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Dionysian and Apollonian in Advertising The Representations of Pleasure and Discipline in Finnish Television Advertisements

Abstract

The recent accounts of our era usually argue that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality play essential roles in media and consumer culture. Advertising especially is regarded as a place where rational argument is displaced by pleasure and sex. However, it is hard to find systematic empirical analysis to verify these claims. In this article, I examine the pervasiveness of the ideal of pleasure empirically in television advertising by analysing 167 Finnish advertisements. The findings suggest that the prevailing discourse about hedonistic culture and especially the hedonistic advertising culture captures something essential, but that this discourse does not tell the whole story because it does not notice the flipside, the ideal of the ascetically-oriented body that appears as frequently as the hedonistic ideal.

Keywords

Apollonian; Dionysian; Embodiment; Gender; Representation; Television advertising; Semiotics; Content analysis

There is at least a 2500-year-old history of the dichotomy that has shaped the understanding of embodiment in Western culture. One side of the dichotomy emphasizes sensuality and the pleasure of the body, the other idealises rationality and ascetic control of the body. This dichotomy can be seen as the contrast between two powers, Dionysian and Apollonian (Benedict 1946; Turner 1994; Turner 1996; Nietzsche 2000). The recent analyses of our era (e.g. Lupton 1994; Turner 1996; Maffesoli 1997) usually argue that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality play essential roles in media and consumer culture. In the other words, the claim is that culture is dominated by the Dionysian ideal. Advertising in particular is regarded as a place where Apollonian rationality is displaced by pleasure and sex.

There are strong claims in the Finnish debate as well (Karvonen 1998; Herkman 2001) that the Dionysian has overtaken the Apollonian in advertising. However, it is hard to find systematic empirical analysis to verify these claims. In this article, I ask whether this Dionysian thesis is relevant in the light of the empirical study of present-day Finnish television advertisements.

A short history of the Dionysian and Apollonian outlooks

The juxtaposition between the Dionysian and the Apollonian philosophies can be found in early Greek culture. The Cyrenaic school emphasised the meanings of the pleasure of the body. In contrast, the advocates of Orphism thought that it was better to live in the ascetic way and avoid carnal pleasure (Synnott 1993: 8–9; Henrikson 1999: 262–267). Later, the Christian tradition reclaimed the ascetic idea of Orphism, defining the body as a source of sin that requires regulation and control (Falk 1994: 47; Turner 1996: 11). This negative and ascetic attitude to the body became the ideal that has dominated modern thinking. Perhaps the best-known critic of this ideal is Friedrich Nietzsche, who wished to reconstruct the vision of human life centred on the body. He thought that all self-denying philosophies, from Socratism to Protestantism, contribute to the neurosis of the modern personality. In Nietzsche's view, all negative attitudes have to be replaced by the affirmative world-view that accepts and celebrates the body's life (Turner 1991: 12–13; Nietzsche 1993.)

One important dimension of Nietzsche's philosophy is the contrast between two powers, those of Dionysus and Apollo. Dionysus was the god of sexual power, ecstasy, and passion in ancient Greek religion. Apollo was the god of order, rationality and reason. According to Nietzsche, history and the human being are the arenas of the endless struggle between these two powers (Turner 1994: 38; Turner 1996: 19; Nietzsche 2000: 193–195.) Nietzsche is not the only one who has appealed to this dichotomy. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1946) reclaimed the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy as a framework for her classic research on North American Indian cultures. In addition, Freud's theory of psychic action can be seen in the light of such a dichotomy. Freud distinguishes between a primary mental process and a secondary process. In the primary process, the psyche is governed by the pleasure principle. The reality principle then dominates the secondary process of the psyche (Freud, 1990).

According to Bryan S. Turner (1996: 23–24), an Apollonian system which emphasized asceticism, discipline and work prevailed in early capitalism. Postponement was in the key position in that saving and work were more important than consuming, and the denial of desire was more important than its fulfilment (Bauman 2000). The Apollonian ideal of early capitalism can also be seen in rationalization, which is the main principle of the civilization process. This process requires self-control and the suppression of desire. Civilization generates the Apollonian, disciplined and regulated body (Elias 1982; Featherstone 1991a: 81; Turner 1991: 14–15.)

The assumption that the ethic of work and asceticism has been replaced by hedonism is frequently made by critics of late modern culture (Gronow 1996: 105–106). Turner (1996: 23–24) describes hedonism as a Dionysian principle. According to him, pleasure, sensuality, the meanings of the aesthetic, and youthfulness of the body are emphasised in Western culture, especially popular culture and advertising. According to Michel Maffesoli (1997), we live in a culture where Dionysus, the god of pleasure and passion, has acceded to the throne and is permitting a never-ending orgy.

Such claims about today's Western culture are common indeed. Many scholars analyse our era by claiming that pleasure, sensuality, and sexuality is emphasized in contemporary consumer culture. Advertising in particular is regarded as a place where Dionysus dominates and rational argument is displaced by sex.

My primary research procedure is to examine the pervasiveness of the Dionysian impulse in today's advertising culture. I ask how relevant it is to claim that the Dionysian dominates advertising. Is there any place for the Apollonian in advertising culture? To this end, I analyse how representationsⁱ of embodiment are constructed in Finnish television advertisements. I also consider how the representations of embodiment are divided by gender in the advertisements.

Data

Of the 400 advertisements in my corpus, I have selected all 167 advertisements which represented the human body for more detailed study. My data consists of advertisements broadcast on MTV3, the largest channel showing advertisements and clearly the most popular TV channel in Finland. I gathered research material during the autumn of 1999 by videotaping advertisements in the most common program genres (news, thriller series, soap operas, family series, entertainment programs, sportscasts, quiz shows, children's and youth programs, and documentaries). I wanted to ensure that I had advertisements directed at all viewers regardless of age and gender. Most of the advertisements were screened in prime-time (in the evening between 6 and 10 pm), and a few in the morning and late at night.

Food advertisements are the largest product group (26%) and cosmetics and the toiletries the second largest (13%). However, the advertisements promote almost everything from lottery tickets to tools. Both men and women are represented in most of the advertisements (41%); men without women appear in 33 per cent of the advertisements and women without men in 25 per cent. The young and young adults are clearly the largest age groups represented. Approximately 15 – 35-year-old men and women appear in 78 per cent of the advertisements. Representations of children can be found in 25 per cent of advertisements and representations of the elderly (about 65-years and older) only in 5 per cent.

Since fifty-eight per cent of these advertisements were produced in Finland and 42 per cent were entirely or partly made by foreign advertising agencies, the findings of this study also tell us about the representations of embodiment in Western television advertisements more generally. I cannot discuss differences between Finnish and other advertising cultures here, but it is obvious that Finnish advertising culture is part of the Western media culture.

Methods

Coming from the field of social sciences and cultural studies, I deal with advertisements as cultural texts by using a semiotic approach and quantitative content analysis. As such advertisements are texts which establish, recycle, crystallize and modify ideals, ideologies, models and stereotypes at the heart of consumer and media culture (Williamson 1978; Goffman 1979: 15; Fiske 1987: 15; Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1990: 5; Heiskala 1991: 40–43; Giaccardi 1995: 112–113). Overall, advertisements as cultural texts produce assumptions about what things are or what they should be (Giaccardi 1995: 127; Kellner 1995). As texts, advertisements are also important definers of meanings which shape ideals about embodiment and gender in today's culture (Twitchell 1996: 13; Blom 1998: 203).

In his book *S/Z*, Roland Barthes defines five semiotic codes which "create a kind of network, a *topos* through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes a text)" (Barthes 1974: 20). According to Barthes, although every text is

interwoven with multiple codes, any text is marked by multiple meanings suggested by five codes, which are:

- 1) *The proairetic code* applies to action, its logic and to “what happens”.
- 2) *The hermeneutic code* refers to elements in a story that exist as an enigma and raise questions. This is the code of the dynamic of a story.
- 3) *The semantic code*, the code of semes, indicates elements in a text that suggest a particular meaning by way of connotation.
- 4) *The symbolic code* applies to binary oppositions that construct the basis of the text.
- 5) *The referential code* designates any element in a text that refers to our shared knowledge about the way the world works, including medical, psychological, physiological, literary, and historical elements as cultural systems.

I have used these five codes as a method of analysing the significant aspects of television advertisements (Sarpavaara 2004). I have using the codes to investigate how cultural representations of the human body are constructed in today’s advertising. I have analysed the narrative aspects of ads by the proairetic and the hermeneutic codes. I have employed the semantic code to identify the smallest elements (“the flash of meanings”) and analysed their connotations. The “good” of the advertisements’ messages (Falk 1997: 83–86) I have examined through the binary oppositions using the symbolic code, and the referential code to look for the cultural ideals and assumptions in the advertisements.

Here I take two advertisements (Carte D’Or and Nokia- Sonera- Päämies) as exemplifying my data, analysing through them the signification of embodiment into Apollonian and Dionysian. For this I use Barthes’ five codes to ask how Dionysian and Apollonian representations are constructed, and how these ideals are expressed in two Finnish television advertisements. First I briefly describe these advertisements, and then analyse them code by code.

After this semiotic analysis I investigate quantitatively how common the Dionysian and Apollonian phenomenon is in my data. For this I use quantitative content analysis, measuring the frequency of Dionysian and Apollonian representations in these 167 advertisements. I also investigate by means of cross-tabulation how Dionysian and Apollonian representations are divided by gender. As Don Slater (2001: 244) noted, “semiotics and content analysis are opposites in almost every way”. However, they could be construed as complementary. For example, Leiss, Kline, and Jhally (1990) show how semiotic and content analysis can be combined in the study of advertisements. Like them, I try to combine the depth of semiotics with the rigour of content analysis in my own study.

Dionysian and Apollonian representation in two Finish ads: semiotic analysis

The Carte D'Or ice cream advertisement starts with a scene in which a young man sits by his desk at work, watching the office building through surveillance cameras. He keeps watch when employees leave for home. Suddenly, an unexpected movement appears in one of the monitors. The building is not empty, as he had thought. By pushing up the stick of the control table, he zooms a camera to see the cause of the movement. Now he sees a young woman eating ice cream in an office. The man focuses the camera on the woman's bare legs and the open ice cream container. The biggest monitor of the control centre displays a large piece of the ice cream in a spoon which moves slowly between woman's lips. The young man gulps and pants. Unexpectedly, the control system crashes and an elderly cleaning woman comes into the view of the monitor. The man shakes the control stick vigorously in order to get the young woman and the ice cream back onto the screen. He then turns around to see the cleaning woman with ice cream standing behind him. The man turns back to the monitors. This time the young woman is smiling at him suggestively from the screen.



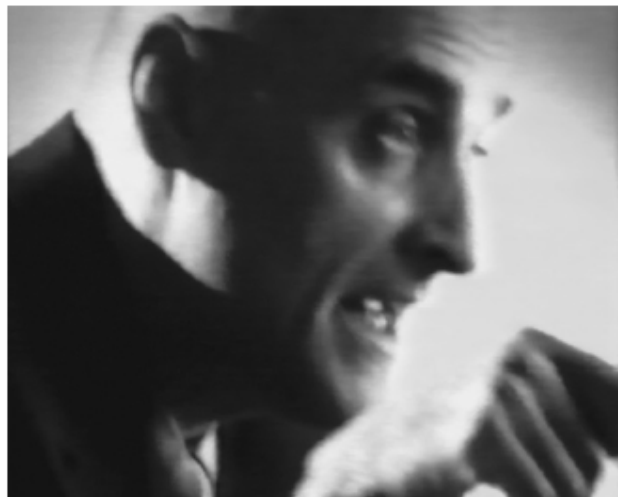


Frames from the Carte D'Or advertisement

At the beginning of the second advertisement, produced for a telecommunicator and teleoperator (Nokia, Sonera and Päämies), fingers tap on the table with a punchy sound-effect in a big close-up.



The next shots disclose that the owner of the fingers is a middle-aged male executive dressed in a suit and wearing a tie. He orders a young male employee: "Fax the invoice to Singapore! For the whole delivery! Ok! Look for it on the Internet! Check the dollar rate! Deliver the picture of our new guy in the export department to them! Book a table for six! That's all." The chief accents his commands by non-verbal body language, pointing at the young man with his finger and pencil and looking him squarely in the eye.



The locale is an office with two chairs and a desk. On the table there is nothing but the communicator and a chrome-plated pendulum. The young, somewhat startled male employee sits opposite the chief and carries out the tasks with the communicator quickly and quietly.



When the commands come to an end, the young man closes the communicator and casts a self-confident look at the chief.



Up till now, the camera angles have changed quickly and the tempo has been quick.

Unexpectedly, the ambience completely changes. Now the chief continues his commands in a gentle tone and dreamy manner “Red roses to the girl” as soothing music (or muzak) plays in the background.



The punchy sound effect halts the peaceful music and the strict look comes back to the chief’s face when he continues: “(...) yellow roses to the wife.” The advertisement concludes with a big close up in which the logo of the company is flung in the executive’s face.

The proairetic code: What happens

Using the proairetic code, attention is paid to the logic, intention, and outcome of actions. The question is what exactly happens in the stories and how are actions integrated into a meaningful whole (Barthes 1974: 18; Blom 1998: 216–217) The action centres on working life in both advertisements. It is fast-paced work without pleasure or sensuality in the Nokia, Sonera and Päämies (NSP) advertisement. The chief gives strict commands and the young man carries out them by using his abilities and the communicator. In the Carte D'Or advertisement, however, work is forgotten and pleasure becomes the main principle of action. This advertisement starts with the episode where the young man watches as the employees leave for home. In the second episode, he looks at the young woman in secret. The woman is enjoying eating the ice cream. Although there is no verbal evidence, the woman's expressions and gestures (her eyes are almost closed and her body motions are languorous and slow) shows that she is enjoying it. The man's panting, gulping, and face show that he is aroused. Nevertheless, it is not completely clear what it is that excites the man; is it the woman, the ice cream or both? The episode concludes with the fault in the control system and the appearance of the cleaning woman. At the end of the story, the young woman looks at the camera, which can be seen as the indication that she knows that she had been the object of the man's gaze.

The hermeneutic code: The dynamic of the stories

Television advertisements as cultural texts include elements that maintain narrative tension. In one way or another, texts impose enigmas and questions for viewers which demand explication. The hermeneutic code can be used to identify these elements. (Barthes 1974: 17)

The story of the Carte D'Or advertisement includes three surprising turns. At the beginning, the young man's work of watching the building goes on as usual. The first surprise is that the building is not empty as supposed. There is a young woman enjoying her ice-cream. The story does not reveal why, like the other employees, she has not left the workplace. Is the reason overtime, the young man, or something else? The story goes on, and the young man focuses the camera on the woman's legs and the ice cream. Is the ice cream or sexual passion the reason for his action? Again, answering the question is left partly to the viewers, but it is clear that the advertisement associates the pleasure of eating ice cream with sexual pleasure. The malfunction of the control system is the second surprising turn. At this point, it is not certain what causes the problem, but the third turn implies that the young woman may have control over the system, since after the malfunction she looks into the camera and smiles. She probably wanted to embarrass the man by causing the malfunction when she became aware of his gaze.

Narrative structure is more straightforward in the NSP advertisement. The surprising turn is the transformation of the strict chief into the romantic dreamer. The story does not say who "the girl" is who gives rise to the change. Why does the chief want red roses delivered to her? Is "the girl" the chief's daughter, mistress or someone else? Again, answering the questions is left partly to the viewers' interpretations, but it is clear that the chief has warmer feelings about the girl than about his wife. In the first place, the implicit question about how the young man carries out his demanding tasks maintains narrative tension in the NSP advertisement. In most of the advertisements, narrative structure is formulated as a question, a problem or an enigma which is resolved with the help of the product. The product becomes the face-saving actor who solves the problem. (Blom 1998: 214—

216) In the NSP advertisement, since the face-saving product is the communicator, the message of this advertisement seems to be that “with Nokia, Sonera and Päämies you can handle even the most demanding job.”

The product (the ice-cream) is the actor in the Carte D’Or advertisement, too; even though, in contrast to the NSP advertisement, the product does not solve any particular problem. The ice cream is in broad terms the actor that changes the workplace into a field of passionate emotions. The main message of this advertisement seems clearly to be that “eating this ice cream is sexually charged action; it is a pleasure like sex.”

The semantic code: denotations and connotations

In Barthes (1974: 191), semes are the smallest unit of meaning in a text, the places in text where the meanings start. The smallest elements of television advertisements – such as a camera angle, lighting, sound effect, style of dress, gesture, posture of the body, expression, and distance between characters – can be regarded as the audiovisual semes. Audiovisual elements of this kind construct the atmosphere and the traits of the characters in the advertisement. Cultural knowledge, knowledge of the visual conventions and the viewers’ own experiences inform the reading of the semes. However, shared, common, and institutional connotations in Western culture can also be discerned by analysing the semes (Veivo 1995: 76; Blom 1998: 212-213)

In the Carte D’or advertisement, the young man focuses the surveillance camera on the legs of the young woman and the ice-cream container. At the very basic level, the sight of the woman eating denotes nourishment of the body, but ice-cream is culturally set up as a pleasure-giving product. The open container is the seme that refers to a pleasure, connoting enjoyment of the taste of ice-cream. The woman’s short skirt and bare legs as the object of the man’s gaze clearly connotes sexual desire. Although ice-cream is associated with sexual pleasure by showing the woman’s legs and mini-skirt, it is not clear whether the man wants ice-cream, sex, or both. In any case, the man’s body-language, his gulping and panting, indicates that he desires something. When he sees the young woman in the monitor, he takes the hold of the control stick and brings it upwards. This gesture represents the action of controlling, the zoom, but it can also be seen as a signifier of sexual lust, an erection and the act of masturbating in this context. The reference to the visual conventions of pornography can also be found in the big close-up in which the woman licks the ice cream, as the connotation of this seme is the male sexual organ. The woman’s expressions, gestures and movement indicate that she enjoys it, and this enjoyment is associated with sexual pleasure once again.

Big close-ups, a common means of arousing a sense of drama (Selby and Cowdery 1995: 51), are used a lot in the NSP advertisement. Views of the tapping fingers, the commanding mouth, and the tough face construct the representation of a strict and demanding boss. The representations of discipline, self-control, and urgency are constructed by such close-ups of both the chief and the employee. In addition, the impression of haste is created by the rapid changes in camera angle. Urgency and endeavours at effectiveness are suggested by the chief’s and the young man’s body language. The decor of the workplace stresses ascetism. There is nothing but a table, two chairs and a chrome-plated pendulum on the table in the room. Although business culture is not slow and directed to the sphere of the afterlife, the ascetic style of the room evokes a monastery where the pendulum has taken the

place of the crucifix. As the symbol of dynamics, the pendulum suggests that dynamic business is practised here with dedication similar to that in the monastery.

The symbolic code: Binary oppositions and symbolic messages

The symbolic code is a structural principle that organizes meanings by way of antithesis. The symbolic structure of a text can be described as a series of binary oppositions, such as life and death, cold and heat, high and low, and man and woman (Barthes 1974; Culler 1998; Felluga 2003). The binary oppositions are the basics of all meaning, and are usually organized in hierarchical manner (Hall 1999: 82 and 154; Emmison and Smith 2000: 67). These oppositions are also helpful structural conventions which articulate the symbolic structures and the symbolic messages of the advertisements. The symbolic message may be things such as health, beauty, status, success, or undefined “good” (Falk 1997: 83—86; Blom 1998: 219—220)

The individual semes and the other significant units of a text take their place in the binary oppositions. In the Carte D’Or advertisement, the woman’s eyes are nearly closed while she slowly eats the ice-cream. Although the woman’s expressions, gestures, and motions do not inevitably suggest the same things to all viewers, we probably place them in “the right place” in one polarity: they signify pleasure, not the ascetic and control of passion. The opened ice-cream container is hardly a seme that suggests strict diet or restraints on desire. More obviously, the function of this seme is the promise of pleasure. The calendar on the woman’s desk can be marked as a seme signifying methodicalness, control, discipline, and rationality but, because it has been laid aside, it means that the things that it connotes are laid aside as well.

The boss’s gestures, expressions, and tone of voice are the semes that signify full activity (not unhurriedness), effectiveness (not ineffectiveness), and authority (not equality) in the NSP advertisement. The young man’s gestures and expressions signify effectiveness and urgency as well, but are dictated by the chief’s action. In addition, the employee’s body language connotes self-control, not bodily pleasure. It appears that the semes and other signifiers in this advertisement try to tell us that a good body is a disciplined one. Discipline, self-control, and effectiveness are the essential parts of good embodiment in this advertisement. In the Carte D’Or advertisement, however, pleasure, passion, desire, sexuality, and sensuality are signified as positive, being associated with good embodiment by the proairetic, hermeneutic, sematic, and symbolic codes. In the other words, pleasure is the shared signified of actions, narrative, semes, and binary oppositions in the ice-cream advertisement. In short, the same binary opposition between the pleasuring and disciplined body emerges in both: in the ice-cream advertisement, the good embodiment is marked as the pleasuring one and in the communicator advertisement as the disciplined one.

The referential code: Cultural ideals and assumptions

All Barthes’ codes are the cultural in a sense that cultural practices have instructed us to read them. However, the referential code is particularly cultural, because it indicates our shared knowledge about the way the world works, including properties that we can designate as “physical, physiological, medical, psychological, literary, historical, etc.” (Barthes 1974: 20; Felluga 2003)

This code stresses that every text is intertextual. According to poststructuralist theorists, there are no autonomous texts because they are always made up of citations and references (cf. Kristeva 1980: 69). Nowadays, intertextuality in television advertisements is manifest in references to movies, sciences, news, fashion, literature, and the history of the advertising. The referential code allows us to locate these references and read the comments advertisements make on them. Such comments may be assumptions like women having to be desirable in men's eyes (Blom 1998: 222—223).

The Carte D'Or advertisement is an example of the genre of erotic advertisements, alluding to a moral code about what kind of eroticism is permissible. This advertisement seems to suggest that the desire for erotic pleasure is natural for young, good-looking heterosexual people. Sex seems norm for interaction between people who have a young, trim, and beautiful body, not for interaction between the young man and an older woman. The elderly cleaning woman represents the antithesis of sex. When she comes into view, the erotic tension between the young man and the young woman dissipates. The aged woman, whose body deviates from the young and trim body ideal of consumer culture (Featherstone 1991b; Turner 1994; Turner 1996), is the signifier of the negation of the object of desire and the negation of attractiveness in this advertisement.

The traditional gender system is another referenced cultural system in the Carte D'Or advertisement, which plays with the connections between attractiveness, sex, pleasure, power, and control. Comments on the hierarchy of the gender system are clearly present. The young man has power over the control system that enables him to watch the young woman. Being the object of the man's gaze does not seem to be an uncomfortable situation for the woman; rather, she seems to enjoy it. The advertisement implies that the woman is in the dominating position after all, manipulating the man's action by her sexual appeal. The assumption seems to be that the beautiful and sexy woman has control and power, even if she is in the position of the object. The woman does not appear to be simply the passive object, but the active subject as well.

Intertextuality is manifested primarily as the references to working life in the NSP advertisement. Some of these references are parodic. The representation of the authoritarian boss is so overstated and stereotyped that it counts as parody. The last scene, in which the company's logo is flung in his face, gives the cue how to interpret this representation. The young man is not the object of laughter, but the real hero who copes with a demanding working life by his self-control, personal ability, and the communicator. Furthermore, the demanding atmosphere of the workplace is not called into question. It is taken for granted as a condition of success in business life. This advertisement tells that you must be disciplined, rational, self-controlled, energetic, competent and young if you want success in today's business life.

Dionysian, Apollonian, and gender in Finnish ads: content analysis

Dionysian and Apollonian representations

On the basis of Nietzsche's and Turner's arguments, the Dionysian ideal of embodiment can be defined as the ideal of pleasure, desire, sensuality, sexuality, passion and ecstasy. It is the ideal that also highlights the beauty and youthfulness of the body. The Apollonian ideal is the counterpart of the Dionysian and includes elements such as discipline, (self-) control, rationality, the ascetic life, and work. The

analyses of the representations of embodiment of the two advertisements discussed can be summed up in the dichotomy between pleasure and discipline that forms part of the broader Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy.

The results of the content analysis of my data shows that occurrence of the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is very common in the Finnish television advertising. It can be found in virtually all of the advertisements of the sample. Of the 167 television advertisements, 98 per cent include representations of this dichotomy. Table 1 shows that 38 per cent of the advertisements were based on the Apollonian ideal, that is to say, the representations of embodiment are constructed by elements like rationality, the control of desires and craving, work, discipline, and asceticism. More specifically, the “Apollonian” category includes representations of working bodies, sporting bodies, muscular and trim bodies, and disciplined bodies in these advertisements. There are also the representations of calculating, rational choice-makers.

Table 1. Apollonian and Dionysian representations in Finnish television advertisements (%).

Apollonian representations	38
Dionysian representations	38
Apollonian and Dionysian representations	21
No Apollonian or Dionysian representation	2
Total (N)	100 (167)

Similarly, as Table 1 shows, 38 per cent of the advertisements represent the Dionysian body ideal: in these representations the body signifies the site of pleasure, sensuality, sex, desire, lust, youthfulness, and attractiveness. This category includes the advertisements that represent enjoyment, partying, sexuality, and experience-seeking bodies. These representations may also emphasize the outward appearance of the body.

Table 1 also shows that 21 per cent of the advertisements include both Apollonian and Dionysian representations. In these representations, the body is depicted as ambivalent in that it is represented as an enjoyer and controlled and disciplined at the same time. This is manifest in a yoghurt advertisement, for example. Here a young, trim, and slender-bodied woman wants to enjoy food but, being worried about her body’s appearance at the same time, makes a rational (Apollonian) choice and chooses the non-fat yoghurt for pleasure (Dionysian).

Hence, the results of my frequency analysis indicate that embodiment is signified as equally Dionysian and Apollonian in these advertisements. The Dionysian representation can be found in most cases in cosmetics, food, and leisure product advertisements. The Apollonian representation appears in most cases in homecraft products, products by occupation, and health product advertisements. It is not unexpected that home and work are mainly the places for the Apollonian, and leisure is the site for the Dionysian in the advertisements. However, there are also advertisements that advertise “Apollonian products” by Dionysian representations, as

in the case of a vacuum cleaner advertisement in which the vacuum cleaning appears as full of sex and passion-laden action.

Gender representations

One interesting question about the representations of the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is how the Apollonian and Dionysian are linked with gender in television advertisements. There are many ways to reinforce and produce assumptions about gender and gender difference in Western culture. Advertising is one of the most effective, since nowadays more and more gender representations are mediated by advertisements. Gender is the issue that is almost unavoidable in advertising. As Sut Jhally notes (1987: 135), gender has become the fetish in advertising. Along the lines of Teresa de Lauretis' theory (de Lauretis 1987; see also Jhally 1987; Bordo 1989; van Zoonen 1994), television advertising can be examined as a technology of gender which produces gender by representations. As the technology of gender, advertising both reinforces and redefines assumptions about gender. It has power to control social meanings and thus the power to produce and convey ideals and codes about femininity and masculinity. Advertising produces gendered experience as the part of the flow of gender representations of consumer and media culture. It can be assumed that advertisements shape viewers' understanding about both womanhood and manhood (see de Lauretis 1987: 2–3).

I used cross tab analysis to study the relationship between gender representations and Apollonian and Dionysian representations in my data. For this I divided the gender representations into "male only representation", "female only representation", and "mixed representation" categories. The last includes advertisements that depict both male and female figures. I then cross tab these gender categories with the "Apollonian representation", "Dionysian representation", and "Apollonian and Dionysian representation" categories. The "Apollonian and Dionysian representation" category is compounded of the advertisements that include both Apollonian and Dionysian body representation concurrently. Table 2 shows the cross tab output.

Table 2. Apollonian and Dionysian representations by gender (%)

	Male only representation	Female only representation	Mixed representation
Apollonian representation	56	31	30
Dionysian representation	20	53	43
Apollonian and Dionysian representation	25	17	26
Total (N)	100 (55)	100 (42)	100 (70)

This table shows that representations in my sample of advertisements are obviously gendered. Women are often represented as Dionysian and men as

Apollonian beings. Although this division is not absolute, it is clear. In the advertisements that include female only representation, the Dionysian representation (construed by the ideal of pleasure, desire, sensuality, sexuality and passion) is more common (53 per cent) than the Apollonian representation (31 per cent). The division is even clearer in advertisements that include male only representation, 56 per cent of these advertisements depicting men as Apollonian (constructed by the ideal of discipline, control, rationality) beings and only 20 per cent as Dionysian beings.

The NSP and Carte D'Or advertisements are typical in the sense that the male representation in the first depends on the Apollonian ideal, and the female representation in the second one is based on the Dionysian ideal. However, the male representation in the Carte D'Or advertisement does not embody the typical male representation, because it depends on the Dionysian ideal.

More typically, the Apollonian male representation can be found in action figure advertisements targeted at children. These ads are full of the action and figures that represent Apollonian elements. More typical, the hero in these ads is the ultra-masculine warrior with a disciplined and controlled body. There are also Apollonian male representations, for example, in the beer advertisements, where the product is depicted as the reward for the hard, disciplined job-related form of body work (see Shilling 2005: 73–74).

As we see in Table 2, there are some Apollonian female representations as well. One of them is in the supermarket advertisement in which the housewives tell the interviewer how rational it is to do the shopping for the family in just this shop.

The findings suggest that pleasure is associated mostly with the woman's body and discipline with the man's body in these advertisements. The division is consistent with the traditional gender system in its binary gender model (see de Lauretis 1987; Hirdman 1988; Liljeström 1996). The Dionysian has been linked with female embodiment since early Greek culture. Since the Dionysian is the ideal that emphasizes the pleasures of the body and Apollonian is the ideal that rejects the body via control and discipline, the Dionysian can be seen as the "more embodied" ideal. Thus the bond between the Dionysian and female embodiment implies that women are seen "more embodied" than the men in the traditional Western gender system. As Myra Macdonald notes, the body has historically been much less important to the definition of manhood than womanhood (1995: 193). From this point of view it seems that television advertising maintains the traditional gender system by representing the woman more as Dionysian (embodied) than the man. Television advertising also maintains this system by linking the Apollonian and the man, continuing the Western tradition in which manhood is largely defined by emphasizing the significance of rationality, self-control, and work (Seidler 1989), that is to say by Apollonian elements.

Conclusion

This research enquired whether the thesis that the Dionysian ideal permeates Western media culture holds of advertising. I argue that it does not. In this study, the claim of the domination of the Dionysian ideal has been tested empirically. This research was needed as there was hardly any systematic research done to substantiate these claims. My research on Finnish television advertisements shows that these claims are only a partial truth. The Dionysian is not the ubiquitous ideal in contemporary Western television advertising; rather, my findings indicate that the dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollonian is so.

My findings also indicate that the dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollonian is gendered. Women are often represented as Dionysian and men as Apollonian beings in the television advertisements. This is not surprising, since gender representations continue the old Western tradition in which manhood is defined by the Apollonian elements and womanhood by Dionysian.

The Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is found in almost every advertisement in my data. It seems that both the modern and the late modern ideals of embodiment flow in contemporary consumer and media culture, since today's television advertisements take advantage of the hedonistic late modern ideal of embodiment, but use the disciplined modern ideal of embodiment as well. Therefore, the prevailing discourse about hedonistic culture and especially hedonistic advertising culture captures something essential, but this discourse does not tell the whole story about Western consumer and media culture, because it does not notice the flipside, the ideal of the ascetically oriented body that appears as frequently as the hedonistic ideal.

My data has been collected from one culture and from one particular period. Finnish television advertising is, of course, only a part of Western media culture, but studying it can show that the Dionysian ideal does not dominate this culture. The result that the Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy dominates my data is not surprising. This dichotomy has been salient in literature, the arts, religion, and philosophy for so long that it would be surprising if late modern advertisements – as the texts which recycle and crystallize cultural ideals and models – do not use it to represent the human body.

Endnotes

- i Like Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1998: 6), I see representation as “a process in which the makers of signs ... seek to make a representation of some object or entity ... and in which their interest in the object ... arising out of the cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker, and focused by the specific context in which the sign is produced.”

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