

Meanings of work embedded in narratives of the self: communication strategies in Nextel's "Welcome to the Club" campaign¹

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Abstract

Using theories of work and consumption, the paper analyzes the advertising campaign by the Nextel brand's telephone services. The paper discusses meanings of narratives constructed by the human subjects who protagonize the ads, presenting life histories that are unusual in relation to ordinary expectations as identifying characteristics of Nextel's symbolic universe. In these narratives, an emphasis is placed on work, as a sphere that can bring challenges, failure, alienation, and success, as well as self-affirmation. Reflections about the spectacularization and aestheticization of intimacy, via the mediatization of narratives of the self, serve as a basis for understanding the role of productive activities in tying human subjects to imagined communities via advertising language.

Keywords

Communication and consumption. Work. Advertising. Mediatization. Subjectivity.

1 Introduction

Advertising discourse is the most visible form of the complex social context in which production and consumption take place. Through the language of advertising we enter an edited world, in which merchandise takes on meaning in relation to human subjects, as a mediator of human relations, thus constituting a symbolic universe ruled by the logic of brand names, advertising institutions, and products. The terrain demarcated by advertising transforms everyday life into a place in which concrete experiences and ludic, fantastical, delirious visions of consumption-oriented languages are entwined: in this way, the individual who looks toward things of the world can use the ethics and optics of advertising's social lens to sustain the meaning attributed to them. According to Jhally,

At the material, concrete and historical levels, advertising has specifically to do with the commercialization of goods, and it came to a place of prominence in modern society as *discourse via and about objects*. [...] More specifically, the discourse in question has to do with a specific and apparently universal relation: the one that exists between people and objects (JHALLY, 1995, p. 13, our translation).

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As discourse that is generated in the sphere of production, whose job it is to cater to the needs of communication— to *publicize*, or to make merchandise public in order to stimulate its consumption – advertising acts as a mediator between production and consumption when:

a) in the *productive sphere*, its role is to amalgamate merchandise, as an aesthetics that superimposes and interlaces itself with meanings that transcend it, the social values, desires, impulses and wants of human beings, materially translated. For Rossi-Landi (1985, p. 86), the production of language is labor and market, since human beings use language to make their thoughts concrete and to put them into circulation for consumption by those to whom the message is addressed. The relations between production and consumption are closely linked, according to Marx (1974, p. 114-115), whose definition states that while production occurs only during consumption, the latter is constituted as a result of supply from the productive system. In Rossi-Landi's view, these relations are transposed with the same meanings to the field of communication: the language produced has potential meanings that only become real when consumption occurs, and beyond that, it is only conceived of from the point of enunciative calculation in relation to the Other, as Bakhtin suggests in his dialogic theory (BAKHTIN, 1997).

The language of advertising molds itself to interactional processes that are initiated in the imagined social auditorium, from which point the enunciator projects his audience and demands it using the message.

b) in the *sphere of consumption*, the *negotiation of distance* is established among the subjects involved in the communication (MEYER, 1998), in other words, between producers and their audiences, bringing the corporative objectives and characteristics of the merchandise to the world of interests and the cultural repertory of the consumers. According to Quessada, advertising created and disseminated a form of language that not only seeks to be a “means of describing the real, the relationship with the world or social ties”; it becomes a form of merchandise to be symbolically bought, sold and – above all – consumed, since, “in advertising, the object, the subject, the means and the goal of discourse are constituted as a single, indivisible thing” (QUESSADA, 2003, p. 125, our translation). In this sense, the language of advertising constructs the place of consumption, both material and symbolic, since it promotes the knowledges and develops the cultures that frame the possible uses of products – which, ultimately, are enacted social practices, in which the supplies of the productive system are positioned in the places of human

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action and interaction. This process involves a humanization of the merchandise and stimulates its naturalization, with the goal of being part of this everyday scene in a “natural” way; in other words, de-semiotized, incorporated into that imaginary place in which the goods are sustained by a discourse of serving human “needs.” In contrast, the merchandise form seems to be generalized into all spheres of human existence, in the process of spectacularization suggested by Debord and intensified in our times, since the consumption of goods takes on the meaning of productive consumption of raw materials, in the process that Bauman defines as the *production of self* as merchandise to be desired and accepted by others (BAUMAN, 2008, p. 20-21). For Jhally, consumption has always been one of human beings’ defining elements, in the sense that practices of appropriation are part of what constitutes us as a species:

The relationship between people and their things should not be seen as a superficial or subjective aspect of life. In fact, it is one of the defining elements of human existence. All societies are based on the kinds of uses that human beings make of the natural world. If we, as humans, manage to survive as a species, it is only because of the “appropriation” of elements of the material world that surrounds us. We get our nourishment from nature, make shelters from materials we obtain from it, clothe ourselves with fabrics made from raw materials taken from it. This relationship between people and objects has been described as a relationship of “objectification” – in other words, we objectify them, as well as our lives, in the materiality of the concrete world (JHALLY, 1995, p. 14, our translation).

The perception of need associated with a marked product is, above all, the naturalization of symbolic aspects that involve the supplies of the productive system, which can even resolve human difficulties but which add to this values and visions of the world that transcend the mere idea of needs. A classic example is given by Bakhtin (1997, p. 114-115), in discussing the sensation of hunger: when it is perceived, a response can be made via the social lens through which we see worldly things. Thus, upper class consumers may think of satisfying their hunger in a fine restaurant; young people may think of sandwiches from fast-food chains; and those who do not have the financial means to satisfy their hunger at that moment may become outraged or anxious about the situation in which they live. All of the above alternatives give the idea of a range of responses that are culturally filtered and determined by the immediate social context, around a single human pulsation identified as a basic physiological need, which is the case of hunger. The sense of “freedom of choice” is combined with the supplies of the market, in establishing a homology between production and consumption, according to Bourdieu (2007, p. 215-217). What is on the horizon of production, as something that is available or potentially possible, based on the technological conditions of the present and its projections in relation to the future, has the ability to invade the social imaginary as a need, desire, dream of consumption. This imaginary is related to consumption, at the

material and symbolic levels – this last referring to connotations and meanings of merchandise to individuals in their interactions with the world, and, in a broader sense, in the consumption of social values, of ways of existence that are identified as strategies of assessment. The superficial plane is simultaneously the most profound and fleeting one in the symbolic exchanges between human beings in our times.

In this sense, we observe with interest the advertising campaign that is the object of this study, the telephone services of the Nextel brand. Positioned in the market as a provider of corporate communications systems, Nextel carried out an advertising campaign that brought individuals who were identified by profession and gave brief summaries of their extraordinarily successful trajectories. They thus translated the process of individualization that characterizes the context of liquid modernity, described by Bauman (2001), in relation to modernity, understood as a collective project with society's common objectives. According to the author, workers in contemporary society identify themselves as consumers, as individuals who make choices according to their desires and wants. In the most authentic liberal spirit, they assume responsibility for the success or lack thereof of their existence, as judged by criteria of the market – which depart from the model that is socially accepted by the majority – having an important, well-paid position, for example – and construct their own narratives of legitimization.

To take an extremely banal example, the situations of professors and researchers: common sense leads many who are outside the academy to suppose that the academics' life choices result from a lack of success in more competitive fields. But the pleasure and personal sense of satisfaction derived from research and the production of knowledge are often never attained by students who seek educational degrees only so as to obtain technical knowledge that will lead to landing a corporate job. This example permits us an approximation of the idea of distinction promoted by the Nextel campaign, which is more carefully explored in the analysis of the company's commercials: the sense of community expressed by the campaign slogan – “welcome to the club” – is based on identification with unusual personal experiences that overcome the disbelief of others, who “don't belong” to a community that is imagined on the basis of difference and individual choices. The sense of consecration of this trajectory emerges from the “results” of the work and personal achievements revealed by the testimonies, which suggest positive outcomes for the personal narratives of these selves revealed by the organizing principle of the brand in question. The narratives of the self organize the existence of those who simultaneously protagonize the advertising discourse that unifies the life histories and produces meaning of the community based on their common structure, sustaining the idea of identity as a standardized linguistic

form. Thus, advertising is part of networks of intersubjectivity, as it reorganizes and edits life histories and thus establishes connections between these subjects who refer to themselves in Nextel's enunciations. For Octavio Ianni,

All narratives, with their figures and figurations, resonate with some form of living, which may be present, past, or future, individual or collective, real or imaginary. They are always constitutive parts of thought, of reality, of feelings and of fantasies. The mystery and miracles of narratives always take with them some or much of the experience, close or remote, real or imaginary, their own or vicarious. Ultimately, within experience are hidden some of the possibilities of thought and feeling, of comprehension and explanation, of intuition and fabulation, which are transfigured, exorcized, sublimated, clarified or maddened in words and narratives (IANNI, 2003, p. 217, our translation).

In Ianni's beautifully phased reflections, it becomes clear what drives advertising discourse: fragments of human experience, slices of life that is lived or consumed, traces of the imaginary of the times are assimilated and reconfigured, edited, narrativized in order to express signifieds of identification of language with the dynamic of social discourses and personal trajectories. It is in this imbrication between the lived and the imagined, between reality and fiction, between self-narratives and brand-name narratives, that the relations between human beings and material goods are communicated, by advertising, by people, and by media discourse. The culture of consumption permeates the narratives of our times, both at the microscopic and macroscopic levels.

Michel Serres reflects on the narratives of humanism in a broad sense, which correspond to the history of great events, in which human beings construct their ways of belonging in a primarily collective way:

I could use the question of universal man, genus, or species, in an unapproachable moment, or of something else, very close but also of difficult access, even in love, with the question: who am I? This question, as badly put as the preceding ones, in antiquity was answered by way of belonging: one defined oneself as a citizen of Athens, as a slave or *hilotas*, as participating in the Olympics, as a beneficiary of Roman law... Thus, one was part of a community, but this did not mean having to push others away to the strangeness of Barbary (SERRES, 2008, p. 35, our translation).

To this form of collective linkage, predominant during Antiquity, Serres juxtaposes narratives of the self, which have their beginning in autobiographical literature, as a way of making life something more than mere daily existence, of romanticizing existences that serve as inspiration and as models, as points of convergence with the lives of the readers themselves:

Who am I? The hero that I play on my own stage? Even when unconcerned, I don't stop telling myself my everyday actions; I tell myself my gestures and attitudes, my work and my leisure; how I walk, think, represent... and I recite it all to myself; I love and, if all goes well, we tell each other. As loyally and as lucidly as possible: will I know how to live, act, feel, cry... without ever confessing, without ever weaving a veil of language that is quiet in the midst of my affects and my decisions? (SERRES, 2008, p. 36, our translation)

in the pages of his book, *A grande narrativa do humanismo* – Serres repeats a kind of mantra, “we all need a narrative in order to exist” –, affirming that the possibility of transcendence that the narrativization of the self represents, as a way of constructing stabilities, coherences with daily life, is marked by fragmentation, by discontinuity, by the absence of meaning in the practice of routines and banal things. In this sense, the narrative is a strategy for aestheticizing experience, a sensitive strategy (SODRÉ, 2006) of subjects in search of permanence, in resistance to forgetting and to the passage of time, a way of producing affections for oneself and for those who share one’s path in life.

In her study of the use of new technologies for exhibiting intimacy, via blogs, photologs, webcams, YouTube, and social networks Sibilia shows the passage from a romantic self who used diaries to develop personal narratives directed inward – in other words, who responded to an intimate need for expression that was guarded under lock and key – to the contemporary scene, in which intimacy is exposed as a form of mediatic existence, in constructing characters that no longer differentiate between the public and private spheres: “The popularization of the most diverse digital technologies and media help to make concrete these dreams of imagnetic self-stylization: alterdirected subjectivities that are constructed before cameras and that are imprinted on the screen” (SIBILIA, 2008, p. 289, my translation). In that process, the self becomes

narrativized in response to objectives, to the search for efficacy in the management of the self as a brand, via the available tools for its self-construction, in a process definitively influenced by the 20th century entertainment industry, especially by the way that cinema established a culture of visibility and of appearances:

To create the desired effect: that is exactly what it is about, when discussing a subjectivity that is alterdirected or exteriorized. And it is for this end that a self-image is created, so that it can be seen, exhibited and observed: in order to have an effect on others (SIBILIA, 2008, p. 279, my translation).

In this situation, the convergence between the meanings of narratives of the self and advertising discourse, which occurs in the Nextel campaign, is perfectly in keeping with the spirit of the times: they are personal brands and commercials that are interwoven in order to publicize the ways that the merchandise symbolizes this search for the visibility of personal characteristics that are desired to be imprinted on the surface, on the body, and on clothing. The mediatization of intimacy in television media, according to Bauman, the spectacles of sincerity serve personal goals as well as those of big corporations, given the consumer’s interest in media products such as reality shows and other forms of exhibiting intimacy:

A number of studies show that personal narratives are merely rehearsals of public rhetoric put on by public communications media in order to “represent subjective truths.” But the lack of authenticity of the supposedly authentic self is

entirely disguised by the spectacle of sincerity— public rituals of personal questions and public confessions, of which talk shows are the most outstanding example, although not the only one (BAUMAN, 2001, p. 101-102, our translation).

In the next section, I will analyze the commercials of the Nextel campaign, with the goal of discussing these questions and concepts in relation to the world of work as it appears in the commercials' representations and significations.

2 The Nextel campaign

Nextel is a company that got its start in the United States, offering telecommunications services for corporations. Founded in 1987, it arrived in Brazil ten years later. Its distinguishing feature, in relation to the products it offers is that it promises to deliver communication services “at your fingertips” via radiocommunicators that are also cell phones. On the company's web site, the term “interconnection” is used to define the company's role in the market. Its target audience is the so-called “businessman”:

The Interconnection, as defined by Anatel regulations, consists of linking functionally compatible telecommunications networks, in such a way that the users of the services of one of the networks can communicate with users of the services of other networks,

or even access their services.³

The advertising concept was launched in February of 2008, in a campaign created by the Loduccca agency, produced by O2 Filmes and directed by Fernando Meirelles, well known for his feature films (such as *Cidade de Deus* and *Blindness*). The first phase of the campaign included seven commercials. According to a press release from this period discussing the opening of the campaign, the commercials showed “individual testimonies by people such as the chef Alex Atala, stylist Reinaldo Lourenço, actress Camila Morgado, and ordinary people,”⁴ also including information about their professional activities and profiles. The second phase of the campaign began in March of 2009, with three commercials featuring TV presenter Fernanda Young, stylist Oskar Metsavaht (creator of the Osklen brand) and visual artist Vik Muniz, according to information from the company's marketing department, published in the advertising industry newspaper *PropMark*. In this article, there is a statement by the creative director of the agency responsible for the brand's advertisements:

“The second part of the campaign has evolved from the first. It's an evolution based much more on form than on content. It would not make sense to tamper with a campaign that successfully repositioned the Nextel brand.

³ Available at: <http://www.nextel.com.br/NextelWebsite/conheca_nextel/interconexao.aspx>. Accessed on: 12 July 2009.

⁴ Available at: <<http://www.propmark.com.br/publico/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?infolid=43573&sid=3&tpl=printerview>>. Accessed on: 12 July 2009.

Now, we have other members of the club giving their testimonies. The big difference is that in these commercials the metaphor of the road gives way to that of the mountain, and that the filming was done by the characters themselves. This is another curiosity, all the commercials were made with an ordinary digital camera”, said Guga Ketzer, one of Loduca’s partners and its creative director.⁴

3 Meanings of the Nextel ads

The commercials from the campaign’s first phase all follow the same structure: the character is seen walking down a road, and as s/he walks, s/he speaks decisively, looking straight at the camera, which is directly in front of them, in a single take without cuts. At the end, the same character’s voice is heard from off camera, with the campaign signature: “This is my life, this is my club.

Nextel. Welcome to the Club”. The reason for the metaphor of the road is obvious: the idea of the individual’s path in life is reiterated by visual and verbal ones. The high profile personalities suggest a trajectory of success in their respective areas, such as cuisine (Alex Atala, head chef of D.O.M., chosen as one of the 50 best restaurants in the world), TV and cinema (Camila Morgado, actress trained in theater, best known for her role in the film *Olga* and for telenovelas that circulate internationally), Cacá Bueno (race car driver, champion in the stock car category, and son of Galvão Bueno, well-known sportscaster on the Globo TV network), among others. The sense of success is also evident in the statements

made by “ordinary people” who appear in the commercials and speak of their success in business endeavors, despite the difficulties they have encountered. The moving images suggest active, determined body expression, with firm footsteps, characteristic of someone who is ready to confront and prevail over any obstacles that may appear. A closed facial expression suggests seriousness as well as a certain irritation, as though the observer were thought of as skeptical of the statement being made. It is a narrative of self-affirmation based on the argument of authority, by showing elements that illustrate the importance of the person’s achievements, with additional support from the discursive memory of these personalities’ media presence. The credibility of these high-profile individuals serves to sustain the claims made by the “ordinary people”, whose situations, being closer to that of the consumers to whom the message is addressed, serves to communicate the possibility that other ordinary individuals will be accepted in the Nextel club.

The “testimonial” aesthetics is evidenced by first-person statements made in a confessional tone, as though the telling provided the speaker with a feeling of catharsis. This is paralleled by a raw visual style with background noise and a focus on the footsteps of the character who, in the celebrities’ cases, is actually a cameo appearance. Because of the commercials’

⁴ Available at: <<http://www.propmark.com.br/publicue/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?inoid=51519&sid=3>>. Accessed on: 12 July 2009.

Figure 1 – Image from Nextel’s print campaign, with Alex Atala.



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Source: <<http://peneirapublicitaria.blogspot.com/2008/03/inovao-na-nextel.html>>. Accessed on: 28 mar. 2010.

standardized structure, we will analyze in more detail one that is representative of this phase of the campaign, which features Alex Atala.⁵ Because his profession is not inherently a mediatic one, we will compare his case to that of a truly mediatic professional, in the analysis of the second phase of the campaign, with the goal of demonstrating the wide spectrum of representation of the world of work and its meanings according to the brand’s statements.

In the commercial featuring Alex Atala (Figure 1), a chef who is known throughout Brazil and internationally as well, the first image is a *contra-plongée* take (from the ground looking up), showing the leafy canopies of trees; then, to the sound of a ringing Nextel phone, the camera moves downward until it reaches the protagonist, who is walking with a firm and decisive gait along a dirt road flanked by trees. Because of his brisk pace, he speaks quickly and breathlessly. His

5 Commercial available on YouTube at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rZsZ9ml4kc>>. Accessed on: 28 March 2010.

gestures are almost aggressive: he strikes his chest to give emphasis to his words, giving the impression of a spontaneous statement:

I'm always being put up against the wall. In Belgium I had to paint walls. Bedroom walls, living rooms, kitchens... yeah, that's right, kitchens. Sometimes the walls open up, sometimes they surround you and close in on you. Time, quality and productivity. If there's a wall, you can put a door into it. That's my life, that's my club.

Off camera voice: Nextel is intelligent, limitless, straightforward and it can be yours.

The soundtrack, with an electronic beat that mingles with the sound of a ringing radiocommunicator, forms a backdrop to the speaker's words and footsteps, marking the commercial's rhythm. At the end, when the off camera voice comes on, the camera makes a lateral sweep in which Alex Atala goes out of focus, coming back to him from behind, still walking. It then returns to the road, and the image becomes divided, with a graphic appearing, showing the logotype and a Nextel phone.

The trajectory shown in the commercial alludes to the evolution of the individual's professional trajectory, which begins with a kind of manual, low-prestige labor that is recognized as material, continuing on to high cuisine, an activity that is more refined and sophisticated, whose prestige value brings a celebrity-like status that extends beyond the professional sphere. There is no direct link between one phase and another, except for the semantic field of the sign

"kitchen": present in the list of menial tasks carried out during his years as a house painter, but later still present in the more sophisticated category of cook. The transformation of this sign's connotations correspond to the individual's professional progress along improbable paths. At the same time, the sign "wall" marks a common element in his past and present: pressure, a heavy work load, control over time and competition are associated with the sign's semantic field. The semantic network maintains textual unity, which, later on, can work against the "spontaneous testimonial", given the lexical choices and, especially, the style that is suggested, framed by the mediatic form of the thirty-second commercial. Here, the protagonist's discourse gives meaning to the kind of work performed, represented as hard labor, as a sacrifice, an activity that could be perceived as privileged according to common wisdom: the materiality of the task stands out, and the merit of perseverance, sublimates the marks of individuality, hand-crafted products, and inspiration.

The second phase of the campaign, launched in 2009, also has a shared structure: the top of the mountain, present in all three commercials, is also a conventional sign connoting successful achievement, the person who arrives "at the top". "Ordinary people" are no longer a component; only people with some degree of celebrity status are present, such as TV presenter Fernanda Young, the internationally known visual artist

Vik Muniz and fashion entrepreneur Oskar Metsavaht, known primarily for his Osklen brand.⁶

This is the place in which the protagonists are situated, partly doing the filming themselves, with close-ups, and, as we saw from the press release above, using ordinary digital cameras.⁷ There is a sense of continuity in relation to the previous phase: the raw aesthetics of the image, “made by the characters themselves,” reinforces the connotations of a self-referential discourse that attempts to erase the marks of the mediating role played by the advertisement, giving a sense of naturalness and spontaneity.

For the campaign’s second phase, we will examine the commercial with Fernanda Young (Figure 2), which includes a professional field already present in the Camila Morgado commercial, the first of this phase: work that is part of mediatic production. Hostess of a program entitled “Irritando Fernanda Young” [*Irritating Fernanda Young*], on the GNT cable network, Fernanda Young also is involved in concept creation for highly successful TV programs, such as “Os normais” [*The Normal Ones*] (Globo TV

network, with Luís Fernando Guimarães and Fernanda Torres), along with Alexandre Machado, her husband and partner in projects of this sort.

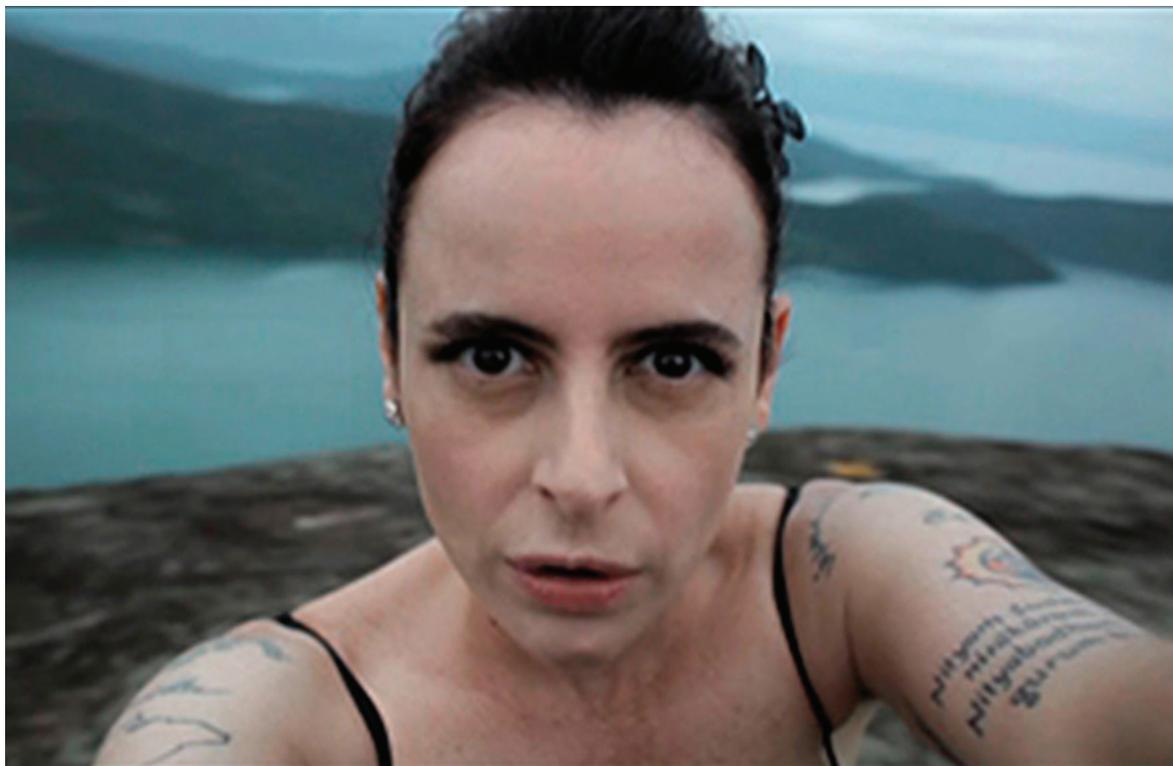
At the beginning of the commercial, to the sound of a ringing Nextel cell phone, we see the protagonist walking toward the camera. In the background, there is a valley with a river and cloudy skies. Fernanda is wearing a gray and black form-fitting dress and her hair is pulled back. When she reaches the camera, she positions herself in a close-up, looking into the camera with a direct and intense gaze, accompanying the cadence of her speech with almost ironical facial expressions. Her back-and-forth and side-to-side swaying body movements create a kind of vertiginous rhythm that accompanies the pace of what she is saying. At the end, when the off-camera voice comes on, she turns her back to the camera and moves away from it, opening her arms toward the valley she is now facing, and saying:

I began to write even before I learned how. I had dyslexia and so I created poems in my head. Pages and pages, all in my head. Then I learned how to write, dyed my hair pink and was expelled from school. Today I have pub-

6 “Today, Osklen has 41 stores in Brazil, three in Portugal, two in Milan, and one each in New York, Tokyo, Rome and Geneva, in addition to showrooms in Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal with exportation to Belgium, Chile and the Middle East. [...] Thus the Osklen Collection was born, with conceptual pieces made in his studio in limited series with sophisticated materials and special finishing touches. Since 2003, Osklen presents its collections in the São Paulo Fashion Week, Latin America’s biggest fashion event.” Available at: <<http://www.fashionbubbles.com/2009/spfw-inverno-2009-osklen/>>. Accessed on: 12 July 2009.

7 Some of the camera angles reveal that self-filming is more of a simulacrum than a description of real production techniques, since it only occurs in certain takes, when the character speaks directly to the camera while holding it. In the case of the Fernanda Young piece, in the beginning of the commercial, when the camera is approaching, and in the end, when it is drawing back, someone else is operating the camera. The image quality also suggests a level of production that is beyond the capacity of a simple digital camera.

Figure 2 – Image from Nextel commercial with Fernanda Young.



Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23oT8NijKTQ>>. Accessed on: 28 March 2010.

lished eight books, three films, theater pieces, five TV series, three daughters.

Pretty good for someone who was considering killing herself at seventeen, isn't it? This is my life, this is my club. Nextel is intelligent, it's limitless, and it can be yours. Access it.

Fernanda Young's "testimony" establishes a parallel between professional and personal life; it suggests that intimate aspects can be seen as obstacles to professional development; the contrast between dyslexia and expulsion from school, on the one hand, and the results of her artistic production, on the other, construct a sense of consecration of a trajectory. Beyond this, her revelation that she considered suicide

in her adolescence (the dramatic effect of this statement is reinforced by a moment of silence in the soundtrack) reinforces not only the meaning of professional success, but the salvation of a life through the achievement of artistic talent and the implicit desire for distinction, for finding self recognition in what she does. Work here has the sense of an artisan's labor, in the sense that the product is identified with its production, to the point of encountering a path for Fernanda's life in general. More than this: her discourse reveals a marked *self-production*, in the sense suggested by Marx, in contrast to alienated labor, which is not embraced by human beings

as their own production. The self-narrative reveals a discourse that delineates the starting and ending points of a path taken along a razor's edge, in the search for identification and for internal harmony. The loud, atonal jazz soundtrack musically translates the sinuous trajectory of the commercial's protagonist. Work is her life, her life is work. The self-production, which generated art and entertainment, with the crowning glory of fame and success, also resulted in her way of life, of overcoming personal difficulties and self-destructive feelings. Producing herself, reproducing herself.

4 Final Considerations

We have sought to demonstrate, via the Nextel campaign, the strategies by which advertising discourse is constructed, mediating between production and consumption – humanizing merchandise, “mercantilizing” human beings. As we have seen, self-narratives, mediated by advertising language, produce the sense of individualizing and particularizing discourse, proposing the intersection between personal brands – sustained by “testimonies” that edit life as a discursive flux of less than thirty seconds – and the commercial brand, in organizing a symbolic universe where micronarratives are sheltered and where they suggest so many others, via the possible projections/identifications of the message's consumers. The world of work emerges in its paradoxal meanings: at the same time

that they can be places of self-production and human achievement, in the broader sense, as narrativized in the Fernanda Young commercial, they are also places of competitiveness, intensifying work, time suppression and constant pressure. In this context, the successful individual is a survivor: in Alex Atala's discourse, there is an implicit reference to the defeat of competitors, to outwitting those who are envious of his success, to the constant risk of jeopardizing his entire trajectory with a single fatal mistake. These are the paradoxes represented by the Nextel campaign, an example of our “great human club” in which work continues to be central to life's histories, memories, and trajectories.

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Significações do trabalho nas narrativas do *eu*: estratégias comunicacionais da marca Nextel na campanha “Bem-vindo ao Clube”

Resumo

A campanha publicitária da marca de serviços telefônicos Nextel é analisada sob a ótica das teorias do trabalho e do consumo. Discutimos os significados das narrativas construídas pelos sujeitos que protagonizam os filmes, ao apresentarem suas trajetórias erráticas de vida, em relação às expectativas do outro, como traços identitários associados ao universo simbólico de Nextel. Nessas narrativas, o trabalho é destaque, como esfera de desafio e de afirmação, de identificação e de estranhamento, de perspectivas de fracasso e de conquista do sucesso. A reflexão sobre a espetacularização e a estetização da intimidade, por meio da midiatisação das narrativas do eu, serve como base para a compreensão do papel da atividade produtiva na vinculação de sujeitos em comunidades imaginadas pela linguagem publicitária.

Palavras-chave

Comunicação e consumo. Trabalho. Publicidade. Midiatisação. Subjetividade.

Significados del trabajo en las narrativas del *yo*: estrategias de comunicación de la marca Nextel en la campaña “Bienvenido al Club”

Resumen

La campaña publicitaria de la marca de servicios telefónicos Nextel es analizada desde la perspectiva de las teorías del trabajo y del consumo. Hablamos de los significados de las narrativas construidas por los sujetos que protagonizan las películas, al presentar sus trayectorias erráticas de la vida, en relación a las expectativas del otro, como rasgos de identidad relacionados con el mundo simbólico de Nextel. En estos relatos, el trabajo se destaca como zona de desafío y afirmación de la identificación y distanciamiento, de las perspectivas de fracaso y de alcance del éxito. El debate sobre la espectacularización y la esteticización de la intimidad, a través de la cobertura mediática de las narrativas del yo, sirve como base para la comprensión del papel de la actividad productiva en la vinculación de personas de las comunidades imaginadas por el lenguaje publicitario.

Palabras clave

Comunicación y consumo. Trabajo. Publicidad. Media. Subjetividad.

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