

The fragrance of a new man? Masculinity and fashion in young males' cologne commercials

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Abstract:

The consolidation of the masculine market within the fashion world has given rise to an increasing objectification of the male figure. In such context, men's cologne commercials portray a youthful, handsome man who embraces masculinity from a highly *fashioned* perspective. The style of these ads is imbued with a sense of artifice, illusion and mirage that nonetheless blends in with the *man-model* whose beauty and confidence become an attainable goal for consumers. Here, the alluring rhetoric of advertising comes into play, equating the possession of a fragrance with such attributes.

Drawing on Lipovetsky (1987), I address the connection between fashion and advertising, focusing on the particularities of the perfume market. Subsequently, I examine commercials from some of the current top selling fragrances for young males: Paco Rabanne, Armani and Chanel. My analysis is two-fold: first, I focus on the conscious background artifice; second, I examine gender portrayal and expectations. My goal is to visualize current patterns in masculinity and show how these commercials enhance beauty and individualization. Such qualities are captured in models that frame a type of man who combines the current penchant for style and fashion with the traditional masculine attributes of power and control.

Key words: masculinity, advertising, cologne, fashion.

Yeni erkeğin kokusu mu? Genç erkeklere yönelik kolonya reklamlarında erkeklik ve moda

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Özet:

Erkeklere yönelik piyasanın moda dünyası ile birleşimi erkek figürün nesneleştirilmesinde artışa yol açtı. Bu bağlamda, erkek kolonyası reklamları erkekliği *moda* perspektifinden kucaklayan genç ve yakışıklı bir erkek portresi çizmektedir. Bu reklamların tarzı, güzelliği ve güveni tüketiciler için erişilebilir bir hedef haline gelen *erkek-model* ile birleşen bir kandırmaca, illüzyon ve yanılsama hissi ile aşılanmaktadır. Burada, kokuya sahip olmayı bu niteliklerle eşitleyen reklamcılığın cazip retoriği devreye girmektedir.

Bu çalışma kapsamında Lipovetsky (1987)'den yararlanarak ve parfüm piyasasının özelliklerine odaklanarak moda ve reklam arasındaki ilişkiyi sorgulayacak; akabinde ise, şu sıralar en çok satılan, Paco Rabanne, Armani ve Chanel gibi genç erkek kokularından birkaçının reklamlarını inceleyeceğim. Gerçekleştireceğim analiz iki katmanlı olacaktır: İlk olarak arka plandaki bilinçli kandırmacaya odaklanacak; ikinci olarak da cinsiyet betimlenmesini ve buna ilişkin beklentileri inceleyeceğim. Amacım erkeklikteki güncel örüntüleri görselleştirmek ve bu reklamların güzelliği ve bireyselleşmeyi nasıl arttırdığını göstermek olacaktır. Bu özellikler, stile ve modaya yönelik güncel eğilimi ve geleneksel erkek özellikleri olan iktidar ve kontrolü birleştiren bir erkek tipini çerçeveyen modellerde bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: erkeklik, reklamcılık, kolonya, moda.

The consolidation of the masculine market within the fashion world, including beauty and style merchandise, has led to an increasing objectification of the male figure that can be perceived in the advertising campaigns of the male fragrance industry. Men's cologne commercials portray a youthful, handsome man who embraces masculinity from a highly *fashioned* perspective. In my research, I addressed four masculine fragrance commercials from some of the current top ten selling scents for young men. These advertising videos are imbued with artifice, illusion and dream-like situations which, as part of the game of fashion, make consumers detach from the story and focus on the model, a man whose beauty and confident demeanor become an attainable goal for consumers. At this point, the alluring rhetoric of advertising comes into play, equating the possession of a fragrance with such attributes. In such framework, I intend to visualize current patterns in masculinity and gender expectations. Drawing on Lipovetsky (1987), I examined the connection between fashion and advertising, focusing on the particularities of the perfume market. Subsequently, I analyzed the videos from two perspectives: background/setting and gender. In them, the stylish, seductive young male is accompanied by a woman who has succumbed to him, in an intensely erotic, magic atmosphere. I will conclude that these commercials enhance beauty and individualization, captured in male figures that frame a type of man who combines the current penchant for style and fashion with the traditional masculine attributes of power and control.

The commercials under analysis are *Invictus* (2013) and *One Million Intense* (2012) by Paco Rabanne, *Bleu de Chanel* (2010) by Chanel and *Armani Code Ice* (2014) by Giorgio Armani. Besides the market success of these colognes in countries such as the US, Spain, Germany or France (Kafkaesqueblog, Perfurmativ), these ads reflect the same gender characteristics, in spite of their stylistic and contextual differences. They construct identity by relying on traditional views of masculinity, such as control, dominance, power and individualism, while also presenting a fashionable, modern man at the surface level.

The advertisements display a common *mis-en-scène* that juxtaposes present and past and amalgamates unrelated locations. Here is where fashion's beautiful artifice and advertising's crafty rhetoric blend in to present a combination of realistic and dream-like scenarios that create an illusory atmosphere. But artificiality is precisely the defining characteristic of fragrance commercials that makes them compelling and memorable. From a gender perspective, I will describe the portrayal of male figures from two outlooks: the objectified body and the man's social role. All these males are youthful, beautiful and seductive. They move in an intensely erotic ambiance where they display self-awareness and a strong sense of fashion. For the past decades, fashion has proved to be no longer a female activity; the men starring these commercials follow current fashion dictates for individualism and distinction, each of them displaying their own style. On the other hand, their demeanor is the same for all four cases: the commercials present a man who is active and takes over control. Conversely, women are shown as passive, highly sexualized subjects that have been seduced by the man. In spite of each commercial's attempt to portray different versions of contemporary men, they all rely on the same *old* gender division.

Fashion and (Cologne) Advertising

In *The Empire of Fashion* (1987), Gilles Lipovetsky accounts for the expansion of fashion and its influence in social behavior. Fashion is sheer seduction and beauty, but its shallowness and artificiality is seen as an upside, since it puts distance between humans and their interactions with the world. Such detachment, according to Lipovetsky, fosters individualism and the ability to choose, thus making the world more democratic. In chapter 5 (pp. 156-173), the author explains how advertising has acquired the characteristics of fashion: "advertising is communication structured like fashion, more and more under the sway of the spectacular, personalized appearance, pure seduction" (158). With seduction as the driving force, advertising becomes a conscious artifice. Ads are superficial, and mere beauty is their goal. The rational and

logical gives way to the fantastic, the spectacular, because that is how seduction succeeds, in a “frivolous” way (156). Advertising and fashion are thus bound to blend with one another because they are structured through rhetoric. As Phillips and McQuarrie put it (2008), rhetoric focuses on *how*; it does not necessarily seek “unadorned truth” (7), but ways of persuading. It is, therefore, tied to seduction: what matters is not the message, but how it is presented, hence the importance of stylistic choices. Aesthetics is “primordial in the work of advertising” (Lipovetsky 159).

In this context, fragrance commercials are the quintessential example where all these characteristics meet. No other ad “celebrates artifice” in such a compelling way, presenting fantastic or dreamlike situations. Even if they take place in real locations, there is always an odd, playful combination of time and place that makes them *unnatural*, pure pastiche. Moreover, they always incorporate magic and mystery, as if encouraging viewers not to take them seriously. The illusory situations of cologne commercials do not invite to closeness and identification, but to distancing. For Lipovetsky, this is how *fashioned* advertising works: “it has no subjective resonance, it elicits no emotional involvement” (161).

And yet, fragrance commercials resonate with a large part of the population. Many of them have become widely popular, with their models acquiring notable fame and admiration. Additionally, perfumes and colognes make up a large part of the firms revenue, and they connect *haute couture* with the *pret à porter*, casual, more accessible fashion. Colognes are affordable for almost everyone, but very few consumers can purchase a designer’s dress. With such economic potential, fashion houses meticulously imbue perfume and cologne advertising with the illusion of their high fashion sophistication, in order to save face down at the world of the average consumer.

Even if the consumer does not just get fooled by the commercial, advertising is vital for fragrances. The buyer will most likely test a cologne before purchasing it, but when she enters the perfume store, with its numerous fragrance samples, what makes her choose a sample is

advertising imagery: “images give us a sense that we know places, times and peoples that we have never experienced” (Schroeder 278). Whether she liked it or not, it is stuck in her head, and the more striking, odd and artificial it was, the better she will remember it. In “Narrative and Persuasion in Fashion Advertising” (2010), McQuarrie and Phillips argue the importance of the “grotesque” for effective advertising. Ads containing negative values will trigger an “intense experience” (380) from the part of the consumer. Although at different levels, the commercials analyzed contain grotesque attributes. Their uncanny elements can be unpleasant, due to the excessive power they confer on the male characters, making them presumptuous, conceited and overbearing. Along these same lines, the dominance of men over women in the commercials can also be seen as grotesque.

McQuarrie and Phillips posit two important persuasive factors for consumer engagement, called “transportation” and “immersion”, which “work by intensifying brand experience rather than boosting brand evaluation” (368). Transportation refers to the consumer “experiencing” the story presented by the ad, an unlikely option for these cologne commercials, due to the excessive artifice they deploy and viewers’ presumed distant attitude. However, “immersion” explains consumers’ potential engagement with the dream-like, illusory cologne commercials. The authors describe this mode of engagement as “creative, innovative and evocative” (387), similar to an art piece in a museum. Observers do not intend to identify with it, but to pay attention to its aesthetics and overall configuration. This factor can therefore explain the resonance of cologne commercials among watchers, even if the ad itself does not spark empathy or identification.

Finally, an essential issue to account for the nature of fragrance advertising is the need to overcome the limitations of scent. According to Zelman (1992), the sense of smell lacks linguistic resources and it is hard to describe it “separately from its source” (110). In the absence of discursive symbols, advertisers choose to rely on “sexuality, wealth [and] rugged individualism” (112), which, combined with “mystery” (114), act as the filler for the empty slot of the indescribable scent. All four men in

the commercials embrace wealth and individualism, in an erotic atmosphere with sexual tension arising between male and female characters. The eroticism is enhanced by the mysterious ambiance of the narrative, with ambiguous conversations and unclear background stories. Much is left unseen and unsaid, but it is hinted by the gaze and the conversations. Several cues lead to sex and sexuality, and that is why gender roles and the representation of masculinity are of paramount importance in the commercials.

The Commercials

The promotional videos belong to renowned fashion houses with a long trajectory in the *haute couture* world. I have examined two commercials from Paco Rabanne, *Invictus* and *One Million Intense*, due to their influence and sales. The ads have an overwhelming presence in the media, and the advertised fragrances have obtained excellent sales: *Invictus* is currently the top fragrance in France and Spain (*Kafkaesqueblog*, *Perfurmative*), and *One Million* heads the US market (*Top Ten for Everything*). Additionally, these videos are worth comparing due to their different setting but same clear-cut exhibition of male power and female sexual subordination. In *Invictus*, all attention is drawn to a shirtless man (former rugby player Nick Youngquest) who walks across a crowded stadium at night, surrounded by Greek-looking deities. The model is carrying a sports cup (which is also the cologne's bottle) and he destroys anything or anyone trying to get in his way, in a display of herculean strength. When he gets to the fitting room, naked nymph-like women are waiting for him, causing him to naughtily grin at the camera, as if he were seeking the viewer's mutual understanding. *One Million Intense*, on the other hand, takes place in a bunker where a man (the model Mat Gordon) with magic powers sets up an encounter with a woman. Every time he snaps his fingers, he obtains something he wants, gradually changing the setting and undressing the woman. In the end, her skin turns gold, like the fragrance, and she ends up embracing him. He therefore possesses her like he can possess the bottle.

Giorgio Armani and Chanel opt for a more classic and classier man. *Armani Code Ice* (2014) features Hollywood star Chris Pine, who adopts different identities at the same time to show a woman passing by that she will not be able to escape him: he is a bartender, a customer, a businessperson and a trend-setter. Eventually, he waits for her in a car and they both drive off together after he says “I thought I’d lost you”. When the voice-over announces the fragrance, the message “Armani Code: unforgettable” is displayed. Meanwhile, in *Bleu de Chanel* (2010), the French actor and model Gaspard Ulliel plays a photographer who has several flashbacks while he is giving a press conference. The person prompting such memories is a girl seating among the other journalists. The flashbacks provide a background story, in which he was a photographer and she was first, his model, and then his lover. Back at the present, he goes through a meltdown and unexpectedly leaves the room after claiming “I’m not the man I’m expected to be anymore”, cueing the fragrance’s motto: “be unexpected”. As he makes his way out, the walls fall down, as if his energy had torn them down.

All four narratives are set in an uncanny atmosphere that is the cause, or consequence, of the man’s magic powers, who is a youthful, good-looking male in his late twenties or early thirties. He displays confidence, authority and initiative, in contrast with his female counterparts, who are passive individuals charmed by him. This same trend is also present in recent videos by other fashion houses. In *Only the Brave* (2014), by Diesel, an athletic man runs through a futuristic city. The place is full of obstacles he has to elude, while a woman eyes him and exchanges a deep, intimate gaze with him. Eventually, he makes it to the top of a building overlooking the city and stares into the horizon while a voice-over states “take over tomorrow”. In *Dior Homme* (2013), Hollywood star Robert Pattinson exchanges sexual and other encounters with a woman he has seduced and now follows him wherever he goes as if she were his little puppet. All images are in black and white, providing a vintage style, except for the end, in which the golden hues of sunset match his beige and black attire, which also resembles the fragrance.

The Artifice Of Time And Place

In “Fashion and Popular Culture”, Wilson (2003) addresses the concept of nostalgia as a mechanism deployed by fashion, which seeks the “appropriation of the past” (172). In my study, I argue that fashion also utilizes places in order to evoke alternative worlds, so that consumers can impersonate not just an artificial epoch, but also a physical space. Indeed, the defining characteristic of fragrance commercials is time and place playfulness, superimposing the present with previous eras and combining different spaces in the same scenario. They constitute a key motif that makes the commercials eye-catching and thrilling.

Such is the amalgamation of historical periods and geographic locations that time and place cannot be analyzed separately. The lack of a present or past is a key component in *One Million Intense*, where the absence of outside references draws the attention exclusively to the man, the woman and their sensuous encounter at an isolated bunker. Meanwhile, the other three commercials share a nostalgic drive for a classy past that connects with the present. *Invictus* is the video with the most marked temporal and spatial contrasts, blending classic mythology with contemporary music (the song *Power* by the rapper Kanye West) and fashion shows with sports games. The sports theme connects the athletic spirit of Old Greece with a present-day stadium, but the world of fashion modeling also intervenes, as the man seems to catwalk on an arena that resembles a fashion show. At some point, it is worth wondering whether Nick Youngquest is an athlete, a model, a deity, or all of them at once.

In “Behind the scenes with Chris Pine”, the video director of *Armani Code Ice*, Andrew Dominik, expressed his desire to include an “Italian setting”, resulting in the combination of Italian architecture with the skyline of Los Angeles, and thus fusing the classic and the modern. Another optimal example is the video’s tune, a remix of Rossini’s *Barber of Seville* by DJ Brian Burrows that fuses opera and electronic music. Additionally, Chris Pine’s multiple roles are a modern impersonation of

the main character in Rossini's piece, who disguises himself in order to seduce a woman. Finally, Scorsese's *Bleu de Chanel* mixes the present of the press conference with the 1960-1970's aesthetics of the flashbacks. The song "She said Yeah" (1965) by The Rolling Stones, and the women's hairstyle and clothes are the main cues that enable the time travel. Regarding space, two other locations appear besides the press conference room: New York's subway and a bourgeois home reminiscing of the 19th century. In the last sequence, Gaspard Ulliel hastily leaves the room while the thin walls fall down, revealing the actual movie studio and accentuating the artificiality of the whole scenario.

In spite of such remarkable references to the past and alternative spaces, something remains in the present and sparks the connection with the young people these commercials try to persuade: the men themselves. Their overall style and demeanor do not mirror the past; instead, they reflect a trendy person who lives in the present and presents himself as a role model of current masculine beauty. This clash of the ultimate, good-looking model that belongs with fashion magazines with other worlds and periods heightens the purposeful artifice of cologne commercials.

All these men have supernatural powers that help them take over the people and space around them: "in advertising contexts [...] men create a sense of identity by extending out from their body to control objects and other people" (McKinnon 91). This mysterious magic is part of the fictional world involving cologne commercials, which makes them derisible and even subject to mockery. But this ostensive display of fantasy is perfectly balanced with an element consumers can relate to: the body. The models showcase a fashionable, beautiful and youthful body whose perfection becomes a desirable goal.

The Man: His Body

The 19th century brought about a significant change in the habits and attitudes of men and women towards clothing and cosmetics. Men "were excluded from the glitter of artifice" in what was

coined as “the great male renunciation” (Fluegel 1930, Lipovetsky 1987, Entwistle 200). The reason for this shift can be found in the rise of bourgeois society, in which men were expected to be “useful” (Entwistle 154). As a consequence, the luxury and pomposity associated with fashion was reserved just for women. In such context, the suit became the masculine garment par excellence, linked to “respectability and the desire to be business-like or professional” (Entwistle 173). Neglected from the sphere of fashion, ignored by the *gaze*, men in suits were the representation of a de-sexualized body (Entwistle 174). The 1980s, however, were a major breakthrough in terms of men and fashion: clothing, style and beauty were no longer exclusively for women. As opposed to the aforementioned “renunciation”, the male figure also became the target of fashion advertising, thus reflecting a “narcissistic preoccupation with his appearance” (Entwistle 146). Since the early 19th century and up to the late 1900s males were outside the fashion spectrum; their relation to dress and appearance was supposed to be purely practical. But from the 1980s, the access of males to the fashion realm and their presence in ads and magazines brought about the eroticization and objectification of male bodies. It was the advent of the “new man” (Triggs 1992; Entwistle 2000).

In the *Invictus* commercial, overt eroticism is shown in the model’s tattooed, muscled torso. The gaze is inevitably drawn to his half-naked body, and his demeanor also indicates that he wants to be the center of attention and the object of desire. The other three commercials show men in suits. These garments, contrary to the old-style idea of *de-sexualization*, contribute to eroticism: “clothing [...] is a crucial feature in the production of masculinity and femininity” (Entwistle 143). The suit has a dual goal: it showcases the traditional, respectable man while also making him desired, bridging the classic with the more youthful and rebel spirit. All three men wear the suit in a non-traditional way: unbuttoned shirt and no tie. The dressed body shows signs of undressing, inviting the viewer to imagine the man’s naked body and picture the sexual encounter with the woman who is so enthralled by him. Even though the body is only overtly exposed in the *Invictus*

commercial, the different garments the other models wear and the frequent glimpses to their chests are a sign of their muscular, slender figures: “physical power is denoted by the muscular tones of the male body [...] viewed as both aesthetically and sexually pleasing although the latter is not readily accessible” (Triggs 28).

Moreover, the commercials show pervasive beauty and youth, a symbol for the “hedonistic, juvenile mass culture” (Lipovetsky 99) elicited by modern fashion. The men always look impeccable no matter what they do or how they feel. Nick Youngquest (*Invictus*) is carrying a large, bulky trophy, showing no exhaustion whatsoever. *One Million's* Mat Gordon is swiftly moving around, but his look is always spotless. Giorgio Armani's Chris Pine adopts multiple roles in the commercial, but his face stays the same, and he looks neat in all occasions. Chanel's Gaspard Ulliel is put under pressure, but no sweat or awkward frowning affect his handsome face. The force of beauty makes it transcend the human and transport the models to the divine. Besides the magic powers that all four protagonists have in common, it is worth noting the influence of classic Greek aesthetics and topics in the Paco Rabanne commercials. Triggs claims that Greek corporeal culture and naked representations were a “cult for wholeness and physical beauty” (28) that went beyond the material, thus placing desire out of reach and transforming the human into the divine. In *Invictus*, the man is surrounded by gods and goddesses, and the women waiting for him at the fitting room replicate the nymphs and priestesses. In *One Million*, the man turns the woman's naked body into gold, thus mirroring the myth of king Midas.

But the objectified, seductive male body finds its most clear-cut expression in the cologne bottle. Back in 1994, Murphy already pointed at the ingenuity that sellers put into the package. A striking, artistic bottle was also necessary to try and overcome the growing competition among brands. The advertisers of these four fragrances seek to transport the model's youthfulness and flawless beauty to the bottle; their attributes are conveyed by the container. *Invictus'* bottle is the trophy the model carries; *One Million's* is a tall, narrow bottle that resembles the

model's slender body; Armani's is dark and elegant, like the man's clothes; *Bleu de Chanel's* squared shape matches the model sitting with his arms stretched and his blazer on. Additionally, the bottle's color matches the predominant hues in the commercial: grey, gold, black/grey and dark blue, respectively.

The Man: His Role

The men in the commercials are highly fashioned. Their style is crucial for their seductive power, and they are all objectified and perused by the sexualized gaze. However, this *new man* does not go beyond the aesthetic. In terms of demeanor and attitude, the models communicate the traditional role of masculinity, defined as control and power. Their supernatural abilities empower them and endow them with confidence and self-assertion. They have complete control over the situations, and they spark an intimidating, yet enchanting feeling.

Moreover, the models display ostensive wealth and success, visible in their clothes but also in their relation to spaces and objects. *Invictus* is an admired celebrity; *One Million* appears in a luxury bunker resembling a Swiss bank; *Armani Code* drives an expensive sports car; *Bleu de Chanel* inhabits a bourgeois house. Three out of the four men are smothered by paparazzi, and all of them dominate the moves and feelings of women. They exert control, but they are not controlled by others. This visual manifestation of strength and affluence is the symbol of the confidence they irradiate, which ultimately sustains the "myth of masculine independence" (McKinnon 89). They do not have family ties; instead, they search for the woman they want, conscious of their success.

McKinnon (2003) defines the 1970s as a period of "stereotypical" gender portrayal. The concepts that, according to the author, 1970s advertising communicates about men are "intelligence", "independence" (88) and "authority/dominance" (90), and all of them correspond with the men in the studied cologne commercials. Conversely, he advocates a shift in the perception of men during the 1990s, more lenient with the

forementioned eroticism and objectification. McKinnon claims that in more recent decades men have been deployed by advertising in ways that in the past would only correspond to women, due to the dynamism of gender as a construct (93). However, he argues that a certain type of advertising sticks to very traditional views of masculinity: car and beer commercials. After examining the characteristics attributed to men in these advertisements, I found them to be analogous to my four case studies: free, individualistic men surrounded by women who “admire and respond sexually to masculinity” (98). Cologne commercials can then be grouped with alcohol and vehicles, which coincidentally are present in the analyzed videos (*One Million* prepares a drink while his woman gets naked, and the *Armani Code* commercial features the sports car). These four men therefore embody the traditional notion of masculinity as powerful, independent and authoritarian, while also portraying an intense sensuality and voyeuristic desire that masculinity has been immersed in since the 1980s and 1990s: “male representations have changed in the last few decades, but male dominance remains” (Schroeder and Zwick 45).

The image of the lone man who makes advances was labeled as a “hero shot” by Schroeder and Zwick, who argue that the lack of evidence for the heterosexuality of these individuals might easily allow for a *gay* reading. To safeguard this much cherished masculinity, these commercials ensure that *their* men have an active role that justifies their (sexual) scrutiny. One of Paco Rabanne’s men is a rugby player, and the other might easily be conceived as some tycoon or entrepreneur; Chris Pine adopts multiple personalities including white collar jobs and bartending; and Gaspard Ulliel plays a photographer. Additionally, they compensate their being eyed by the viewer with doing something: walking, setting up a date, driving, giving a press conference and so forth. In this sense, Holt and Thompson (2004) account for the existence of a “man-of-action hero” in American consumer culture, who is the middle ground between the traditional “bread-winner” (the hard-working, responsible father) and the “rebel” (the amoral, independent cowboy):

Man of action: must be adventurous, exciting, potent, and untamed, while also contributing to the greater social good. He must be perpetually youthful, dynamic, and iconoclastic, while at the same time fulfill the duties of a mature patriarch. He must continually defy the social status quo, while he enjoys a considerable degree of status and respect. He must be an unreconstructed risk taker, be dangerous, and yet be utterly indispensable to the integrity and functioning of the social order (429).

The men from Rabanne, Dior and Chanel fit into these characteristics, showing a sassy, sometimes unorthodox behavior. But despite their recklessness, arrogance and self-absorption, they are very much respected and admired, partly thanks to the alluring voice-overs and the fascination and devotion shown by female characters. Furthermore, these men are not evil or cruel, like the cowboy, but mischievous rascals with a mysterious aura that intensifies their attractiveness.

On the other side of the spectrum we find women. Unlike the active, daring and powerful man, females adopt a submissive role that obliterates their personality. Their only active intervention (if there is any) is to facilitate the sexual encounter with the man: “the male embodies the active subject, the business-like, self-assured decision maker, while the female occupies the passive object, the observed sexual/sensual body, eroticized and inactive” (Schroeder and Zwick 34). Naked, nymph-like women lie on a bench at the fitting room waiting for their *Invictus*; meanwhile, a girl is undressed and turned into a (literal) piece of gold for *One Million*, looking like the actual fragrance. The female lover of the Chanel man is just a passive model of his camera lens and his own eyes. Finally, Chris Pine is said to be “a businessman, a trend-setter, a bartender and a client”, while the woman is just described as “the beautiful woman” in one of the promotional videos for the Armani commercial. This description sums up the limited female roles: they are just beautiful *objects*, princesses who have been enchanted by the powerful *magician*. Completely seduced by him, the woman just follows her man.

In *Gender Advertisements* (1979), Irving Goffman accounted for the role of men and women in advertising. Thirty five years later, many of his examples still prevail in the cologne ads. Goffman explains that men usually take the executive role (32), but he also provides more specific details. For instance, women “are pictured on floors and beds more than are men” (41). In the cologne advertisements, women appear motionless, sitting on benches (*Invictus*), armchairs (*One Million*), car seats (Dior) or chairs and floors (Chanel). In contrast, if the men are portrayed sitting down, they do not remain still, like the women. Goffman also contends that women tend to be “unoriented” (57), and on many occasions “drifting from the physical scene around them” (64). In the commercials, the woman is never mentally present: while she is not with the man, she is thinking of him; while he interacts and plays with the watcher, she is oblivious to the voyeuristic eye and remains focused on him. Therefore, a clear-cut gender demarcation is very much alive in these commercials. She is what he is not: “as an engine of consumption, advertising plays a strong role in promulgating dualistic gender roles and prescribing sexual identities” (Schroeder and Zwick 21). Despite the modern aesthetic that presents a groomed, fashioned man, there is still an old, classic message.

Conclusion

The 1980's and 1990's shift towards male objectification is a consolidated trend today, with the unstoppable incorporation of men to the fashion world in which beauty, youthfulness and individualism prevail, as it has been shown in the four cologne commercials under analysis. And yet the meticulous, stylish and cutting-edge physique of the male protagonists goes hand-in-hand with traditional views on gender, in accord with Goffman's study of gender advertising during the 1970s: a subordinate woman and an affluent, successful male who exerts the executive role. This gender division (present not only in the studied commercials, but also in brands such as Diesel and Dior), reveals a pattern in male cologne advertising. On the

other hand, the reinforcement of conventional masculinity may be an attempt on the part of the sellers to respond to the traditional assumption that fragrances are something feminine. To reach out to male population, fashion houses need to emphasize masculine attributes. These men's bodies are the target of the gaze and their attire and aspect are the result of a meticulous selection. But the potential vulnerability of a male figure that is under scrutiny is balanced out with conventional masculine features: from physical, tangible elements (suits, cars, sports) to demeanor and attitude (power, self-assurance, control, wealth). It is therefore feasible to think that we are not completely over the "great male renunciation", and that men's engagement with fashion and style still needs to be justified. However, this is just a possibility, and not an assertion, due to the particular characteristics of advertising.

These commercials incorporate sufficient artifice for consumers to ignore the content and just pay attention to the form. McQuarrie and Phillips' research demonstrates that the grotesque is an effective tool that "forms a duality with the pretty" (379) and fosters seduction. The "pretty" is consumers' ultimate goal, and advertisers deploy all the persuasive and engaging means at their disposal to cater to it. Society is immersed in the quest for beauty, and the grotesque can be acceptable so long as it serves the purpose of perpetuating youthfulness and attractiveness. For this reason, I cannot venture to claim that men still cling to the idea of dominance and power over women just because the commercials picture it that way, since advertising portrays a fantasy of which consumers are usually well aware. Therefore, future research needs to shift from advertising to an analysis of consumer behavior and motivations when purchasing fragrances. That way, we will be able to verify the actual influence of this type of advertising in society, and also confirm if a new kind of masculinity has emerged, or if the age-old *macho* has simply put on a new, fashionable disguise.

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