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Reproduction of Gender Ideology through Russian consumer culture: Iconography of Russian ‘Mother’

Contemporary studies in consumer research significantly shifted the attention towards gender identities and its importance in consumer culture (Epp and Price 2008, Humphreys and Thompson 2014; Dion et al 2014, Cova et al 2013), however less attention was given to ideological aspects in gender representations persisting in today’s marketing practice (Thompson and Üstüner 2015, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). CCT scholars often look at the social reproduction (Bourdieu 1979) and construction of identity as a result of socio-historic and sociocultural change that are evoked through meanings, symbols and signs (Moisio, Arnould, Price 2004, Arsel and Bean 2013). Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) argue that class and gender norms undergo through intergenerational transmission that often represent the collective past and Humphreys and Thomson (2014) suggest culturally iconic images as significant element in consumer decision making process and they represent the ‘bigger systematic picture of integrated political and market structures’ (Holt 2012, McDonagh et al 2012). Thus the theoretical and conceptual conversation around CCT allows this study to fulfil the gap by looking at the reproduction of gender ideology that presumably generates iconographic images of motherhood (mothers) in print advertisement. Following Schroeder’s interpretation we agree that images are core components of advertising practice that continuously circulate in everyday life by producing and reproducing sociocultural meanings (Schroeder 2006, Borgerson and Schroeder 2002;), stimulate gender roles (Goffman 1979), circulate signs and symbols that contribute towards identity formation as well as lifestyle choices (Arnold and Thompson 2005, Featherstone 2006). Thus this study explores archetypical images of mothers in Russian consumer culture and proposes five archetypes of motherhood frequently used in print media. By implemented body of theory in consumer research we suggest a novel theoretical framework that attempts to unpack iconography of Russian mothers and the effect of reproduced gender ideology in Russian consumer culture.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s ‘*symbolic power*’ and Jung’s ‘*archetypal figures*’ we address the following research questions: 1) how females as *mothers* are portrayed in Russian print advertisements and whether they represent singular and universal iconic image of *motherhood* distinctive for the given sociocultural framework? 2) To what extended gender (mother) archetypes are ideologically driven and whether the sociohistoric evidence of symbolic power persists in Russian consumer culture? Russia is a country that passed through several sociohistoric transitions and political and cultural transformations that largely constructed contemporary Russian consumer culture (Roberts 2014, Kaufmann et al 2012).

Mother/ motherhood as a topic of discussion in consumer research has long been linked to the behavioural aspects of consumption (e.g. reflections on child influence on consumption experience, family life, market and cultural capital) (Kerrane and Bettany 2015, Epp and Velagaleti 2014,), self-image formation (Belk 1988, McNeil and Graham 2014, Bettany et al 2014) or so called collective/social identity expression, (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013, Coleman and Williams 2013). Only a few studies vaguely reflected on females’ representations as *mothers* in contemporary advertising practice (Atkinson 2014, Minowa et al 2014, De Laat and Baumann 2014, Granot et al 2014, Lin and Yeh 2013, Zotos and Tschla 2014). We applied a novel methodological framework of critical visual methods (Schroeder and Borgerson 2015) and qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2014) and conducted thorough image analysis of *mothers* produced in Russian ‘mother and baby’ magazines. The

dimensions and categories of qualitative analysis are mainly based on Goffman's schema (1979) and critical visual analysis (Schroeder 2002, Schroeder and Zwick 2004). Totally 45 randomly selected issues for the period of 2013-2015 have been selected and overall 160 valid advertisements with images of *mother* have been analysed.

The results revealed plural archetypal images of mothers in contemporary Russian print advertisements. Namely we explored 1) traditional archetypal figure of mother within conservative family settings (the image contained male figure, two or more children in casual everyday life settings), 2) modern family in more formal settings (male figure, one or more children in more formal settings and representing higher social class) 3) mother and daughter goddess were more often seen together engaged in various activities (here again no male figures observed) 4) mother and child (infant) where the figure of mother is more a background symbolising protective shield for a child (the image mostly did not involve any male figures), 5) positive and independent mother figure (this archetype moves towards Western stereotypes of motherhood where mothers are more often seen in social spaces, more active and engaged).

The mothers produced in ads are representatives of younger and middle social class generation, they usually do not portray dominant agency in the advertisement and are usually passive. We also unpacked the fact of passive and active gaze of mother and child, where child was more actively engaged with the camera rather than mother. The centre of mother's attention remained to be the child, with the mother's agency (as rendered by gaze) expressed only through the child. Moreover, it appeared that majority of pictures are taken indoors and the mother figure was seen mostly in home settings. We also observed the products/services advertised: majority of products were of Russian origin and designed either for child, housekeeping or medical purposes. The content analysis also showed that majority of women in images were not wearing makeup (or very light), the hair was mostly not styled and they were in casual outfit. The character traits observed were more delicate and dependent on other figures present in the ad. Less often we observed physically active and socially independent character. Thus we can conclude that in contemporary Russian consumer culture there are five archetypal images of the mother. Each archetypal figure consists of different ideological meaning and symbolises different character traits. The study suggests further investigation of archetypal figures in Western context that would unpack and give more insights on gender reproduction and ideological aspect in relation to advertisements.