how nowadays the ideals of masculinity are so bound to the physical appearance, something that was almost unthinkable a few decades ago. It is clearly seen in the fact that no advert would ever show a naked man but a fully clothed one, usually with suit and tie, a hat, or a posture of mystery and intrigue. They projected their masculinity toward an external object to which the masculine idea was psychologically linked. At that time, the concept of manliness was something directly embodied by objects such as cars; whereas the ideas of femininity were always displayed through the exhibition of the sexual attributes of female bodies. And those exhibitions had two main functions: first, they served as the mould for women to identify their womanliness, and second, they were the target for men to recognize the differences between genders. In this way, the female body was always isolated, exposed, embellished as a fetish and offered to the spectator, being the masculine's glance the determiner who projected his fantasies over the feminine figure.

“The naked or partially naked male body, as a body and not as a person, has traditionally been absent from representation on screen, a further aspect of the attempt to present masculinity as non-corporal. One way to think about the issue is to assume that any representation of the revealed male body objectifies it since the viewer is necessarily gazing at his body” (REESER 2010: 111)

But this fact has changed. Now marketing is using the physical appearance as a means to show a man’s manliness, and it is sexualizing the male body as it has always done with the female body. Thus, no matter how virile and macho CR wants to appear
in his adverts, he and other spornosexuals are being feminized: since the attention to the body has always been bound to femininity, the excessive attention to the male body is the result of adopting a feminized conduct.

The male body becomes the object of the glance, which is a turn to the traditional view in which the exhibited body was always a woman’s body. Marketing then feminizes the male protagonist to create another representation of masculinity making thus flexible the traditional concept of manliness. It is not only that the man is the possessor of the glance as I commented before, but that he is now the object of desire too. The man is taking the woman’s place in the world of marketing, constructing a new masculine identity based on the exhibition of the male body. Figure 6 shows the parallelism existent nowadays between female and male figures presented in marketing as models of femininity and masculinity.

Figure 6: Parallelism between men and women in actual marketing.

Source: WomanLifeStyle.altervista.org
Though the male body is transformed into the object of desire just like the woman’s, CR and Megan Fox\textsuperscript{13} are perceived in a different way in Figure 6. Since men and women do not consume sex in the same way, the underwear adverts are stared with a different look depending on the sex of the person who observes. While Megan Fox may appear sexy by both men and women, CR may be regarded as sexy by heterosexual men who seeks in his figure the ideal male body or by homosexual men who find him attractive; but he may be perceived as ridiculous by women.

They are both shown almost naked, displaying the alleged canon of beauty of today’s Western society, standing in a seductive posture that invites the onlookers to enjoy that idyllic beauty. Why then women, regardless of their sexual orientation, would consider Megan Fox sexy and CR ridiculous? Maybe it has to do with the conception mentioned before about masculinity having been always projected out of the man’s body. Now that the man exhibits his body just like a woman would do, it seems ridiculous that he could expect to be considered masculine and attractive, because that male attraction has been based before on the mysterious, which meant to show as least as possible to create certain expectative in women.

However, marketing only shapes the vision toward the desired object, in this case the body, but the desire itself does not change as it is inherent in the human being. Marketing moulds the jar into which the body is presented as if it were a perfume, changing the labels and covers of the ‘perfume’ adapting it to different epochs, but it does not modify the prevalence of a certain set of sexist ideas that are still dominant in our society. In this way, marketing constructs a new identity for men in which their masculinity is exhibited by a muscled body which is still a sign of the position of dominance over the female gender. Hence, the male glance is still the one determining and directing the camera lens: it is still legitimizing its position of power and control over society.

Just like in chapter 1 I explained how publicity shaped and distinguished the roles of masculine and feminine gender during the last decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century by

\textsuperscript{13} American model and actress, Megan Denise Fox began her acting career in 2001 with minor series and film roles, being the action film \textit{Transformers} the one who spread her fame in 2007. She is considered nowadays one the main female sex symbols and has appeared in magazines such as \textit{Maxim}, \textit{Rolling Stones} and \textit{FHM}.
creating an atmosphere of power surrounding the male figure, I want to remark the fact that nowadays it has not changed at all. The spornosexuals are the target of all camera lenses, they are willing to show their power and the audience is willing to be fobbed off with them. Hence, the masculine figure is still the centre of attention. But what is more striking than that is the fact that they seem to be taking the place that has always been subjected to the women.

In figure 7 it may seem at first glance that it is the woman who has control over the man, as she is the one holding CR by his hip while looking directly to the camera and thus reassuring her position. Moreover, the fact that she is only half-naked and standing in high heels may be understood as a way to emphasize the idea that the gender roles have changed and now it is the time for women to take control.

Figure 7: Gender roles have not changed.
Nothing farther from the true meaning of the advert. If the message were that the gender roles are changing, why then is she not wearing a blouse, a tie and a pair of moccasins? Her leather skirt marks the point of inflexion, the boundary that the man is not yet allowed to cross; but it marks as well the target of the male intentions. Like in the movies, where the female character may represent the place the hero will cross. And even though they both are covered in the lower parts of their bodies, she is naked from the waist up whereas his bathrobe covers his shoulders and arms. For me it is clear that the woman holds the glance of the spectator in a mere game of representations in which it is the man the one who commands and displays the action, the one who really transmits the message to the spectator.

Today, the western world is still sexist in that the construction of manliness is still taking place in respect to the position of dominance upon the woman, since it is the man who is still the main motor of consumerism, creator of desire, target and object of it at the same time. It is not only that nowadays the woman exhibits herself as an object to be possessed but that man equals her to reinforce his supremacy, trying to occupy the place of object of desire that was bound before to the woman perception. This shows a masculinity in crisis in a Western society in which the body has become the cult object per excellence and the calling card of high social class men.
5. CONCLUSION:

Though there has been a considerable advance in women’s rights, cultural interchange, tolerance between races and many other social movements; today the Western world still lives isolated from other cultures and builds its own identity on the basis of the existing differences in respect to them. It is striking how marketing in the current modern world still creates the male identity upon the dichotomy between genders (men and women), races (white and non-white people) and social classes (prestigious and working class). The male body is thus encoded in patterns that would change as the turn of consumerism as the same time that a whole myth is shaped around the concept of the masculine identity to the point of reaching an almost divine state.

Marketing as a language in its own transmits messages of categorization and influences the construction of identity. The adverts shown in this paper launch a distinctively new set of codings of masculinity within the domain of popular culture and reflect how marketing does not only influence the way men see themselves but also how they reflect their own conception of manliness with their attitudes and behaviours, and hence marketing shapes too how women perceive that masculinity in the wake of images that sink within the subconscious.

From the gendered identity to the racial discourses and the wealth distinctions, masculinity has been thought of as an ideological construction bound to the culture which an individual is placed in. The values often considered as manly and attributed to a strong and self-secure virility have been changing throughout the different historical periods, and marketing has reflected such evolution in the changing publicity campaigns going from the construction of manliness upon the dichotomy between genders to the divinization of the strong black race until the hyper masculine image of the current sport bodybuilders.

Today’s Western society is still using black bodies to highlight their brutality in opposition to the ideal harmonious beauty of the white body – because marketing presents the ideal of beauty as that of the white man’s – and furthermore it is still using female bodies to highlight their object-possessed position in opposition to the man who stares and possesses. But then these stereotyped images are paradoxically being challenging by creating a parallelism of the man’s image as the object of the glance, which redefines the Western standards of the desirable masculine identity. Hence,
though spornosexual men might be seen as the effeminate version of the hyper-masculine body, wouldn’t it be a step further towards egalitarian perspectives between men and women? It has always been the place for women to objectify their bodies by making them the target of desire and by building the feminine identity by means of physical beauty. What if this new autoerotic hyper-muscular male image is providing society a new way of claiming equality between genders? Though this idea may appear contradictory at first instance, I think that nowadays marketing is not only constructing the male identity through discourses related to beauty and consumerism but it is also reinforcing its place in a society that tries to move forward from racist and sexist stereotypes.
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES:


