

# On consumption, censorship, beer, and celebrity: Building the meaning for the Devassa brand

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect on the assumptions of the advertising activity by presenting and analyzing the *Devassa Bem Loura* beer launch campaign in Brazil. The case represents a transition from traditional advertising, practiced since the beginning of the last century through paid insertions into the media, using an invasive model of persuasion, to current advertising, which seeks to engage consumers on multiple media platforms, no longer by imposing sales arguments, but, rather, by invitation and the consenting participation of Internet users in promoting the brand. The article discusses the assumptions of the advertising activity in this transition scenario and presents the creative, visual, and verbal elements that now constitute the brand's signs of identity and personality.

**Keywords:** Devassa brand, teaser, identifier signs, representation of women.

It is a common belief that an ad or an advertising campaign<sup>1</sup> must convey its message directly in order to establish an immediate connection with the reader or audient. However, some argue that the ads that are more easily recalled are those that propose a mystery to the audience, a puzzle to be solved in a short period of time. This creative technique is known in professional circles as a teaser, a message that subverts the advertising formulation code by intentionally omitting the message sponsor's name and the brand name involved in the puzzle and, thus, engages the receiver in the unveiling of the proposed media mystery.

Aiming to create a playful connection with the adult audience, the Mood Agency, specializing in brand promotion and activation, inaugurated, in February 2010, more precisely on Sunday, the 7<sup>th</sup>, a campaign to (re)launch of the *Devassa* brand, a craft beer from Rio de Janeiro acquired by the Schincariol group in 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> The term *propaganda* refers to the process, while *advertising* to the profession. The former deals with the action of convincing, of *delving* into the mind of others; the latter indicates the means to achieve this goal, i.e., the means to spread an idea, whether ideological, political or commercial. The CENP, the Executive Board of Standard Rules, an entity created in 1998 to enforce the Standard Rules of the Advertising Activity, does not distinguish between the terms, defining them as: "Advertising or Propaganda is, in terms of art. 2 of Decree No. 57,690/66, any form of paid dissemination of ideas, goods, products or services by an identified advertiser" (article 1.1).

Using the teaser strategy, Mood rolled out an ambivalent campaign: modern in terms of the media it used (TV, Internet and Twitter), but very conservative in the use of creative clichés (eroticism and celebrity), an approach that ended up putting the ad on the spot (we are not referring to this specific campaign and its developments, rather to the advertising industry in general). These conditions led us to choose the campaign as the central motif of our reflections on advertising theories and processes, particularly on the construction of meaning in advertising.

The reason for choosing this particular campaign (with the [*Bem Misteriosa*] *Very Mysterious* teaser and the [*Devassa Bem Loura*] *Very Blonde Devassa* ad) is due to the fact that at least three relevant axes of propositions concerning the advertising industry were identified in it, through which one can discern where the industry is going after having existed in Brazil for a century and with a few radical changes underway: 1 – the *strategies of persuasion and dissemination* axis, through which it is possible to scale the interactive nature of the persuasive process and the impact that digital media and social networks have on people and how they involve them in differentiated experiments with brands; 2 – *creation and production of meaning* axis, through which the syntactic-semantic elements that sustain the discourse of the brand and the rhetorical resources of the formulation of the advertising message that integrate the symbolic universe of the brand are identified; and 3 – the *ethics and quality* axis, through which not only the cultural content and values conveyed in ads and promotions are analyzed, but also the mechanisms through which consumers and viewers are protected when they feel offended or disrespected in their codes of honor and moral values.

The *Very Blonde Devassa* campaign brings together relevant content in the three essential axes of any advertising or publicity effort; however, we will focus on the discourse of the *creation and production of meaning* axis. The other elements will be described in general terms, since this is an integrated, or 360° campaign as they say in the professional jargon. We could not stop on a single aspect of the campaign without considering its connection with the other ones that make up its line of strategic thinking. However, it is on the construction of the brand's concept by means of advertising and promotional marketing actions that this article will focus its analysis and conclusions on the persuasive advertising process.

The *Devassa* case represents a transition from the *traditional advertising* that consolidated itself, in the last century, with the arrival of mass media (radio and television) and its invasive model of persuasively addressing the consumer, and *current advertising*, which seeks to secure a place in the future, practicing a new way of understanding the consumer behavior, and engage them more through an invitation than by pushing selling content.

In this condition of transition, a few assumptions that underpinned the advertising industry in the twentieth century are challenged by the case, while others are reiterated or updated.

Among the assumptions that were challenged, we can mention the following: (1) Advertising is the main communication *tool* to lead consumers to buy; (2) Advertising is making a TV ad; (3) Integrated Communication is replicating the same ad in different media.

Among the propositions that still recur in professional practice, we highlight two that are directly connected with the theme: construction of meaning in advertising: (4) Sex, humor and celebrity in advertising guarantees attention; (5) Emotion *catches* the consumer.

By presenting the [*Devassa Bem Loura*] *Very Blonde Devassa* campaign, we hope to gather sufficient evidence to point to the emergence of an updated model of doing and teaching advertising.

#### FROM TELEVISION TO TWITTER: THE STARTING POINT

An ad aired on Sunday night, during a very popular TV show<sup>2</sup>, shows a sequence of new footage, only with an instrumental soundtrack: from an apartment/studio, a photographer tries in vain to capture the face of a neighbor who lives in the building across his window using a powerful camera. She is blond and wears a tiny black dress.



**Figure 1** Sketches of the *Very Mysterious* teaser, created by the Mood Agency for the launch of the *Very Blonde Devassa* beer.

<sup>2</sup>The teaser started being aired on February 7, 2010, during a commercial break of the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Big Brother Brazil show, in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, on the Globo Television Network. In the schedule of the attraction, Sunday is reserved for the voting to eliminate one of the participants from the reality show, hence this day usually attracts a larger audience.

Noticing her photographer neighbor's *voyeurism*, she teases him and makes poses reminiscent of the old American pin-ups<sup>3</sup> from the 1940s. Since she moves quickly, the photographer can only shoot her shapely legs, her figure from behind, and the movement of her hair. He cannot get a picture of her face. While reviewing the snapshots he was able to take on the display of his camera, he sees a frame showing the phrase [BEM MISTERIOSA] *VERY MYSTERIOUS* in neon red. The film ends with the close up of a profile shot of the photographer's face and, just below that, lettering showing a website address, from [www.bemmisteriosa.com.br](http://www.bemmisteriosa.com.br).

Nothing else; no brand sponsor, no voiceover in off, only a striking musical score<sup>4</sup> and an Internet address.

By going to [www.bemmisteriosa.com.br](http://www.bemmisteriosa.com.br), Web surfers were greeted with a page that had an image of a keyhole in the middle and this wording: *Very mysterious. She is coming. She is very mysterious. And she will make you very curious. Use Twitter to peep. The more tweets tagged #bemmisteriosa you post, the closer you get to the key hole. Participate and encourage your friends to take part too.*

Creatively planned to involve consumers, advocates and the specialized media for a week, the mystery was resolved in a couple days thanks to the great reaction and involvement of Internet users and tweeters<sup>5</sup> in a message amplification space in which there are not only brand consumers and non-consumers, rather people who rate themselves as *followers* and *followed*.



Figure 2 Keyhole at [bemmisteriosa.com.br](http://bemmisteriosa.com.br). Images posted on Rafael Ziggy's blog in February 2010.

Even before the planned 200,000 tweets foreseen for the key hole to be blown wide open, the specialized media had already spread the news that the blonde in the keyhole was Paris Hilton, an American socialite,

<sup>3</sup> The expression “pin-up” appeared in the U.S., in the 1940s, to designate paper women who, pinned on the American soldiers' locker doors, would cheer them up during the Second World War.

<sup>4</sup> The soundtrack that was used is from Elmer Bernstein's *The Man with the Golden Arm*, a movie starring Frank Sinatra and the winner of an Oscar in 1955.

<sup>5</sup> Twitter is a microblogging server.

heiress to an international network of hotels portrayed through the lens of J.R. Duran, an internationally renowned photographer, for one of the brands belonging to the Schincariol group<sup>6</sup>.

The owner of beer brands such as *Nova Schin*, *Primus*, *Glacial*, *NS2* and the *Nobel* craft beer (Recife), the Schincariol group acquired the *Devassa* beer from the UDC group, União Devassas Cervejaria<sup>7</sup>, in 2007, for R\$30 million. The brand was (re)launched in a bold marketing campaign aiming to establish a brand image and expand the *Devassa* beer consumer base in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where there are already breweries with the same name that act as their own distribution and product promotion channels.

Mystery solved, model identified, a new message was posted on [www.bemmisteriosa.com.br](http://www.bemmisteriosa.com.br) inviting Internet surfers to monitor the progress of the campaign. It used the following wording:

You were very curious, right? But it is not over yet... You will see much more on February 12, during a *Jornal Nacional* newscast break. And if you do not live in Rio or São Paulo, you will still be able to see it by going to [www.devassa.com.br](http://www.devassa.com.br) at the same time.

## CAMPAIGN DEVELOPMENTS

Other marketing actions followed this teaser and invitation over the Internet – new TV films (*disclosure film*, *appreciation film* and *She is back*); magazine ads; *Devassa* brand website reformulation, assembly of a box at the Rio de Janeiro Carnival, *press release*, promotional brand activation actions on the streets of the city; promotions at the brand's breweries and design of the point of sale and vehicle fleet material – all of which well-coordinated under the contemporary integrated communication or 360° communication concept. This means that the Mood Agency planned, designed and produced all campaign pieces, integrating different disciplines such as design, promotion, stage design, press office services, and advertising itself.

The *advertising* part of the campaign included developing films for TV and the Internet, radio spots, print ads and Web pages; the *design* part worked specifically on the visual makeover of the site, with the redesign of the fleet of vehicles and pieces conceived to decorate the points of sale; the *set design* was the responsibility of the architect Marcelo Rosenbaum, who worked on the ambiance of the Devassa Space at the Marques de Sapucaí avenue during the Rio de Janeiro 2010 carnival; the *press office* contributed, among other things, with the brand's outreach efforts in specialized media, to document Paris Hilton's visit to Rio de

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<sup>6</sup> Rafael Ziggy's blog [www.simviral.com.br](http://www.simviral.com.br), after nearly 48 hours of the airing of the *Very Mysterious* ad, had already posted the news at 7:30 PM on February 9<sup>th</sup>: "Mystery revealed: #bemmisteriosa is a Devassa is action with Paris Hilton". The conversation held by Internet users over this blog shows that one of the clues to unravel the mystery was the discovery that the ID/TBWA agency, Lew Lara/TBWA's digital agency, which has the Schincariol Group account, was behind the *bemmisteriosa* website.

<sup>7</sup> The date of origin of the beer marketed under the Devassa brand is controversial. In the *O mundo das marcas* (World of brands) blog, available at <http://mundodasmarcas.blogspot.com/2008/05/ceveja-devassa.html>, the brand's history begins in 2003, when the *União das Devassas Cervejaria Ltda* (UDC) was established. At the time, Joca Muller entered the partnership that had been created a year earlier by Marcello Macedo (Cello) and Marcelo do Rio at a bar in the in Rio de Janeiro Leblon district called *Cervejaria Devassa*, where they already served an exclusive beer formula ordered to and manufactured by brewer André Nothaft: the Devassa beer.

Janeiro, and the *promotional* aspect involved an activation action on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro during the summer of that year, and a national competition with the free distribution of prizes to *Very Blonde Devassa* beer end consumers seven months later.

### THE MOVIE – DISCLOSURE

The response to the teaser came as a 60-second ad aired in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, from February 12, according to information provided previously on the [www.bemmisteriosa.com.br](http://www.bemmisteriosa.com.br) website. It was a controversial film and generated *buzz*<sup>8</sup> even in states where the beer is not distributed or consumed.



**Figure 3** Scenes sketched from the *Very Blonde Devassa* disclosure film in response to the *Very Mysterious* teaser.

Following the earlier film's narrative and with the same main characters, the photographer sees his neighbor through the window and tries to get a photo of her again. She opens a refrigerator and grabs a can. It is the *Very Blonde Devassa* beer. She looks toward the photographer and runs the can on her neck. The photographer then takes other photos and is happy, because this time he was able to photograph her face. The blonde then continues dancing slowly, sensually, while she lowers the can over her tiny black dress. From the beach and neighboring places, young, old, street vendors – ordinary people aged more than 18 years – look at the window and cheer, raising glasses of beer in salute to the blonde of the window who, finally, opens the can and pronounces the name of the beer: DEVASSA! In the background, to the right of the screen, the image of the Sugar Loaf, in Rio de Janeiro. The film was only aired for two weeks because it was suspended by CONAR,

<sup>8</sup> Buzz marketing, according to the Mouth-to-Mouth Marketing Association [www.womma.org/main](http://www.womma.org/main) is based on the verb *to share* and gives the advertiser a reason for people to talk about its products and services, facilitating the beginning of informal conversations of this type between the corporation and ordinary people - consumers or not. In Portuguese “*buchicho*” or *conversation*.

the National Council for Advertising Self-Regulation, on February 26 due to complaints filed on behalf of the *Special Secretariat of Policies for Women*, a body with ties to the Presidency of the Republic, by *Cervejaria Itaipava*, a competing brand, and by some other customers who were offended by the ad's sex appeal, which was considered "disrespectful to the female condition and sexist in nature."

The injunction against the *Devassa* film was issued by CONAR 14 days after it was first screened, on the grounds that its content infringed on section 3.a. of exhibit "A" of the Code that states that "any appeal to sensuality shall not constitute the main content of the messages; advertising models will never be treated as a sexual object." The suspension of the pieces on television, the Internet and in print media was maintained at the Council's deliberative meeting, held in late March that year.

### **REACTION OF THE AGENCY AND FILM – APPRECIATION**

The Mood Agency reacted with humor to the CONAR decision and substituted the censored film for another one starring the package of the beer itself with the addition of an irreverent touch of a black stripe over the breasts of a *retro doll*, the main icon of the brand. Paris Hilton's face appears only at the end, saying the name of the brand. In the beginning of the film, lettering and the voice of an announcer state: "The Devassa beer film starring Paris Hilton was taken off the air. To those who were offended, we offer a new film. To those who were not offended, we invite you to watch the previous film on the Internet". At the end of the film, the voiceover invites again: "Watch the original ad on the Internet. Very Devassa. A product intended for adults".

From April 16, a third film started being aired on TV stations to thank customers and to announce: *She took!*

Made with the same scenes as those used in the disclosure film, it removed the sequences made with Paris Hilton in Los Angeles and kept the other ones shot in Rio de Janeiro, with the soundtrack (which became a sound sign of the brand) and a voiceover in off making a *balance of victory*:

She was seen by more than 2 million people on the Internet. She was the one talked about the most during Carnival. She was the subject in national and international press. We would like to thank those of you who tried her, asked for one and turned "Very Blonde Devassa" a success! She took. Well requested, very blonde, Devassa.





In August 2010, four months after the airing of the appreciation film, Paris Hilton returned to stage the brand's poster girl in a well-behaved film, once again with the Rio de Janeiro beach scene as a backdrop. The novelty was the presence of the brand's promoters, a subtle way to make it possible to maintain the female presence in the brand's promotional activities, regardless of the emblematic presence of Paris Hilton, as in the initial release of the beer during the Carnival at the Marques de Sapucaí Avenue.

The film, titled *She's back*, shows a blonde dressed in black (Paris Hilton) driving a *Devassa* delivery truck next to the Rio de Janeiro shoreline. The truck parks on Copacabana beach; the photographer reappears with his camera and, smiling, clicks the driver again; the people on the beach greet the beer and a character lifting up with glasses of the beverage, while promoters wearing tiny red dresses and caps, the color of the Brand, get off the truck carrying beers in ice buckets, ready for a tasting "by adults only."

### CREATIVE CONCEPT OF THE CAMPAIGN

The creative concept is the heart of any successful advertising campaign. The task of finding this concept and the series of ideas linked to it depends on a strategic work process. It starts with the marketing plan, goes through the definition of the brand's goals insofar as positioning and segmentation are concerned, and continues with the development of the specific communication plan that involves items such as the definition of the target audience, media, messages and methods of measuring the entire marketing communication effort.

The *Very Blonde Devassa* creative concept rests on a tripod comprising: (a) the *Devassa* name, which has existed since 2002, when it was a craft brew distributed at a bar that had the same name, a homonym, located in Rio de Janeiro's Leblon district; (b) the adjective *blonde*, a term used mainly in France and Belgium to designate a *golden ale* (Hampson, 2009, p. 339); and (c) the use of celebrity, American national Paris Hilton, heiress to the international hotel chain, to introduce the product in the purest advertising tradition with the figure of the presenter.

Mood Agency planners and executives undoubtedly assessed the risks and benefits that a creative concept associating the name of the brand with the daring sensuality of an internationally renowned character (or *persona*?) might generate in terms of brand awareness, consumer loyalty and increased sales. The Agency apparently took a calculated risk, strategically designed to add buzz and conversation and, thus, get the media involved in spreading the values of the brand.



**Figure 6** Sketches of scenes from the *She's back* film, created by the Mood Agency for the *Very Blonde Devassa* beer in August 2010. In the voiceover: *You asked, and she came back with more. Well served. Very cold. Very blonde. Devassa beer, very “devassa”. A product intended for adults.*

## MEANING PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

Lorente (1991, p. 27-30) says that the brands that thrive the most are those that can generate daily acts of faith in the market and that trade faith is built with exactly the same ingredients present in the major faith phenomena in human history: (1) a clear, simple idea, one that promises benefits; (2) a basic schematic reasoning that can be understood by all; (3) external and indispensable signs in the task of translating the intangible; and (4) a hierarchy of power that defines and defends the faith.

Since its birth, in 2001/2, the Devassa brand has based its communications on this *recipe of faith*, with the reiterated and consistent use of verbal and visual elements that remain intact in various marketing efforts throughout these years and which today are its identity and personality signs.

### Brand manifesto

The idea of the Devassa brand, or its *DNA*, is expressed in a Manifesto that symbolizes the cultural universe of the brand:

A beer that is self-proclaimed Devassa must at least be authentic. Because it takes on everything that other beers would like to be, but would die of shame if doing so. Devassa is very happy, it has that mood that attracts good things, interesting people and fun conversations. Asking for a Devassa has the right amount of ulterior motives. Devassa drinkers are looking for freedom. They do not pretend to be what they are not.

Devassa is quite witty, it catches you by the collar, seduces you with its sent, and makes you fall in love for good with its flavor. So much so that many people cannot resist the temptation. And as beer, Devassa has its irresistible draft beer – raw, unpasteurized and always extremely fresh.

In addition to the smoothness and the unmistakable flavor, it has a cream that is pure lust. All it takes is two to three fingers to ensure a legion of fans. In sum, those who know it, know.  
With Devassa, life is a delight.  
Very cold. Very refreshing.  
Devassa. The very Devassa beer<sup>9</sup>.

Supported by the fact that *Pilsen*-type beers are called *blonde* in Europe, the manifesto develops its argument about the rhetorical devices of the double meaning and of the personalizing metaphor through which the *blonde* [beer] turns into a *blonde* [woman] and the term *de.vas.sa* (*Feminine noun: Inquiry, investigation*) is used in its adjective form, *de.vas.so* (*Devoid of moral values, unruly or immoral behavior*). But, conversely to what is recommended by good customs, the *Manifesto* brings us to accept that being “devasso” means, in fact, being authentic, a value to be cultivated or, even better, to be asked for.

The pragmatic discourse about the physical characteristics of the product (designated in the manifesto by words such as *collar, aroma, flavor, raw, unpasteurized, soft, very fresh, ice cold, refreshing*) is overlapped by a predominant emotional argument that is based on the symbolic values of the brand (*genuine, cheerful, good mood, interesting, fun, ulterior motives, freedom, witty, seduces, makes one fall in love, temptation, lust, fans, hot*).

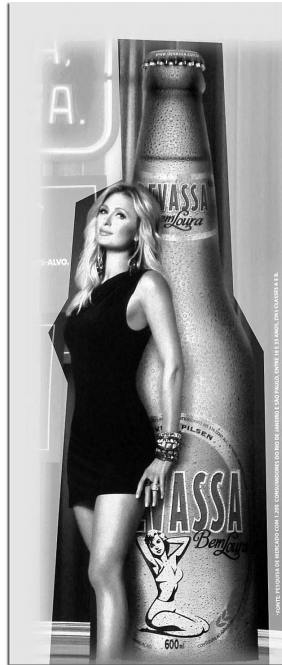
Lannon (quoted in Jones, 2004, p. 68) sets out a few principles that help explain how the visual metaphors (in particular, the blonde/bottle metaphor) endow the beer brand with symbolic values and are effective advertising motifs: (1) The visual metaphors allow the use of exaggerations that would not be possible in a persuasive rational line of argumentation; (2) The visual metaphors are economical because they *embed* various types of information in a single image; (3) The visual metaphors are useful to define the brand's exclusivity territories; (4) The visual metaphors lend themselves to abbreviations and can be translated similarly to logos, packaging, ads, text and gifts; and (5) The visual metaphors help build a bridge between the product and brand image.

The reader is led in a clear, simple manner to understand the main benefits that consuming the product promises: a Devassa beer is as pleasurable as being seduced by a hot blonde. And it is equally simple reasoning to deduce the following schematic: both pleasures – a cold beer or falling in love with a hot blonde – deserve no resistance; rather, they show that you are authentic and not afraid to let yourself go with the feeling of sensorial pleasure. So you're *the man!* Everyone applauds. You, the consumer and connoisseur of Devassa beer, become a role model. *Devassa* gets the status of a substantive name, a prestigious brand. From the

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<sup>9</sup> Available at: <http://www.devassa.com.br/adevassa.php?yes=yes>. Accessed in May 2010.

feminist perspective (Camille Paglia's 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of feminism), Paris Hilton symbolizes the power that is extracted precisely from her condition of being not only a woman, but also beautiful, rich and desirable.



**Figure 7** *Bottle woman*, taken from an ad published in the April issue of the Supermercado Moderno (SM) magazine.

Joannis identified this persuasive strategy as a “symbolizing bisection” (1988, pp. 59-61), a common area of intersection between two seemingly strange worlds and from which impact and communication emerge.

### **Signs identifying the brand**

The Devassa graphical brand makes a reinterpretation of traditional American pin-ups that were popularized by American illustrators such as Gil Elvgren (1914-1980)<sup>10</sup>, undoubtedly the most renowned representative of the genre of the twentieth century, and followers such as George Quintana (1930s), Alex Schomburg (1940s), and Peter Driben (1950s), among others.

The suggested but never materialized nudity is the key point that characterizes the pin-up genre of illustrations that became popular among American soldiers in the 1940s and was encouraged by the military authorities as a *secret weapon* to boost the combatants' morale. Typical of this period are the paintings of girls on warplane fuselages as good luck charms, which gave rise to so-called nose art. They are usually portrayed

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<sup>10</sup> See this type of work at [www.gilelvgren.com](http://www.gilelvgren.com).

with large breasts, narrow waists, shapely legs, heels and suggestive, low-cut or transparent clothes; in the war period, their clothes were adaptations of the military uniforms in shorts and bustiers.



**Figure 8** Three examples of pin-ups. Two reproductions of artist Peter Driben, USA, for Whisper magazine, 1950, and First magazine, 1954; to the right, a picture for German magazine Gondel, 1959.

Source: Dian Hanson's: The history of Girly Magazines, 2006, p. 193,180 and 479, respectively.

In Brazil, the pin-up illustrator of was José Luis Benício (1936-), or simply Benício, a Rio Grande do Sul native from Rio Pardo, who began his career at 16 as an apprentice designer at an advertising agency in Porto Alegre. He became notable both for the numerous illustrations he made for police and spy novel covers for the Monterrey publishing company, and also for divulging posters for the so-called “pornoanchadas,” a type of sitcom that dominated Brazilian cinema between the 1960s and 1980s (Junior, 2006)<sup>11</sup>.



**Figure 9** Benício poster for the film that launched Vera Fischer as a sex symbol. Available at <http://www.benicioilustrador.com.br/>. Accessed in: Nov 2010.

<sup>11</sup> and <http://www.benicioilustrador.com.br>

I cannot state it for sure, but I have no doubt about the influence of these masters, Elvgren, Driben and Benício, on the Devassa brand graphical design. The little retro doll, as it is called, displays the same features as the pin-ups and sex symbols: it is both provocative and sensual, but not vulgar or explicit.

### Brand slogans

Troiano (2009, p. 122)<sup>12</sup> acknowledges that slogans are a mandatory feature in brand communication. For a long time, the Devassa beer slogans (or *battle cries*) were *A turn-on beer*, which, although bold, was never reported to CONAR<sup>13</sup> as offensive to society.

When the campaign was launched in 2010, this slogan was substituted for [*Bem Loura. Bem Devassa*] *Very Blonde. Very Devassa*. However, since slogans are generally printed on semi-permanent materials at points of sale or points of dosing (bars, pubs and restaurants), such as luminous displays, refrigerators and other displays, you can still find bars and stores with *A turn-on beer* printed on a variety of merchandising materials.



**Figure 10** Logo and graphic symbol of Schincariol's *Very Blonde Devassa* Beer, inspired by the graphic pin-up tradition.

**Figure 11** Luminous display in a bar in São Paulo. (Photo Sandra Souza, April 2010.)

These materials are typically supplied to retailers in a cooperative manner and have a longer life cycle than advertising campaigns do. For this reason, as a rule, the content of pieces intended for points of sale does not allude to the concept of advertising campaign, rather to the concept of brand and the slogan, which are more durable.

The Devassa breweries maintain the *Cervejaria Devassa* slogan. *It is made here. It is drunk here*, reminding patrons of the origin of the brand and of the craft beer.

<sup>12</sup>According to a survey conducted of the content of 540 issues of Editora Abril's Claudia Magazine, over 45 years of print advertising.

<sup>13</sup> In 2007, an ad of the brand titled *Before Christ, some peoples already made craft beer. Thankfully, after Christ they invented sin* was the subject of a CONAR judgment and suspended after all applicable appeals. In his opinion, the relator mentions that using the *A turn-on beer* slogan, in isolation and separately, had not been analyzed in the representation, therefore it was not included in the suspension decision.

### **Semantic universe of the brand**

The semantic universe of the brand was skillfully built by means of previous campaigns carried out by McCann Erickson and W/, both from Rio de Janeiro, between 2005 and 2009. These pieces can be found in the archives of the Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo Creation Clubs ([www.ccrj.irion.com.br](http://www.ccrj.irion.com.br) and [www.cbsp.com.br](http://www.cbsp.com.br), respectively).

In 2007, for example, a promotion created by Rio de Janeiro's McCann Erickson for the Devassa Brewery produced calendars for the brand using, in each month, selected illustrations of the work of Carlos Zéfiro<sup>14</sup>, the master of erotic comics, to establish the “A turn-on beer” concept.

The calendars were sold at Devassa boutiques, spaces located within the breweries of the same name and where consumers could purchase various items of the *Devassa culture*, for example, the *Catechisms of Carlos Zéfiro*, reissued by the Cena Muda publisher; books of the *Erotic Tales* collection with titles of Cassandra Rios and Almodóvar, and collectibles such as glasses, buckets and coasters with the Devassa brand.

Other promotional marketing actions reinforce this semantic universe associated to Rio de Janeiro eroticism and humor. In 2009, for example, the brand's Breweries launched, through the W/ Agency, the kiss promotion to celebrate Valentine's day. In Rio, to participate, all one had to do was go to one of the *Devassa* breweries on Valentine's day, from 7 PM and kiss for 30 or 60 seconds; participating couples received, based on how long the kiss lasted – 30 or 60 seconds, a free glass of draft beer and discounts at motels, in addition to prizes such as condoms, handcuffs, small whips and copies of the *Kama Sutra for women* book. In São Paulo, from June 5 to 15 2009, couples should buy a combo of the *Devassa* promotion and kiss for 30 seconds to win a copy of the book.

Concurrent with the launch of *Very Blonde Devassa* on TV and on the Internet, during Carnival 2010, activation and degustation actions were carried out by the Mood Agency on the Leme, Copacabana, Ipanema, Leblon and Barra beaches, in Rio de Janeiro. A cart called *centipede*, mounted on a structure of nine interconnected tricycles driven by promoters, strolled along the beach while a DJ, installed on a 2-meter tall can/replica of the product positioned in front of the Copacabana Palace Hotel, set the crowd into motion with music and drew attention to the promoters who distributed beer to beach goers<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Carlos Zéfiro was the pseudonym of Alcides Aguiar Caminha (1921 - 1992), a Rio de Janeiro public official who, in a parallel profession, was considered Brazil's greatest porn designer. He illustrated and published some 500 erotic comic books dubbed *catecismos* (catechism), sold in a disguised manner at newspaper stands.

<sup>15</sup> Story posted on <http://pdvnews.blogspot.com>. Accessed in August 2010.



**Figure 12** Pieces of the Rio de Janeiro Devassa Brewery promotional action created by McCannEickson in 2007, with illustrations by Carlos Zéfiro.

Also in Rio de Janeiro, *Devassa* sponsored the *The Cariocas* television series, co-produced by TV Globo and Lereby Productions and written by filmmaker Daniel Filho. Based on a work of the same name written by Sérgio Porto, better known as Stanislaw Ponte Preta, was aired from October 2010. In the series, ten Rio de Janeiro women discussed their stories of love, betrayal, meetings and disagreements shot in ten different Rio districts. Meanwhile, the *Devassa* ad (*She's back*) was aired during the program's commercial breaks, reinforcing the association between the brand and the Rio de Janeiro daring, original spirit.

In São Paulo, while the TV campaign was suspended by CONAR, the brand sponsored a humor event called *Risadaria* [www.risadaria.com.br](http://www.risadaria.com.br), which was held at the Bienal Pavilion, at the Ibirapuera Park, between March 19 and 21 2010. The event was organized by Paulo Bonfa and brought together a large sample of Brazilian humor, with presentations by cinema, radio, television, Internet, cartoon, drama and stand-up comedians.

All these marketing actions converge to a same creative concept and represent a well-planned brand management work.



## **DEVASSA AND THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN**

Women have always been represented in advertising in fragmented and, unfortunately, recurrent stereotypes (perhaps because most creative professionals are men): devoted mother, young nubile, sexy female, determined executive, successful smart woman, etc. “The Brazilian communications addressed to adult women is built around three main female profiles: Cinderella, Carmen and Jane Fonda” (quoted in Troiano, 2009, p.98).

The *Cinderella* social identity is built around marriage, the family structure and maternity, and it is from this social space, which is occupied by a husband, kids, friends and neighbors, that she extracts power.

The *Carmen* female identity is defined by the conquest of the male and seduction, to her, is the way to climb positions in her race *against* other women. Carmen's source of power emanates from her body and from her ability to awaken affection and pleasure in the opposite sex.

The *Jane Fonda* profile is characterized by self-determination and independence, especially in the definition of the career and professional advancement.

These three female portraits (Cinderella, Carmen and Jane Fonda) appear repeatedly in ads about women or for women. The great criticism of the use of an isolated model to the detriment of the other two is that the portrait becomes overly simplistic and is reduced to women or to the homely mother or conquering female stereotypes or, also, to the image of a powerful executive. As Troiano says, “they hate to be portrayed as if they were 'canned peaches,' in other words, in pieces” (2009, p.100).

The *Very Blonde Devassa* campaign doubtlessly uses the *Carmen* mask: sensual, beautiful, elegant, seductive, libertine. The dissatisfaction of a few women who felt offended by the representation embodied by Paris Hilton can be explained by the confirmation of seeing, in advertising, only an isolated (and glorified) aspect of identity, without taking the other complementary roles and profiles into account; a *whole peach*, Troiano would say. In this regard, creation in the *Devassa* campaign incarnates the old, traditional aspects of advertising, the cliché that most attracts men and offends women, who feel reduced or depreciated.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: WHERE IS ADVERTISING GOING?**

Advertising communications is going through changes in paradigms, and its future is unsure. The fact is that advertising no longer reigns absolute among the marketing communications disciplines; nor does the consumer fit into the old role of being a submissive listener of the invasive, superlative ads of the early decades of this professional activity.

Advertising communications are transitioning from an era of interruptions and intrusion to one of involvement and invitation. The key to understand this change is the transfer of power: from those who make communications (TV and cinema producers, advertisers, show produces...) to those who consume them. The consumer now decides *how*, *when*, and *if* he wants to be exposed to sponsored messages.

The assumptions that underpinned advertising communications should be reviewed and updated, as some of them can no longer explain the professional activity, such as it was practiced from the 1950s until the early 1990s (the beginning of the digital revolution) or as it was taught ever since the first university courses<sup>16</sup> in the country.

The *Very Blonde Devassa* campaign analysis aimed to question the validity of some of these assumptions regarding the production of meaning in advertising, as well as to draw others that point to the future survival of the profession.

Concerning the changes that are underway, we reach the following conclusions:

- The initial assumption, which we presented in the introduction of this article, that *Advertising is the main communication 'tool' to lead the consumer to the act of buying*, after the analysis of the *Devassa* campaign can be substituted for *The big ideal of a communications campaign can come from any discipline, and not necessarily advertising*. The *Very Blonde Devassa* campaign made it evident that its creative concept was born even before Paris Hilton was picked as the brand's poster girl. It was born with the *Devassa* name and with a symbolic universe built around the logo and other graphic elements used for the brand (which existed prior to the campaign). It matured with the brand's *Manifesto* and has been fully revealed with the integration of other media and marketing actions that reinterpreted the brand's basic concept, each in its own way.
- The second assumption we presented, that *Advertising is making TV commercials*, does not hold with the *Devassa* campaign. Instead of that, we can say that advertising lasts more than the 60 seconds it is aired on TV and has intrinsic entertainment value. The website involved Internet users, bloggers and tweeters in a fun search that extended the content of the commercial in time and space: it stirred chatter in the specialized media, and involved people living in remote areas that weren't even reached by the distribution of the beer.
- Concerning the belief that *integrated communications is replicating the same ad in different media*, the case showed that the boundaries between the communication disciplines are increasingly vague and new, hybrid formats are replacing traditional ads and commercials.

Regarding the traditional advertising assumptions that have been updated and reiterated by the *Devassa* campaign, we emphasize:

- *Sex, humor and celebrity in advertising ensure attention* remains a primary creative resource, but with the caveat that it increases brand recall only when it is relevant to the brand's main message. *Very Blonde Devassa*, ordered off the air on account of excessive sex appeal and disrespect for women, divided opinions and mobilized support actions for the campaign. It was not the sex scenes, which in fact were not featured in any version of the

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<sup>16</sup> In 2010, the School of Communications and Arts celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Advertising course, from which I graduated in 1977 and in which I have taught since 1981.

ad, that drove the imagination of the censors, rather the insinuation of sensual dancing and *voyeurism* allied to the *devassa* name. The prohibition engendered debates that are located well beyond the advertising content: 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of feminism, political pressure versus technical criteria, morality, and consumerism. The conclusion of some discussants (including Santaella, 2010) is that beer associated with beautiful, young and hot women is part of the cultural background and their campaigns are expected and *enjoyed* as entertainment and fun. For this reason, it continues a recurrent resource of advertising content. The value that Paris Hilton, a celebrity, transferred to the Devassa brand went well beyond attracting the attention of the media and of the audiences. The truth is that the life of scandals and eccentricities of the model favored the credibility of the brand's arguments: *being authentic is not being afraid of showing oneself as one is*.

▪ *Emotions 'grab' the consumer*. More than drinking a quality beer, the campaign showed that *being authentic, doing what can be done and letting senses flow* are intangible benefits that are as important as functional needs that consumers want to be resolved by the product's performance. Almap, a traditional communications agency, in an old ad on the profession already asserted that there are hundreds of ways to advertise an egg, but the best lesson, in propaganda, comes from the fact that *every chicken clucks when it lays an egg*.

All assumptions described above and compared with the performance of the *Very Blonde Devassa* campaign, picked as an exemplary case, point to relevant changes in the way advertising and brand communications are understood in terms of the social transformations that are in course (social networking, mobile marketing, collaborative journalism, etc.). They point to a systematization which, although not quite the base of a theory on the activity, organizes the major underlying thought of the post-twentieth century advertising communications for those who make of practicing and/or teaching the activity their main job.

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