

MYTHICAL ARCHETYPES AND ADVERTISING

Mihaela MARCU

Associate Professor, Ph.D., University of Craiova, Romania

mihaela_marcu2007@yahoo.com

Abstract

We believe that an advertising construction is really solid if it is based on well-defined elements, such as mythology. Of the various forms that myths manifest, we have dwelled on archetypes. An archetype serves the same function as a symbol. The definition of the archetype is: an example, a representation. Archetypes are usually copied after something. The archetype is an original example of something. Our ancestors conferred on their gods all sorts of such attributes: power, courage, honor, wisdom, protection.

Key-words: archetypes, mythology, advertising

01. Our approach aims to bring together two seemingly unrelated concepts: myths and advertising. But we considered that the most visible connection between them is their fundamental characteristic: communication. Both through myth and advertising, people have communicated and continue to do so. That is why many modern advertising constructions have myths as their substratum

02. Myths, archetypes and symbols go beyond space and time, returning from prehistory to ancient and modern history, without always and in the most unexpected forms.

The myth extends from the old world to the modern world a cultural dimension, projected in advertising through the image of hero, idol, saint, good mother etc. Through this projection of the past into the present, the creators of advertising want to show that we live in a continuous circle, in which the signs multiply and repeat.

Starting from the idea that myth is a communication system, a message, its use in advertising becomes natural, even necessary.

A specific area to the space of modernity, which seeks the resources of creativity by exploring the most hidden aspects of social and cultural life,

advertising capitalizes on the world of classical mythology by taking images, symbols or stories that transform and adapt to its pragmatic dimension. The salability of products by introducing symbols or euphoric affective components in a persuasive and informative discourse, is the fundamental mechanism of advertising.

Symbolic images taken from myths will be dominant in the advertising discourse that is visible in the entire cultural and mental realm of the contemporary world: “Europe of the third millennium will not be dominated by heads of state or military, but by communicators (*faiseurs de mots, faiseur d’images*), because no product (from toothpaste to the president of the country) will be sold without a mythologizing speech, without a brand image, sometimes more important than the political act itself or product quality” (Daniela Roventă-Frumușani, 1999: 135).

Starting from the distinction formulated by Roger Caillois (in the study *Myth and Man*, 2000) between a *mythology of situations* (namely, an inventory of narratives retained by a community) and a *mythology of heroes* (authors of exemplary deeds), contemporary advertising fully exploits both mythologies, using the idea of conflict developed in a situation, to be resolved then by the intervention of a saving hero.

03. Among the many forms of myths found in advertising, we set out to dwell on archetypes. By archetype can be understood the concept and function of symbol. The definition of the archetype is: an example, a representation. Archetypes are usually copied after something. The archetype is an original example of something. Our ancestors conferred on their gods all sorts of such attributes: power, courage, honor, wisdom, protection.

Carl Jung's concept of archetypes is fascinating. Psychological archetypes are aspects inherent in the human personality. A kind of represented on a psychological level. These archetypes are **Anima, Animus, Persona, Umbra and Sinele**.

04. The *archetypes specific to the erotic myth* - are mainly focused on two types of relationships, male - female, seductive - seduced; the product mediates the process of temptation or triggers it; the masculine or the feminine are associated with it.

Here we can integrate the series of advertising perfumes represented on the basis of mythological characters, which includes the commercial for the female perfume, Flora, by Guggi, with reference to the goddess Flora.

In Roman mythology, Flora (Latin: Flōra) was a goddess of flowers and the spring season - a symbol of nature and flowers (especially the spring flower). Her Greek counterpart was Chloris.

In the advertising construct for the respective perfume is symbolically presented the goddess who, caught in the middle of a chain of flowers, tries with her miraculous power to gather all the perfume of flowers, tightly in her hands, to then evaporate it on her whole body. The scent of the perfume seems so pleasant that the goddess repeats the movement, letting herself be carried away by the grandeur of its pleasant aroma. Therefore, it relies on the refreshing and strong scent of the perfume, which, symbolically, gives birth to the very goddess of flowers. Thus, the created liqueur can only be one that tempts, leaves itself desired, creates addiction.

Therefore, the erotic myth is frequently used in perfume advertising, to create for the buyer the feeling of pleasure, beauty, eroticism.

The Hypnotic Poison perfume, produced by Dior, presents the image of a beautiful woman (Monica Belucci), with a snake wrapped around her body and a red spheroidal bottle. Obviously, the image explicitly refers to the myth of original sin, from which three components are easily recognized: the serpent (temptation), the woman (the seducer) and the apple (the object of seduction). Only Adam (the seduced) is missing, but his absence turns out to be only apparent, because he can be identified with the consumer - the recipient of the advertising message. Replacing the mythical apple with a bottle, that is, with the product, creates the necessary distancing from the source myth and an additional justification for the advertising myth. Liquor hypnosis, which actually translates to "poison hypnosis", is designed to attract customers, who are always tempted to choose to taste the stopped fruit and fall into temptation.

We recognize in perfume advertising the use of different forms of manifestation of myths. The reference to women, to color, to images full of forms and meanings appears frequently. The erotic archetype is always valued in the commercials that have perfumes in their center. It is considered a permanent element of seduction.

05. *The archetype of the conqueror of wild lands* or worlds is associated with the *archetype of the explorer* or the one who desires knowledge.

The meaningful effects pursued by advertising this archetype are: the product helps the consumer to feel free, to be nonconformist; the product inspires vigor, resistance, solidity, being suitable for use in dangerous situations; it helps the consumer to build a strong identity, to differentiate himself from others through the time-space-speed ratio transferred to the level of his personality.

The desire to know, to explore is reflected, for example, in *Levi's company advertising*. Here he often relied on mythical themes. For example, in the advertising of the time when the emphasis was on the sale of the jeans they promoted, the company's representatives used a series of mythological characters, rendering exactly the idea on which their advertising was based, more precisely the return in time, in the past when consumers they relived the moments of lost youth, but also the adaptation of classic fashion among young people.

On one of the commercials, the representatives of Levi's company used a Satyr, as the main character, a mythological one. In Greek mythology, the Satyrs, like the Fauns, are half-human -half-animal beings. From head to waist it resembles a man, but with the addition of horns and goat's hooves. But unlike wildlife, Satyr men love women, especially those creatures called Nymphs, spirits of nature. In other representations the Satyrs appear as warrior characters, capable of fighting using a wide range of weapons.

The advertising image has in its center a Satyr, in the middle of a forest. This is its natural living environment, a wild place, unknown to humans.

The Satyr is placed on a piece of wood, with a pair of Levi's jeans in his hand. For this mythological being, jeans are equivalent to an unconquered, unknown place. The Satyr has never seen jeans, but now he has them in his hand and looks at them with great pleasure. Hence, the advertising element suggests several hypotheses that intrigue customers.

Advertising here appeals to the subconscious memory of the consumer who sees beyond the actual image of the poster. The message is decoded and the advertising consumer understands that the product is so coveted that even a creature of nature would like to wear it, although it does not have this possibility.

Also, the natural environment presented in the advertising material can create a relaxing atmosphere in the minds of potential male customers. We

understand, therefore, that advertising is intended exclusively for them. This condition is induced by the association with the product presented, the pants can be perceived as useful, comfortable, good quality clothing, always used by men.

The mythical character presented in the commercial, Satyr, can be associated with a strong, responsible, fighting being. But he also shows refinement, good taste, because only this way he is able to choose a comfortable, quality product, such as Levi's jeans.

Advertising about Levi's jeans continues to use another myth of antiquity, related to mermaids. He is impressed with the depth of the construction of advertising by capitalizing on elements related to the old world, even timelessness.

In Greek mythology, mermaids were beautiful but dangerous creatures that lured sailors with their beautiful voices, causing ships to crash on the reefs near their islands. They were the daughters of the river god Achelous, while their mother may be Terpsichore, Melpomene, Sterope or Chtihon. Although there were close controversies about the marine environment, they were not considered sea deities.

In the commercial, several mermaids appear in the depths of the sea, attracting a young man wearing Levi's jeans. It seems that these sea creatures are not interested in the man, but in the pants he is wearing, Levi's jeans. The mermaids' desire to have pants, even if they can't use them, because they have a fish tail. It is a point of view well constructed by the creator of advertising: even some beings - fish want these jeans. The message is clear, direct, consumer-oriented.

06. Myths are and will remain an inexhaustible source of inspiration for mankind. Interestingly, they forcefully return to a message of the modern world that is advertising. And, no doubt, myths are making advertising stronger, able to sell more and more. There are connections that seem difficult to build, but that exist and that lead, from time to time, the world of advertising.

Our approach is not exhaustive. Much can be written about myths and advertising from many perspectives. We have developed only two archetypes, the erotic and the conqueror of the unknown, as they appear in advertising.

REFERENCES

- Angelescu, Silviu, *Mitul și literatura*, Editura Univers, București, 1999.
- Boia, Lucian, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005.
- Caillois, Roger, *Antologia nuvelei fantastice*, cu o prefață de Matei Călinescu și un studiu de Roger Caillois, traducere de Dumitru Țepeneag, Editura Univers, București, 1970.
- Caillois, Roger, *Mitul și omul*, traducere din limba franceză de Lidia Simion, București, Editura Nemira, 2000.
- Caillois, Roger, *Abordări ale imaginarului*, traducere din franceză de Nicolae Balotă, Editura Nemira, București, 2001.
- Frumușani, Rovența-Daniela, *Semiotica, societate, cultură*, Editura Institutul European, 1999.