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**Creation of identity value in video advertising:  
Performing identity myths of stigmatized groups of society**

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# Abstract

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Brands have changed their approach to advertising, instead of offering products, nowadays they offer ways of living and seeing the world. To do so, they own a symbolic language which is embodied in advertising discourse. Brands aim to create more profound relationships with consumers and to concretise it, they have a variety of strategies at hand. The most common is through brand personification, where characters are generated to facilitate identification as encapsulated in a figure, they lend human characteristics to the brand. Cultural branding, on the other hand, proposes the creation of identity myths that can connect on a deeper level with the audience they seek to allude to. One of the proposed approaches in cultural branding is to perform an identity myth that is embedded in current social tensions. To understand the creation of identity value, this qualitative research uses Critical Discourse Analysis to find discursive patterns that allow the creation of thematic axes on which brands rely to create identity myths in video advertising. The results showed that the themes that Lipigas uses to generate identity value are the exaltation of women, the representation of Chilean popular identity and the resignification of the flaute. However, this discourse also presents major contradictions between what it seeks to oppose and what it ends up representing. While there are positive elements in Lipigas' discourse, such as inclusion and the revalorisation of marginalised identities in pursuit of greater social unity, it also falls back on current vices in terms of gender representation. Especially in that women have virtually no meaning outside the home or the family.

**Keywords:** Identity value, identity myth, personification, discourse advertising, social tensions, cultural branding, critical discourse analysis

**Word count:** 17,909

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# 1. Introduction

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In the consumer society, brands have evolved, and instead of selling products based on quality or functionality, they offer lifestyles (Kornberg, 2010; Fournier, 1998). In the constant fight for the audience's attention (Kim et al., 2017), brands are committed to offering us guidelines on how to live, presenting us with different values, concerns, ideals, tastes and more, positioning them as agents that contribute to shaping our identities (Kornberg, 2010; Holt, 2004). To achieve this, they have developed a language overflowing with symbolism (Holt, 2004) that can easily be found in advertising.

Brands aim to create a relationship, a bond with the audience and to do this, they follow different strategies (Fournier, 1998). Since brands are immaterial concepts and cannot interact with audiences as people do, they imbue nonhuman elements with human qualities, a strategy called brand personification or anthropomorphism, to connect with the consumers (Aaker, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Cohen, 2014). Creating an attractive brand personality leads to a better performance when it comes to remembrance and acquisition intention (Freling et al., 2010); it also helps with identification with the brand and relatability (Cohen, 2014). One approach to brand personality is personification, where an object or other living creature related to the brand is filled with human traits to work as a spokesperson (Cohen, 2014). Given the positive effects of using anthropomorphic figures, it is relevant to discuss how these characters are constructed, what human elements they should have and how they should behave.

One of the problems with conventional advertising is that it gives more importance to creativity rather than fitting a story into a specific social context (Holt, 2004). One of their biggest mistakes is the belief that creating cathartic advertising is an infallible branding formula and that generating an emotional reaction from the audience implies generating identification with their brand (Holt, 2004). In response, cultural branding is articulated around two concepts, identity

myth and identity value (Holt, 2004). Identity myths are stories that generate powerful emotional connections with the audience (Holt, 2004). This level of identification is rooted in the fact that these identity myths are constructed for a particular society, with a deep understanding of its most hidden longings, greatest fears, and biggest dreams (Testa et al., 2017; Holt, 2004). Identity myths appeal to society's contradictions from an imaginary reality, constructed especially to represent in a metaphorical way deep issues that citizens experience daily (Holt, 2004). Thus, identity value is a great myth's consequence (Holt, 2004). When an identity myth generates meaningful connections with the audience, brands build identity value; the biggest arena where brands present their identity myths is advertising (Holt, 2004). Brands, then, perform the role of bearers of meaning, from where consumers can collect the ones they identify as meaningful to them to develop their own identities (Holt, 2004). The audience tends to be attracted to brands that can help them achieve the lifestyle they aspire to (Holt, 2004).

Even though creating identity value is critical for success, for low-involvement markets, it is less relevant compared to brands related to self-expression –such as fashion, food, and cars, among others– (Holt, 2004, p. 23). Rosenbaum et al. (2018) followed Holt's reasoning claiming that, for low-involvement brands, it is enough that the customers are aware of them. To surpass the next level, differentiation is complicated for many brands regardless of their market. However, aside from aspects such as service and performance, there are markets where brands play their role purely on branding, given that competing products are basically the same, such as air flights (Small et al., 2008) or gas cylinders.

Iconic brand is the label reserved for those brands that perform best in creating identity value. As Holt (2004) postulates, iconic brands are capable of seeing, amidst the tension between national ideology and those who do not fit in, the contradictions of society. The brands that perform best at creating identity myths that fill the spaces that cultural contradictions entail are iconic brands (Holt, 2004).

The creation of these identity discourses, where there are contradictions between national ideology and citizens, implies social tensions related to power relations (van Dijk, 1993). As advertising portrays fictional realities inspired by the real world, some companies use a discourse that can have some elements of

resistance to the power structures of reality (Wodak, 2001). If a brand chooses an identity myth related to non-dominant groups, it could be profitable to them, especially if it addresses a social tension that concerns or is related to their target group, but it can also imply contradictions.

## **1.1. Research Problem**

For marketing researchers, there is a challenge to study branding not from an economical perspective but rather from the basic human nature of desires to belong to a group and to differentiate from other groups (Hirschman, 2010). Analysing brand narratives from a cultural branding perspective is an understudied area, especially for low-involvement brands where the product itself is not involved in the construction of identity. Moreover, studies, where there is a clear intersection between cultural branding and power dynamics, are scarce.

The study of advertising showcasing power relations through CDA to appeal to the audience is rather null. There is more research about criticising the representation of a non-dominant group but focusing on one aspect, for example, the representation of women in advertising. Another area where CDA has been applied is political advertising. This can be explained because CDA researchers tend to focus on the media and politics. On the other hand, CDA analysis focuses more on the discourse of dominant groups than non-dominant discourses (van Dijk, 1993).

Consequently, it is novel to study the phenomenon of brands constructing their identity value by targeting a myth market of an oppressed group, where it is a choice to incorporate the social tensions of society as part of their identity myth. Even more, where the power relations are inverted to some extent, and the protagonist or hero is an anthropomorphic character.

It is also interesting to explore how contradictory it is that, although brands can incorporate resistance discourses, in the making, they also reproduce these discourses since ideology runs deep into human mental structures and many forms of dominance are seen as natural without even understanding them as one (Wodak, 2002). In the case where brands want to capitalise using social issues to connect

with their audience, it is possible that in appearance they can put a front of resistance towards some topic, –class, for example– but at the same time, reproduce others –sexism–. These social issues are, somehow, seen as individual problems rather than structural problems that are all related to dominance (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022).

## 1.2. Study Aim and Research Question

This study aims to fill the gap in research about the combination of brand personification and cultural branding, where the targeted identity myth is a non-dominant group and is starred by a personified spokesperson. This research focuses on how social tensions are represented in discourse to create identity value and aims to show contradictions between what in appearance wants to reverse the power relations, but, in this effort, it also shows the extent of how deep the power relations are rooted in society. Since this research problem is discourse-centred Critical discourse analysis has been chosen for theoretical framework and methodology.

The results of this research will contribute to the practice of marketing communication, advancing and deepening the knowledge about the importance of cultural identity for brands to perform strong identity myths. This means dissecting the cultural elements that were put together to create a charismatic personified spokesperson who performed an identity myth. Regarding the contribution to strategic communication, shows the importance of representation in cultural products, which in turn can facilitate the process of identification and how this can impact on audience reception. Furthermore, this work opens a discussion and calls for reflection on how we are communicating and how we can inadvertently perpetrate or validate social issues. It also contributes to shed critical light on social problems represented in advertising. In a process of resignification that seeks to provide positive elements to non-dominant groups (marginalised classes and women), it is also possible to fall back on the same sexist and discriminatory discourses that are sought to be reversed.

**RQ.** How do brands create identity value by addressing social tensions to perform identity myths in video advertisements using anthropomorphic spokes characters?

## **1.3. Research Demarcation**

### **1.3.1. Scope**

The scope is to explore how Lipigas –a Chilean company that sells gas cylinders– created its identity value, rather than showing if Lipigas is an iconic brand given that this research starts from the recognition of this as a fact. To achieve its purpose, this study examines patterns represented in a sample consisting of 20 advertising videos from 2005 to 2015, covering the period from the first video of Lipigas’ spokesperson and his last before his death in 2016. Along the same line, this research proposed that, before the introduction of this spokesperson, Lipigas followed the aspirational strategy of branding. However, it does not mean that older Lipigas advertising videos are analysed further than this notion.

Although the theoretical framework and part of the methodology are linked to CDA, since the author does not have a linguistic formation or background, so the focus is on how language and discourse envision identity elements and power relations in fictional interactions rather than a strict and technical linguistic analysis.

### **1.3.2. Limitations**

CDA is vaguely used to analyse advertising discourse, as it majorly focuses on ‘real life’, like media analysis, i.e., discourses in news, and politics, and not fiction. This can present differences in some dimensions since, even though advertising reflects society, it does not necessarily follow the rules or logic of the real world and is rather an imaginary realm presented by the brand. Along the same line, CDA usually analyses the discourse of the dominant groups to expose power dynamics, but, on the contrary, this research focuses on elements from non-dominant groups to do so. Alongside, there is not much about the cultural elements of the flaites in Chile (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022). Regarding the format of the sample, previous research uses rather images than videos, presenting another difference that can be relevant to state. For the sample, videos with the most relevant content were selected. This relevance can be translated to videos with more characters, thus, more



interactions, or more significant interactions concerning the topics addressed on them.

Concerning the methods, thematic analysis is based on the researchers' interpretations. Alongside, CDA studies are transparent with the socio-political orientation of their researcher, and thus, it is also openly recognized as biased (van Dijk, 2001).

#### 1.4. Lipigas

Lipigas is a private company founded in 1950 that sells primarily Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders to households and other companies (Lipigas Companies, n.d.). This type of product is consumed mainly by middle- and lower-class households not equipped with electric power systems. Gas cylinders are an essential part of their daily life since they are used to heat domestic water and allow them to use stoves. Contradictory, until 2004, they used symbols of the Chilean upper classes to portray their consumers, such as their codes, environments and appearance, following the strategy of using aspirational figures to make the brand appealing. Nevertheless, this generated distance to their target group since there were no elements they could identify with.

In 2004, Lipigas was growing as a brand but still was in third place in the gas industry. They aimed to build Lipigas' image as "reliable, warm, close and innovative" (Effie Awards Chile, 2007). Thus, the creative agency, Ogilvy Mather Chile came up with the idea of having as a spokescharacter a mixed-breed, talking dog based on the Chilean archetype (Escobar, 2016) specifically, with the human traits of the Chilean lower classes. Lipigas' board members thought it was risky and were not sure about having a mixed-breed dog as their representative (Ruiz, 2009). The idea of targeting the myth market of the so-called '*flaites*' –the Chilean equivalent of the Chavs from the United Kingdom, the *racaille* from France, the *eshays* from Australia or the *chonis* and *canis* from Spain– was a complete success and Lipigas still uses Spike as their spokescharacter in 2023. It made the total knowledge of the brand go from 25% in 2007 to 44,7% in 2008 (Escobar, 2016). Meanwhile, the levels of advertising recall went from 26.2% to 65%, doubling up

their competitors (Escobar, 2016). In another survey, related to knowledge of animals from commercials (Ruiz, 2009), Spike was by far the most recognised branded animal in the country: 41% of the 600 participants recognised him, while the second place got 24%, and the third place, 4%.

The advertising videos starred by Spike were so popular that he became a Chilean icon. The press covered every milestone of his career, until his death in 2016, when the press and social media even declared national mourning (La Cuarta, 2016). Among his major acknowledgements are, the first prize for their campaign in the category of product in the Effie Awards Chile in 2007 (Effie Awards Chile, 2007). In 2010, Spike was the runner-up for being elected the ‘Bicentennial Character’ in an open ballot to choose who’s pictured would be buried in a time capsule celebrating the country’s 200th anniversary (Cooperativa, 2010). This award was meant for humans and even the organisers of the competition, the commune of Santiago, through its mayor, Pablo Zalaquett Said, expressed their disagreement with Spike being in the first place, stating that “I have a lot of affection towards the Lipigas dog (...) but to think that he is the character of the bicentenary, he is not<sup>1</sup>” (Cooperativa, 2010). In the final week of the ballot, and after more than 170 thousand user votes, Mario Kreutzberger Blumenfeld, well-known as "Don Francisco" —one of the characters with the longest television career in Chile and one of the best-known Chileans on the American continent —, surpassed Spike by a narrow margin with 20.237 preferences (Commune of Santiago, 2010). Even after his death, he was nominated for “Best Fiction Character of the Decade” in one of the most important awards for popular culture in Chile, the “Golden Chilean Bellflower [*Copihue de Oro*] (La Cuarta, 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> My translation. Original text in Spanish: “yo le tengo mucho cariño al perro Lipigas’, pero ‘de ahí a pensar que para mí sea el personaje Bicentenario, no lo es’” (Cooperativa, 2010).

## 2. Literature Review

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This section presents three subtitles that unravel different branding strategies that help to understand the phenomenon studied in this research. In this sense, each of these elements contributes, to a greater or lesser extent, to the construction of identity value in advertising. It starts with cultural branding to explain the origin and implication of two fundamental concepts: identity value and identity myth. These ideas set a shift in how to do branding, setting a path to become iconic and how to maintain this status. Later, anthropomorphic marketing is introduced as a branding tool that helps to create deeper relations with the audience. Finally, low-involvement branding is explained to understand how the market in which brands are involved affects the strategies they should use.

### 2.1. Cultural Branding

Embedding stories with symbolic meanings and myths is a recurrent strategy for social groups, and organizations too. Faced with the fear of extinction, mythological narratives are meant to preserve the group's cultural identity and allow it to develop over time (Wodak, 2009; Robins, 1996). These evolving stories are constructed to help with identification, as they lay the roots of the group's idiosyncrasies and can place these heterogeneous individuals in the same historical and cultural place (Hall, 1996). One of the pivotal elements of these stories is that they define the group through differentiation from other groups, creating animosities that are central to these narratives (Hall, 1996). But cultural identities are not omnipotent, they have fractures within their dominant ideology (Hall, 1996). Identities cannot remain unaffected by the passage of time and historical events (Hall, 1996). Therefore, the way they are constructed is interesting, as they mix interpretations of history with fictitious elements that are convenient for their discourse, and they always involved power dynamics in them (Hall, 1996).

Branding hangs on the natural human desire to belong to groups, so the process of identification and identity creation plays a big role in it (Hirschman, 2010). As a mirror of society, advertising uses cultural and national identities as resources to wrap itself in “symbolic values” which, in turn, generate a discourse that increases their sales performance (Yücel, 2021, p. 308). In these stories, they “create myths, symbols and will associate them with the product and service it intends to promote” (Yücel, 2021, p. 305). To achieve this, brands also construct narratives about social groups embedded in positive qualities that differentiate them from other groups, where symbolic components arise, such as heroic figures placed in time and space following a path that continues growing (Hirschman, 2010). These narratives should be simple as easy-to-follow and remember, but they should balance with the complexity of growing progressively in time and not remain inert (Braun & Patterson, 2010).

All these ideas belong to cultural branding, a concept introduced by Douglas Holt to the reasoning behind why some brands become iconic (Holt, 2004). The stories described before are called identity myths, and because of them, brands can construct identity value (Holt, 2004), which can be understood as the worth that people give to a brand in terms of how much it helps them build the identity they aspire to have (Holt, 2004).

The right identity myth, well performed, provides the audience with little epiphanies— moments of recognition that put images, sounds, and feelings on barely perceptible desires. Customers who find this kind of identity value in a brand forge intensive emotional connections. Emotional attachment is the consequence of a great myth (Holt, 2004, p. 61).

Rather than rely on creativity, aspirational figures, mindshare or generic emotional situations, cultural branding focuses on creating identity myths, powerful narratives aligned to a specific culture (Pineda et al., 2022; Holt, 2004). As mentioned above, there are no all-powerful cultural identities, and within them, there are always divisions and contradictions. Holt (2004) argues that there are powerful niches among those who do not identify with the dominant culture. These identity myths are niches that are available in the myth market for brands that can recognise them and work with them to create an identity myth that can connect with

the audience and thus create identity value (Holt, 2004). Brands that can find an identity myth and can adapt it through the years are iconic (Holt, 2004). A foundational quality of iconic brands is they can generate identity value through narratives that consumers identify with and can provide material to shape their identities (Holt, 2004).

Holt (2004) exacerbates the fictional character of identity myths, as fictional stories where people's desires, fears and other aspects of their identities are represented simplistically in quotidian scenarios but in parallel realities. "Myths smooth over these tensions, helping people create purpose in their lives and cement their desired identity in place when it is under stress" (Holt, 2004, p. 29). Holt even proposed that top iconic brands can achieve such powerful identity myths, that they constitute a driving force for people to change their mindsets regarding their societies and themselves (Holt, 2004). The logic of iconic brands reinforces the idea of the power that lies in advertising discourse, which lies in how these brands become part of the identity creation of individuals (Pineda et al., 2022).

The protagonist of such narratives can be called icons since they condense a set of ideas and work as symbolic shortcuts to them (Testa et al., 2017; Holt, 2004). As Holt explained (2004), "Icons come to represent a particular kind of story—an identity myth—that their consumers use to address identity desires and anxieties" (p. 19). Thanks to the cross-cutting nature of these icons, their use helps those who belong to the group to recognise each other and to converse (Testa et al., 2017). Despite the strong influence of cultural icons, their identity power is framed in a place and, especially, in a rather limited time, especially in modern societies (Testa et al., 2017). However, some icons have managed to overcome all these barriers, such as Cleopatra or the Eiffel Tower (Testa et al., 2017). The creation and development of cultural icons through cultural products have become of paramount importance to the global economy (Testa et al., 2017). An example used by Holt (2004) was James Dean, whom he identified as the icon of rebelliousness in the United States since he thought his work and personal life represented someone who was questioning the discourse of his society in the 1950s.

Holt's approaches are highly relevant to this research, as they allow us to partially answer how identity value is created in advertising by representing

marginalised groups. This phenomenon is clearly seen in the case study presented by Holt (2004), where he analyses the case of the Mountain Dew soft drink brand and how it became iconic by representing the identity myth of the hillbillies. To do so, Holt explains the historical and social context in which the case is set. This is the United States, between 1950 and 1960, where society was seeing the fruits of a major industrial and scientific breakthrough and wanted to deep further that point, not backward. A certain group of people were living outside this national ideology, even oppositely, attached to their country's traditions, which were seen as primitive and thus, inferior. They were called 'hillbillies', a term with a negative connotation used to refer to the working-class people who lived in rural areas of the United States, especially in the Appalachian Mountains (Holt, 2004). In this context, as Holt explained (2004), "the hillbilly was used to create myths that both buttressed and challenged the national ideology" (p. 82). On the one hand, the hillbillies were mocked in popular culture but on the other hand, they got icons such as Elvis Presley (Holt, 2004). Presley was seen as a passionate man, who sensually swayed his hips and charged the sexual realm in his voice (Holt, 2004). He was a symbol of the primitive desires of the self, which were opposed to the ideal of the bureaucratic man in a suit. As Holt stated, "Presley's mythic figure implicitly argued that real men were to be found out in the country, away from the emasculating new norms of suburban life" (p. 83). Meanwhile, in 1962, the broadcast CBS premiere 'The Beverly Hillbillies', "the second most popular television program of the 1960s" (Holt, 2004, 83). The show was based on a family of hillbillies, the Clampetts, who became rich but lacked the cultural capital and customs of the new class to which they belonged. As Holt (2004) explains, the appeal of the programme was that this family were not aspirational, even though they were rich, they did not change their identity and embrace it. Although people from their new circle may have a low opinion of them, they were unbothered and continue to live as they have been doing (Holt, 2004). Consequently, as a family, they were portrayed more positively than the other rich people, since they were authentic and even smarter from a perspective far removed from academia or business (Holt, 2004). "The Beverly Hillbillies was a populist allegory that

championed pragmatic knowledge over book learning, character over self-presentation, and traditional hospitality over manners” (Holt, 2004, p. 83).

In 1960, Mountain Dew presented the product we know to this day. Four years later of successful branding, PepsiCo bought it (Holt, 2004). The secret behind such success was that “they used the soft drink to create an identity myth that addressed one of the mightiest contradictions of the day” (Holt, 2004, p. 79). Mountain Dew incorporated several elements of the Hillbilly culture. Beginning with the name, which derivates from a local folk song which used the phrase ‘mountain dew’ as a replacement for moonshine, the illegal homemade liquor (Holt, 2004). The company also presented a hillbilly stereotyped character named Willy to portray the life of the working class in rural areas of the United States. In summary, Mountain Dew used the hillbilly identity myth, which promoted this idea of masculinity free of appearances, who enjoyed a simple life away from the city and who also lived his emotions freely (Holt, 2004). In clear opposition to the national ideology of suburban life. As Holt (2004) explained, “When Mountain Dew’s customers guzzled the sweet yellow liquid, the brand allowed them to imagine themselves as a bit of a wild man in a world in which the organization man reigned supreme” (p. 85).

In conclusion, performing identity myths to create identity value in a specific group generated by social divisions is, if well executed, a formula that can make a brand achieve the iconic status.

The successful case of Mountain Dew exemplifies how to use an identity myth that is rooted in a social group that was marginalised and stigmatised. By targeting this identity myth and giving it a positive connotation to their identity, they re-signified it, removing some of its stigma, which means that people who, at some level, identified with the hillbilly lifestyle had their existence and way of life validated. Thanks to this, Mountain Dew was able to build identity value, which catapulted it as an iconic brand. This case has many similarities with the phenomenon studied in this research, as it appeals to marginalised groups with representations that distance them from their stigmas and surround them with positive characteristics. For this, the concepts of identity value and identity myth are essential in both the Mountain Dew case and the one studied in this research.

## **2.2. Brand Personification and Anthropomorphic Marketing**

Marketing strategies have plenty of figurative resources that enrich their language. Thus, using symbolic or metaphoric elements is more usual in this area than in any other social science (Lloyd & Woodside, 2013). A clear example is the extended use of symbols, which possess both explicit and implicit significance and are used to encrypt life, for example, in brand logos (Lloyd & Woodside, 2013). Along the same line, another extensive practice is using animal characters as symbols in marketing strategies because they work as associative shortcuts between meanings and brands (Lloyd & Woodside, 2013). As Levy (1985) stated, while exclusive brands with male targets are linked with wild or strong animals (e.g., lions, tigers, elephants); standard brands are linked to domestic animals (e.g., horses); and female target brands use rather a grace, beautiful animals (e.g., swans, snakes, leopards) or small animals which convey the need to be protected (e.g., small breed dogs, small birds) (p. 70-71).

Since brands do not have a physical form, a character, or opinions, to differentiate themselves in the market, they construct brand personalities, which are defined as “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Among the strategies to provide a personality to a brand, there is “anthropomorphization, personification and the creation of user imagery” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). Among the benefits of creating an appealing brand personality is that they are more memorable, and they generate a higher aim to buy (Freling et al., 2010). A definition of brand personification is to use registered inanimate elements of the brand and give them human-like characteristics, which can vary from a physical or a mental level (Cohen, 2014). The intention behind using brand personification is “facilitating recognition, recall and loyalty to the brand, as well as a sense of identification with the brand, and/or a consumer perception of a ‘relationship’ with the brand” (Cohen, 2014, p. 3). Although the study of brand personality has generated a lot of interest among researchers, there is some uneven use of concepts in previous research, i.e., personification does not have a unanimous



definition (Aaker, 1997) and some researchers use personification and anthropomorphise interchangeably (Cohen, 2014).

The resource of giving humanlike characteristics to unhuman objects or living beings is called anthropomorphism and is very extended in marketing since there is a predisposition in consumers to anthropomorphise elements (Aaker, 1997; Delbaere et al., 2011; Lloyd & Woodside, 2013; Cohen, 2014; Huang & Mitchell, 2014). The use of anthropomorphism in advertising can lead to an increase in the likeability of the brand because it creates more possibilities of an emotional reaction and it elevates the brand personality (Delbaere et al., 2011).

In turn, Cohen (2014) postulated five overlapping forms of brand personification. The first form is related to anthropomorphising the brand itself – what Aaker (1997) refers to as anthropomorphism– and the second one is to create an anthropomorphic character –what Aaker (1997) calls personification–. Cohen exemplifies the first case with Exxon, a gasoline brand which associated itself “with the strength, endurance, and manoeuvrability of a tiger” (2014, p. 1). In the second case, this figure does not necessarily embody the brand but rather works as a spokesperson with illustrative and associational meanings. This situation was clarified with Hanes, an underwear brand without tags that decided to use a talking tag with an annoying personality to show how comfortable are their products (Cohen, 2014, p. 1). In this case, this character does not personify the brand, instead, it highlighted the advantages of their products narratively. The third case explained by Cohen (2014), the ambassador, is a variation of the second one, and it happens when the character is an actual human being who promotes certain brand values or benefits of their products. The fourth case mentioned by Cohen (2014) occurs when brand personification is done by the founder or manager of the brand who works as a mascot. The last case refers to when the character does not fit the others and is described as “while presented by a particular brand, neither ‘speak for’ the brand, nor even represent it” but it is still related somehow to it (Cohen, 2014, p. 4).

As stated by Cohen (2014), creating anthropomorphic characters imply many decisions to make. From the appearance and voice to the back story and role. Aligning these items correctly can bring benefits such as higher possibilities for customers to identify or feel relatable with the brand (Cohen, 2014). Fournier

(1998) proposed that brands construct actual partner relationships with customers. She proposed that characters can be understood as means by which brands create bonds with consumers because “marketing actions conducted under the rubric of interactive and addressable communications qualify the brand as a reciprocating partner” (Fournier, 1998, p. 345). As characters have personalities, and emotions and can verbalize their opinions, they help the consumers to create an image of what the brand stands for and with every interaction, characters help to create deeper relationships that can even be considered parasocial (Fournier, 1998).

In conclusion, giving brands human characteristics is a widespread practice because it brings a variety of benefits. Strong brand personalities make them easier to remember (Cohen, 2014; Freling et al., 2010), to recognise and to generate loyalty (Cohen, 2014). One of the elements used is to create characters of animals or things that have human characteristics on a physical or psychological level (Cohen, 2014). These anthropomorphic characters facilitate the creation of relationships between brands and consumers because they provide the capacity for sympathy and identification (Cohen, 2014; Fournier, 1998). In this way, they make them more lovable because they provide a bridge to emotional connections due to their human characteristics. These characters tend to play different roles, but regardless of this, they are icons of what brands want to project and, unlike brands, they do possess communicative skills, faces and emotions (Fournier, 1998). These figures work as shortcuts for the values and beliefs of the brands as they are created with a certain personality and are usually also connected with other symbolic meanings rooted in collective knowledge, e.g., bulls are strong, swans are elegant, jaguars are fast, and dogs are loyal.

The connection of this section with the phenomenon studied in this research is that the use of anthropomorphic spokespersons is identified as a key element in the construction of identity value for brands. On the other hand, given that in the phenomenon studied social tensions are used to address marginalised groups, the use of symbols of this type helps to deliver a message that has a high emotional level. It puts a 'friendly' face on groups that are stigmatised in society and allows them to express their identities from a perspective that shows their positive characteristics. In this particular case, the character functions as a spokescharacter

for the brand as it “advocates for it, explains it, brings credibility to it” (Cohen, 2014, p. 4). In this way, these characters give an interest in how they are constructed and represented in advertising.

### **2.3. Low-involvement Advertising**

According to Rosenbaum et al. (2018), the concept of involvement refers, essentially, to how willing the consumer is to do research about a product before buying it. The authors defined involvement as a vital element of consumer psychology since it helps decide how important a brand is to a person, and proposed a model of factors to identify which level of involvement a product has depending on: “the price, the frequency of purchase, the symbolic meaning, the social visibility, the time commitment, the potential for harm, and the technical complexity” (p. 32). As opposed to high-involvement brands, low involvement represents products that are cheap, routinary, possess low symbolic meaning, do not grant status, do not have an extended life, have a lower potential risk when using, and have a simple technical elaboration (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Whether a product is high-involvement or low-involvement depends on “the price, the frequency of purchase, the symbolic meaning, the social visibility, the time commitment, the potential for harm, and the technical complexity” (Rosenbaum et al., 2018, p. 32). For example, a car can be seen as a high-involvement brand while toothpaste, is a low-involvement one.

Advertising strategies that rely merely on functionality (Kornberger, 2018) are scarce because it is reserved for products that are unquestionably superior to their competence (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Thus, most brands, including the low-involvement market, want to add an emotional side to their branding because “an emotional association is much harder for competitors to replicate or ‘reverse engineer’ and is, therefore, a more defensible position to hold” (Rosenbaum et al., 2018, p. 23). The level of product involvement impacts the focus that should be given to the advertising strategy. As Holmes & Crocker claimed (1987), since the purchase of low-involvement products does not constitute a radical change in user’s life, they tend to consume without the need to look for reviews or generate an

attitude before the purchase. But for high-involvement products, the user would be proactive to search for information (Holmes & Crocker, 1987). Therefore, since the mental load prior to purchase is dissimilar, Holmes & Crocker (1987) claimed that rational arguments have a greater effect with high-involvement products and on the other hand, emotional appeals are more suited for low-involvement brands. In addition, some brands are in markets where the products are essentially the same, as in the case of airline flights (Small et al., 2008), or electricity, mobile data, gas or water. In these cases, branding is critical to differentiate in the marketplace (Small et al., 2008).

As stated by Huang & Mitchell (2014), between symbolic products (e.g., jeans) and functional products (e.g., dish-washing detergent), the latter usually have less or no levels of brand personification, which is the user predisposition to see a brand as a person. Consequently, this type of brand depends more on imagination to create stronger brand relationships because they are not usually involved in the construction of identity as symbolic product brands do (Huang & Mitchell, 2014). Kim et al. (2017) proposed a similar situation when comparing the attitude towards advertising using visual metaphors. For low-involvement products, it meant a better attitude but for high-involvement brands, it is the contrary and more so, it even reduces the chances of purchase compared to advertising with no visual metaphors.

In conclusion, since low-involvement products lack a high symbolic charge, a common strategy is to add emotional elements (Rosenbaum et al., 2018; Holmes & Crocker, 1987) since they give brands the possibility of distinguishing themselves from the competition in a unique form (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). The importance of branding is more extreme in markets where there is a minimal or non-existent difference between products (Small et al., 2008). Alongside, for low-involvement brands, adding imaginative narratives helps with identification (Huang & Mitchell, 2014)., same case with metaphoric language (Kim et al., 2017)

The relationship between this section and the phenomenon studied is that it confirms the idea that low-involvement brands must resort to symbolic and emotional language. In the previous section, most of the research did not differentiate between the level of brand involvement. This section confirms the applicability of the above to brands such as the one studied in this research.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

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This chapter introduced the theoretical framework which sustains the analysis of this research. Since discourses are ideological (Wodak, 2001), advertising discourses included, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to understand the dominance structures behind it, even when they present sorts of resistance to the status quo (Wodak, 2001). Thus, key concepts of CDA are presented in the first section while the second one explores advertising discourse “as a cultural mirror which gives brand symbolic values and a narrative identity” (Yücel, 2021, p. 305).

### 3.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is focused on the relationship between discourse and its social context, especially concerning power dynamics (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). This perspective revolves around “the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249), meanwhile, Wodak et al. (2009) situated discourse as the means of maintaining and reproducing a national identity. For van Dijk (1993), dominance is the “exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality” (p. 249-250) and can be exerted in several dimensions, such as “political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality” (p. 249). Dominance also has different representations in the discourse, which show different levels of reinforcement. These ‘modes’ can be “support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). CDA wants to identify how communication helps these modes (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250) and usually put more attention to ‘top-down’ relations rather than ‘bottom-up’ ones (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). For critical discourse analysts, this does not mean that dominance is “unilaterally ‘imposed’ on others”, instead, dominance has deep roots in the

dominated groups so it is not unusual to see them reproducing these dynamics as they can see it as the inborn order of things (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). For the unprivileged members, the power dynamic is, at least, acknowledged.

### ***3.1.1 Social Cognition***

The concept that differentiates CDA from other discourse analyses is social cognition, as it is seen as “the necessary theoretical (and empirical) ‘interface’, if not the ‘missing link’, between discourse and dominance” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 251). van Dijk (1993) argues that the major form in which power is exercised has fluctuated and that nowadays, power is more in the sphere of mental processes derived from socialisation, such as beliefs or values, which can be applied as “socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking and arguing, inferencing and learning, among others” (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 257). Thereby, social cognition supervises relations between what Van Dijk (1993) called “micro– and macro–levels of society, between discourse and action, between the individual and the group” (Van Dijk, 1993, 257). Due to this, social cognition establishes a direct relationship between dominance and discourse (Van Dijk, 1993).

According to van Dijk (1993), for CDA it is needed to connect and highly develop both the discourse analysis as much as the socio-political analysis (p. 252). Rather than focusing on the contributions to the academic world, it aims to put social conflicts into the spotlight so it can impulse change. As van Dijk stated (1993), when referring to the critical discourse analysts, “their hope, if occasionally illusory, is change through critical understanding” (p. 252). CDA academics also recognise that the protagonists of change are those who live under dominance and that their contribution from this academic trench provides insights on the subject. Their superior aim is “to get more insight into the crucial role of discourse in the reproduction of dominance and inequality” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). Instead of focusing merely on the object of their analysis, it is needed to go through a wider and more global understanding of the contextual aspects behind it. “Their structural understanding presupposes more general insights, and sometimes indirect and long-

term analyses of fundamental causes, conditions and consequences of such issues” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253).

### ***3.1.2 Power & Dominance***

Power is exercised through control, one group rule over other groups. Power remains perpetrated and constantly reproduced exactly because its control is not merely rooted in force but because it also implies control in the mental reasoning of individuals, which is the most common and the strongest (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). This is the reason why it is needed to discuss the power of discourse, since “managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254). How the power dynamics of discourse are perpetrated are not blatantly obvious, they are often “subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appears ‘natural’ and quite ‘acceptable’” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 254).

CDA is mostly focused on the abuse of power, i.e., “in breaches of laws, rules and principles of democracy, equality and justice by those who wield power” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). To separate legitimate forms of power from the abuse of power, the term dominance is used. Dominance shares several characteristics with the concept of power. There is no such thing as total dominance; rather, it is confined to certain areas and can be both explicit and implicit. In the same way, there are also “various modes of challenge, that is, counter-power” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). Many of these demonstrations of resistance may be rooted in fully conscious ideas or actions as well as not. When constant displays of defiance are registered over time, ideas previously accepted as natural begin to be questioned. As an example, van Dijk (1993) uses the idea of superiority between male/female, black/white and rich/poor. The fact that one group accepts - to a greater or lesser extent - the dominance of another and at the same time collaborates in the perpetuation of this dominance without the need for brute force, implies a hegemonic relationship (van Dijk, 1993). Precisely, the dominant discourse is such because it manages to allude to and captivate the majority (van Dijk, 1993). In this context, where the concepts of hegemony and its derivatives come into play, it implies that the sides are often not entirely clear in an analysis of critical discourse.

There is no clear figure who tacitly imposes his or her dominance, but as previously evidenced, dominance is often also given in unconscious ways and with the complicit participation, in a certain way, of the dominated group (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). As stated at the outset, power and dominance are both exercised by a group, which is usually organised and institutionalised (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255), which implies there is a materialisation of both, they are not mere notions. This materialisation can take place, for example, in the laws or the media. This formalisation of power and dominance discourse then accounts for the existence of a “*hierarchy of power*: some members of dominant groups and organizations have a special role in planning, decision-making and control over the relations and processes of the enactment of power” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). In this organization of power, only a few can be on the top and are called power elites (van Dijk, 1993). These elites are “the ones who have most to *say*” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255) so they possess “symbolic power” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). Additionally, the author identified a tight connection, a directly proportional relationship between social power and discourse access (1993, p. 256). The elites can gather more information because there are more people at their service, so their control is bigger. On the contrary, the people on the bottom mostly communicate with their inner circles because they have scarce power.

### **3.2. Advertising Discourse**

Much work in cultural studies focuses on the analysis of texts and lived experiences. A good deal of culture is textually mediated through advertisements, magazines, films, computer games, music and the like (Longhurst et al., 2008, p. 91). Thus, advertising is understood as a cultural and social product that always promotes a discourse through metaphorical representations (Yücel, 2021; Thornborrow, 1998), which interpretation depends on the audience (Thornborrow, 1998). How people can decode the discourse is given by their cultural experience and their idiosyncrasy (Lahuerta et al., 2022; Rosenbaum et al., 2018; Thornborrow, 1998), in consequence, the audience plays a big role in how to construct advertising discourse and at the same time, it reflects the society it represents (Yücel, 2021; de



Andrés & Maestro, 2014; Small et al., 2008). Therefore, it is true to affirm that there is a synergy between advertising, which “produces, mediates and reproduces discourses” (Small et al., 2008, p. 17), and the audience, “who daily build and validate social concepts and self-concepts” (de Andrés & Maestro, 2014, p. 191).

### ***3.2.1 Dominance in Advertising Discourse***

In advertising, some groups are more desirable to be represented while others are usually excluded. This selection is made based on age (Andrés & Maestro, 2014), attire, features, skin tone, religion (Small et al, 2008) and ethnicity (van Dijk, 2005). Thus, there is a preference to incorporate people that are “the young, able-bodied, slim-to-medium build, white, heterosexual person, often in corporate professional employment” (Small et al, 2008, p. 34). The selection of the desirable/undesirable groups is rather common and independently of the societal context. In Turkey for example, the white Turkish myth was used in advertising due to the need to be accepted in Europe, so aspirational elements came to play that were not representative of the country (Yücel, 2021). In Latin America, to some extent because of colonialism, societies are majorly racist and white people are privileged (Valenzuela, 2011; van Dijk, 2005) because as van Dijk stated, the beauty standards are of common knowledge the blond, blue eyes, and light skin people. In consequence, advertising has also racist elements. People that fulfil the beauty standards are desirable to promote products and discourses, while the ones that do not, are excluded because they are undesirable (BBC, 2014). A survey of 404 people (Montes, 2018) stated that 52% of Chileans do not believe they have indigenous roots. Regarding identifying as ‘mestizo’ –i.e., mixed European with Amerindian– only 24% preferred this option, while ‘Chilean’ got 73% preference and ‘Mapuche’, 2%. Regarding discrimination, 71% claimed that having a Mapuche last name would be detrimental to finding a job or having a promotion. Alongside, 51% stated that they have never shared social activities with them and a 34% would not vote for a Mapuche in an election. Despite all of these, 88% do not think they are less intelligent. In comparison with Europeans, 38% think they are more intelligent than Chileans. Concerning beauty, 71% considered Mapuche

unattractive, 47% stated that light-coloured eyes are more attractive than dark-coloured eyes, the same with blonde and dark hair, where 42% claimed that the first is more distinguished than the latter. Even more, 32% believe that blond people are generally more attractive. The fact that Chileans do not identify themselves as mestizos can be explained by the "symbolic and social burden of being mestizo, dark or descendant of a foreigner in a country that represents itself as white" (Amigo et al., 2016, p. 156). This racist narrative continues to be driven in some ways by the media, where there is an overrepresentation of 'white' people with 70% of those who appear on television having light skin, light eyes or both (Amigo et al., 2016) which is the opposite of the social reality, where most people are mestizo.

### ***3.2.2 Dominance in the Production of Advertising***

But there are more issues with advertising, and one of them is related to its production. The lack of diversity among workers in this area has consequently discourses produced from the top of the social hierarchy to the bottom (Andrés & Maestro, 2014). As stated by de Andrés & Maestro (2014), "Discourse is a speech act about 'them' or about 'others'" (p. 190). But in continents like Latin America, there is an alarming lack of women behind the scenes in advertising (Deng & Grow, 2018). The rate of women working in advertising creative departments in Chile is the second lowest in Latin America, with 4,7%, only above Peru, which has a 1,6% (Deng & Grow, 2018). A situation like this establishes control of dominant groups over discourse (van Dijk, 1993) because they are in charge of producing, directing, editing, and approving or rejecting advertising products. Therefore, recurrent resources in advertising discourse are sex (Thornborrow, 1998) and gender stereotypes (de Andrés & Maestro, 2014; Small et al., 2008; Thornborrow, 1998) from a male perspective.

## 4. Methodology

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This research follows a qualitative approach since it focuses mainly on language rather than any numerical or statistical data (Prasad, 2018). Moreover, due to the topics touched by this research, regarding addressing a social reality from a discourse perspective, as stated by Prasad (2018), it is by itself a non-positivist research. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be tracked to the roots of the Critical Tradition since their central study areas are related to “examine social arrangements through the lenses of power, domination and conflict” (Prasad, 2018, p. 125).

As the Critical Tradition, CDA also takes the side of the non-dominant groups and aims to expose their position in the power structure to change society. It has been studied before that critical research has no consensus on which methodological approach to use (Wodak, 2001). More than a common theory or methodology, the element that all CDA researchers have in common is their agenda (Wodak, 2001, p. 4).

Within the CDA approach, this research is also aiming to highlight the different latent themes that may appear. Because of this, a thematic analysis is the most suitable to find these themes. Thematic analysis consists of “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The generation of these themes is based on finding social patterns, through interactions, repetition or emphasis, that show deep-rooted social problems in society, which is in line with the theoretical framework of CDA. Thematic analysis provides flexibility to adapt to a wide range of research questions (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006), can condense the central insights from a large data set, is useful for making social inferences and, it is suitable for researchers with limited experience on research, (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **4.1.1. Sample**

The gather data technique is document review, specifically, advertising videos posted on YouTube. The videos are examples of how Lipigas was successfully able to create identity value with Spike as a symbol of the average Chilean. The relevance of these videos lies in how they use different cultural elements to create a discourse based on an identity myth that was able to connect with the audience and make them feel related.

The sample consists of 20 advertising videos from 30 seconds to 1 minute and 30 seconds long that were retrieved from YouTube in January 2023. These videos are relevant due to how through the years, Lipigas aimed to get closer to their audience and to that, the brand decided to incorporate different elements to create identification with their target audience. Some of these elements involved social issues such as machismo, discrimination and role genders. Every one of the advertisements tells a story, but all together show a bigger narrative, the discourse of Lipigas where it is possible to see their position on social tensions.

The selection was made with the available material to that date from Lipigas' official account and other different users. The timeframe was set between 2005 and 2016, starting with the first appearance of Spike and finishing with the year of his death, when the brand decided to stop using his image. In 2020, Lipigas started to use Spike's figure again but in animated versions or as a plush toy.

Due to the changes after the massification of the Internet, the older videos of the sample were aired on television, while for the more recent ones, there is no certainty about if they were shown on television or were only published online. There is no precise information that allows specifying which ones were aired on television and which were not. Alongside, the exact dates of airing for the ones that were aired on television are not clear. Even though Lipigas has an official account on YouTube, the older videos were published by other users. Some of them count with specific information about when they have aired and others only estimations.

#### **4.1.2. Analysis Model**

To secure trustworthiness, this research follows the six steps to thematic analysis suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006). In the first stage, the videos were reviewed several times to be familiar with their content. Since the content of the sample has oral and visual content, it was transformed into text in a transcription. This material was reviewed, and the first codes started to appear. Once codes were established, they were grouped into categories. Subsequently, these categories gave way to more prominent themes, relevant to answering the research question. Later, the themes were reviewed to ensure they had a solid foundation. The final part consists of an analytical process to write down the findings. The product emanating from this method is decanted into three (3) themes and six (6) categories. An overview of the codebook can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Overview codebook

<b>Code</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Mother at home	(n=40)	Glorification of the mother (n=180)	Exaltation of the women (n=264)
Affectionate nicknames for mothers	(n=33)		
Mother in charge of household chores	(n=33)		
Mother in charge of children	(n=20)		
Loving mother	(n=16)		
Working mother	(n=13)		
Self-sacrificing mother	(n=7)		
Woman with authority	(n=4)		
Tribute to mother	(n=4)		
Pride in sacrificing for her family	(n=3)		
Hard-working woman	(n=3)		
Another woman in charge of household chores	(n=2)		
Resignation to sacrifice for the family	(n=2)		
Knowledgeable mother	(n=1)		
Strong mother	(n=1)		
Man working	(n=27)	Negative image of men (n=84)	
Macho figure	(n=11)		

Sexualisation of women	(n=10)			
Absent father	(n=10)			
Conflict between men	(n=7)			
Distance from the father	(n=6)			
Man at home	(n=5)			
Dissatisfied father	(n=2)			
Individualist man	(n=2)			
Masculinity associated with brute force	(n=1)			
Difficulty expressing feelings	(n=1)			
Men doing household chores	(n=1)			
Lazy man	(n=1)			
Use of diminutives	(n=60)	Language (n=101)	Representation of popular Chilean identity (n=179)	
Chileanisms (words/idioms only used in Chile)	(n=41)			
References to quiltros and dogs	(n=31)	Chilean cultural symbols (n=78)		
Chilean places	(n=17)			
Chilean food	(n=13)			
Chilean music	(n=8)			
Football reference	(n=7)			
Chilean mass media	(n=2)			
English Knowledge	(n=44)	Virtuous (n=227)		Resignification of the flaute (n=291)
Bubbly	(n=23)			
Royal treatment	(n=21)			
Knowledgeable in general global culture	(n=20)			
Leader	(n=17)			
Affectionate	(n=16)			
Assertive	(n=16)			
Self-confident	(n=16)			
Close	(n=14)			
Forward	(n=12)			

Skilled	(n=10)	
Makes himself respected	(n=7)	
Respectful with women	(n=4)	
Smart	(n=3)	
Educated	(n=2)	
Warm	(n=2)	
Linguistic 'errors' or flaws	(n=48)	Embrace his identity (64)
Kevinism	(n=8)	
Conflicts with elite symbols	(n=8)	

### 4.1.3. Quality and Reflection

For transparency regarding the model, a partial view of it is shown in Table 1, this way, readers can see examples of every level of analysis made and see the connections between them. Concerning credibility, the research question is appropriate for the topic, and it is aligned with the theoretical framework and the method. Alongside this, there are complete and rigorous transcriptions of all the material to analyse the data correctly. The steps of the method are also stated clearly so the analysis process is transparent and logical. The interpretation of the data has solid ground, and all the codes come from explicit passages of the transcription.

One of the issues with thematic analysis is when it is not connected to a theoretical framework supporting it because it could lead to being more descriptive than analytic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, it is clearly stated that the theoretical framework is CDA, and this is consistent throughout the document. One of the characteristics that CDA research should have according to van Dijk is that the results should be written in such a way that they are accessible to the public and especially to the social group being analysed (Meyer, 2001). This is because CDA aligns itself with oppressed groups and seeks to contribute to

social change from the academic trenches, so a grounded and not only theoretical vision is necessary.



## 5. Analysis

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The coding process, and subsequent analysis, lead to three major themes that emanated from the data. These themes illustrate the different social tensions present in Lipigas' advertising discourse. These themes derive from the repetition of certain phrases or scenarios, the emphasis given to them and the verbal, paraverbal and kinesics interactions between participants. The three themes generated from the coding turned out to be the pillars on which Lipigas relies to create identification with its target audience. The three themes are presented below, each with a section divided between a contextualisation of the phenomenon they seek to portray and then the categories specific to each theme, with examples found in the advertising videos.

### 5.1. Exaltation of Women

Lipigas' discourse reflects the disparity in Chilean society regarding women. In this dynamic, Lipigas decides to position itself on the side of women and to do so, it is the main subject of its discourse and is elevated within it. Whereas in the case of men, they are completely omitted from the family equation. In most of the videos, there are no fathers. In the few instances where there are, they are given a negative connotation, as they are not cooperative in the home or with the children and are only engaged in activities related to themselves.

This discourse is the reflection of Chilean society, where there is a pronounced gender disparity and strict and restrictive gender roles. Even though female workers in Chile have increased significantly since 1991, nowadays "the female labour income share is equal to 38%" (Chancel et al., 2021, p. 189). But in the face of a crisis, it is women who must withdraw from work. A clear example is that, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a ten-year setback in Latin America in the

female labour participation rate (ECLAC, 2021). In Chile, before 2019, this rate was 53% and decreased to 41% in the second trimester of 2020 (Alonso, 2022). Moreover, during the crisis, there were more than 4,7 million women that were not working nor looking for a job (Alonso, 2022), in a country of nearly 16 million inhabitants (Government of Chile). The Ministry of Social Development and Family (2022) identified two main causes of this situation, women take care of family members and the housework too, because they tend to oversee unpaid work. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 67% of women did domestic work, while only 21% of men did, considering people older than 18 years old (Ministry of Social Development and Family, 2022).

But more than only gender roles, there is also injustice regarding women and children. In 2021, the law on the national registry of maintenance debtors was enacted (Ministry of Women and Gender Equality, 2021). This legal measure came to address one of the most important issues for mothers in Chile. According to a survey by the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality (2021), 46% of women do not live with the father of their children, and among this number, 65% of these women do not receive any economic compensation for the children. According to the National Institute of Statistics of Chile (2018), there were 5.651.637 households in Chile in 2017. Of them, single-parent households correspond to 717.732, and most of them were led by women (609.329). According to the Judiciary of Chile (Senate of Chile, 2020), 84% of the debtors of alimony do not pay the agreed amount, damaging around 70.000 children. In 2017, 580.389 people received income from alimony and of them, 87,4% were women. Among these women, 56,7% were the sole contributors to the family's economy (Senate of Chile, 2020).

Through symbolic elements and representations, Lipigas address these issues subtly. In the ads, household equals to women, and the subject to whom Lipigas speaks is the mother since there is no point in addressing who is absent from family dynamics, in this case, the father. This is also part of a commercial strategy. For the above reasons, it is women who supervise children and household chores. Therefore, appealing to them in discourse makes sense if they want to create identity value because the families Lipigas pictured try to imitate the national reality.

### 5.1.1. *Glorification of the Mother*

The role of women is strongly linked to that of the mother in Lipigas' discourse. The word 'mother' is never used to refer to this group. Instead, mothers are referred to as 'mommy' and other Spanish affectionate variants in 12 of the 20 videos sampled. Due to this, it was identified as a code, which appears 33 times. In Spanish, the word order for mother, from most formal to most informal, is *madre*, *mamá*, *mami* and *mamita*. In particular, Spike never uses the two more formal forms and mostly uses *mamita* and *mami*. These two are used by young children or when people want to use a more affectionate word. Alongside the diminutives, the context where they are used is respectful, bubbly and affectionate. As in the following examples:

Voice-over: "Keep on fire, mommies, and when you need our energy we will be close by because we also carry it in our hearts"<sup>2</sup> (Lipigas, 2015a)

Spike: (inside the house, running towards a woman who is waiting for him with her arms wide open and crouched) "Helloooo, mommy!"<sup>3</sup> (Alejandro Lagos, 2007)

Following the line of the association women/mother, the mother figure is always associated with being at home, a situation that was repeated 40 times. Whenever a house is shown, there is a mother, regardless of whether there are other family members. This situation is represented in 12 of the 20 videos. The exceptions are when there is neither a family nor a home mentioned or shown. An example of this code is, "If I'm not there, nothing works in my house"<sup>4</sup> (Lipigas, 2015c). Here, the mother is presented as the pillar of the household.

Regarding the division of household chores between woman and man, there is a big gap. In 9 of the 20 videos, there was a mention or a representation of

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<sup>2</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "Sigan *onfire*, mamitas, y cuándo necesiten nuestra energía vamos a estar cerquita porque también la llevamos en el corazón" (Lipigas, 2015a)

<sup>3</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "Holaaaa, po' [pues] mami!" (Alejandro Lagos, 2007)

<sup>4</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "Si yo no estoy, no funciona nada en mi casa" (Lipigas, 2015c)

household tasks and in every single one of them, a woman was performing it. Regarding childcare, only in 8 of the 20 videos, there were children, but in all of them, there was a maternal figure taking care of them. Regarding household chores and childcare, there was only one video advertising that had a variation. This one, in the context of a reality show type of ad, presented the life of a single-parent home, Paola, and her three children –two in their twenties and the other around 10 years old–, and her grandson, a toddler (Lipigas, 2015e). Here, the older sister has her toddler sitting on her lap, while she and Paola are preparing breakfast (Lipigas, 2015e). The older son came later after Paola called for him to hurry up when everyone is already eating. He sits on the table and starts eating, while Paola and the eldest daughter each assist a child. The variation here is that there was a man when there were collective tasks and also that the two mothers, Paola and her daughter, were collaborating. This video advertisement shows how it is women who must get up earlier and take care of family-oriented chores. Given that the son was questioned for being late for lunch and not for not helping with homework, it is evident that this family dynamic is normalised.

Another video showing a variant during the performance of household chores also involves a son in another reality show-style video. This time, the mother, Diana is washing the dishes and preparing lunch while her son, in his twenties, is chopping onion (Lipigas, 2015c). Despite the difference, the pattern where the mother has the heaviest workload in the household is repeated. In this video, Diana is also shown in charge of her younger daughter –Coni–, getting her ready for school, going and coming to pick her up from school, preparing Coni's lunchbox, taking care of the family dogs, preparing lunch, and weeping the entrance to her house (Lipigas, 2015c). As stated in the video (Lipigas, 2015c), Diana performs all these tasks daily before starting work, as she is an independent entrepreneur who sells perfumes door-to-door. Again, the balance of household chores and childcare is weighted towards women.

Erika: I love cooking because... it's an act of love that I do for my daughters<sup>5</sup>

(Erika wearing a cooking apron brings a plate of food to the table where her two daughters, one approx. 14 and the other approx. 16, are sitting eating)

Erika: They love ehh, to eat yummy things, so....<sup>6</sup>

(Erika serves juice to her daughters while they all laugh)

Erika: And since I've gotten them used to that, so that [cooking]... I love to do it<sup>7</sup>

(At the dining room table, her two daughters are doing homework. Erika appears with a basket of dirty clothes, as she approaches to take a closer look at the notebooks)

(Erika is in the kitchen peeling tomatoes, her 14-year-old daughter hugs her from behind as they both laugh) (Lipigas, 2015d)

In the third reality show-style video, Erika, another single-parent housewife, makes a direct link between housework and affection for her daughters. Likewise, her daughters are grateful for the actions their mother does for them.

In total, there are 12 mother figures represented in 11 Lipigas videos. Of these 12, only half have dialogues. However, the main and most cross-cutting characteristic in the construction of the mother characters is that they are loving to their children and other people. The 'loving mother' code is the most repeated on behalf of the mother's personality, 16 times in 9 videos.

Concerning mothers working outside the house, this code was repeated 13 times in 3 of 20 videos. These three videos were presented as reality show style advertising. In any case, it is two women who are shown working or talking about work outside their homes. In the first case, it is Paola, who works as a seasonal worker, picking grapes (Lipigas, 2015e). The relationship with work that is shown

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<sup>5</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "A mí me encanta cocinar porque... e' un acto de amor que realizo para mis hija" (Lipigas, 2015d)

<sup>6</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "A ellas les encanta ehh comer cosas ricas, así que..." (Lipigas, 2015d)

<sup>7</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "Y como yo las he acostumbrado a eso, entonces eso [cocinar]... me encanta hacerlo" (Lipigas, 2015d)

is that it is the means that allows her to support her children, so Paola defines herself as a “working mum” (Lipigas, 2015e). In the second case, there is Diana who defines herself as an “entrepreneurial mum” (Lipigas, 2015c), as she runs a business in which she sells perfumes at home. In this case, Diana states that she “likes” her job and finds it “fun” (Lipigas, 2015c). She adds that thanks to it, she has been able to create lasting bonds with her clients, whom she already considers friends (Lipigas, 2015c). Diana also describes her work as “a routine” and when she does not do it, she misses it (Lipigas, 2015c).

From the way mothers are portrayed, another particular characteristic is born, that of sacrificing themselves for their family. This code is repeated 7 times in 3 videos, where the clearest example is Paola. In her story, Paola acknowledges the difficulty of reconciling her hard work as a seasonal worker with being a housewife (Lipigas, 2015e). Paola is shown early in the morning in an empty street going to buy bread for breakfast while showing signs of being cold, as she tries to warm her hands (Lipigas, 2015e).

### ***5.1.2. Negative Image of Men***

As Spike represents a male figure, some of his interactions will be analysed in this section but the main configuration of Spike comes in the next theme. In this section, his negative sides will be analysed, which are practically overshadowed by all the positive characteristics that are imbued in him.

In Lipigas videos, men are mostly represented in the role of workers, especially in the brand. Despite this, their interactions are shorter and less meaningful than those of the women. In contrast to women, men are rarely at home playing a family role. This occurs in only four out of 20 videos and in half of them they are fulfilling the role of an adult son. Moreover, of the four appearances, only one is positive and that is when Diana’s son is chopping onions (Lipigas, 2015c). This scene also represents the only time a man is seen doing household chores within the family context.

There are only four fathers portrayed in Lipigas advertising. The human fathers though, are three. The first father figure is in a family scene, where three

people are waiting for Spike to come out of the bathroom (Alejandro Lagos, 2007). The female figure is seated and resting her head on her hands in anticipation as she turns her back to the camera, so at first glance, she appears not to be there (Alejandro Lagos, 2007). Meanwhile, both the father and son are in their pyjamas waiting by the bathroom door, but only the father has a towel in his hand (Alejandro Lagos, 2007). Although the scene is confusing, since it is not clear why they are all waiting at the same time, the female figure is standing away from the door, suggesting that although she is waiting, she is willing to give up her turn. As only the father has a towel, it is then implied that he will be the next to enter. It is clear from this family dynamic that the father figure revolves around his individual needs and is in a position of privilege vis-à-vis the other members of the family. Similar situations also occur in reality, where fathers often sit at the head of the table and are always the first to be served.

In the same logic, another father figure is shown sleeping in a marriage bed with a woman who is just waking up (Lipigas, 2015a). The woman looks at a clock with the time on it and is surprised (Lipigas, 2015a). Immediately, she turns to look at the man, but he is still asleep, so she shows an openly annoyed expression and gets up abruptly but does not say anything to him (Lipigas, 2015a). Then, the mother starts preparing the school uniform for her son and tempers the house by turning on the heater (Lipigas, 2015a). The son sleepily comes into the living room where the mother is and hugs her, as she is warming his clothes for him (Lipigas, 2015a). As the father is only shown sleeping, it is again implied that the fathers are disengaged from housework or childcare. Rather, they are concerned with their individual rather than collective needs. The last father figure is Diana's husband, who in the reality show-style video only appears for the closing, when the whole family is outside the house saying goodbye to the cameras (Lipigas, 2015c).

The father figure with the most appearances, interactions and, the only one with dialogue is Spike's father, who is in two videos. What is interesting to mention is that, canonically, he is dead. In one video, Spike is walking in a park while singing the Lipigas jingle when out of nowhere he hears his father (Diego11bkn, 2008). Spike, incredulous, looks up at the sky and sees the sun, when suddenly, the image of his father's face appears covering the sun (Diego11bkn, 2008). Spike's

father, also a mixed-breed dog, asks him “What have you done with your life” (Diego11bkn, 2008). Faced with physical distance, Spike runs to a higher point, the top of a small mound, in a reference to the film *The Lion King* (Allers & Minkoff, 1994). Spike replies “daddy, I live to be close to people”, to which his father replies “yes, but now your mission is to be closer” (Diego11bkn, 2008). Surprised, Spike replies “Tssssss, closer? but how do I do it, Daddy. Give me a sign” (Diego11bkn, 2008). As his figure fades into the sky, Spike’s father repeats “only warmth” several times (Diego11bkn, 2008). This interaction, which corresponds to the entire video, has a high symbolic value. It reflects the figure of an absent father, who appears briefly only to show his dissatisfaction with how his son has lived his life and demands more from him, only to leave again. In this brief interaction, there is no affection, but distance on the part of Spike’s father. In the son’s position, Spike runs to get closer to him, but to no avail, the distance is not shortened. In any case, Spike has a high regard for his father, as he does not reproach him for anything, gives him any explanations and even asks him for advice.

Contrary to the discourse they seek to criticise, Spike is not an example of a good father either. In one video, Spike and his delivery partner go to a family home. As they leave the scene, Spike turns as he says goodbye, looking towards the entrance of the house, where there is a female Cocker Spaniel and four puppies (Alejandro Lagos, 2007). These puppies shout “daddy” incessantly at Spike, while one of them asks him where he is going. Spike sighs and says “Ahhh, just warmth”, turns and walks away (Alejandro Lagos, 2007).

The second most repeated code in this category is the macho figure. In the 7 videos where elements of this type are represented, we find the configuration of the manly man, which encompasses being strong, gallant and mischievous. For example, in one video, Spike has a framed photo of a poodle dog on his office desk (Lipigas, 2011b). In another, a Lipigas worker shows off his biceps while in the delivery truck and Spike barks at him to congratulate him (Alejandro Lagos, 2007). In another example, the footballer Gary Medel appears without a shirt, showing off his professional athlete’s physique, in most of the video (Icuc9, 2010). On the other hand, Spike’s language is very picaresque and many of his sentences can be interpreted with a degree of sexual connotation. In a video where Spike is hosting



a cooking show where they receive dishes prepared by mothers, he says “You already know, send me your recipe, I’ll eat them<sup>8</sup>” (Lipigas, 2012a). On the one hand, Spike is someone whose language is marked by a severely informal use of language and who makes quite a few ‘mistakes’ in his speech. In the quoted sentence, Spike speaks to his audience, the housewives, always treating them respectfully as “You”. When he alludes to the word ‘recipe’, it is in the singular, but when he says “I eat them” it is in the plural (Lipigas, 2012a). The construction of this sentence can be interpreted either as a mistake or as implying that Spike would ‘eat’ the mothers. The latter word is used informally to refer to sex-affective behaviour. A similar situation occurs in another advertising video, where there are two female dancers in leotards and 80s attire (Lipigas, 2012d). While they are singing, the dancers are in a recreation of a bath with the bathtub curtains closed (Lipigas, 2012d). Playing with the shadows, they appear to be naked (Lipigas, 2012d). In this context, Spike arrives, asking if this is the foam party (Lipigas, 2012d). Entering the shower with the dancers, Spike says “Make a dance move! or shall we do three? Tsss<sup>9</sup>” (Lipigas, 2012d). Here, the verb used in Spanish is used in Chile as a way of saying to have sex, so Spike would be joking about having a threesome with the two dancers. This interaction is another code found in the Lipigas videos, where women outside the role of mothers are sexualised by men. This code is repeated several times in this video alone, where the dancers are seen as sex objects for Spike and a singer (Lipigas, 2012d).

## 5.2. Representation of Popular Chilean Identity

Chile is in many aspects, a very diverse country. Situated in South America, it is the narrowest and one of the longest countries in the world, with 4,270 km of

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<sup>8</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: “Ya sabe, mándeme su receta, que yo me las como” (Lipigas, 2012a)

<sup>9</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: “Aquí e’ la fiesta de espuma? ¡Tírense un paso! o nos tiramos tres?” (Lipigas, 2012d)

land surrounded by the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean (Government of Chile, n.d). Due to these characteristics, the approximately 20 million inhabitants are distributed in sixteen regions that possessed almost all the existent climates on Earth except tropical (Government of Chile, n.d). Even though the population is diverse in this sense, some elements unite the Chilean people.

From the Colony until the twentieth century, motivated by the elites, the national ideology of Chile imagined the country as a homogeneous one, with a “conservative, hispanicised version of Chilean-ness” (Crow, 2016, p. 17). This led to a problematic construction of mestizo identity in Chile (Saffie, 2021; Montecino, 1999). As stated by Bonomo, over time, this notion of homogeneity has been diluted and has given way to a gradual embrace of the country’s indigenous ancestry (Saffie, 2021). In 2017, more than 2 million people identified as part of one indigenous folk, and most of the people, 79,8%, did as Mapuche (National Institute of Statistics of Chile, 2018).

Two elements that unify the Chilean identity are language, and food (Pauta, 2021). Traditions such as the celebration of the national holidays also bring more elements such as the flag, food, and music strengthening the idea of national unity (Saffie, 2021).

### ***5.2.1. Language***

As stated by Bargsted (Saffie, 2021), the Chilean language has a full repository of symbolic meanings that only makes sense in this nation. The Chilean standard is the variant of Spanish that this country has formed over time, and which is part of the country’s linguistic identity (Valdés-León & Cerro, 2020). It was born, to a certain extent, in opposition to European Spanish, but also from the need to appropriate a language and adapt it to the local reality (Valdés-León & Cerro, 2020). On the other hand, it is also a form of differentiation from other Latin American countries, and therefore also a way of strengthening Chilean identity (Valdés-León & Cerro, 2020). Cultural elements that make the Chilean norm a variant of its own are the inclusion of indigenous words in traditional Spanish and also the chilenisms, which are a sign of cultural syncretism between the indigenous

and the Europeans (Valdés-León & Cerro, 2020). All the linguistic elements incorporated in this category represent transversal and accepted figures as distinctive forms of Chilean, regardless of gender or social class.

The use of the Chilean variant of Spanish is transversal in all Lipigas videos and is especially used by Spike. A feature that is recognised transversally as Chilean is the extensive use of the diminutive, expressed as the suffix *-ito*, *-ita* (Saffie, 2021; Valderrama et al., 2017). The use of diminutives is a code repeated 60 times in 18 out of 20 videos. One case where they are used is, for example, in the Lipigas jingle, where Spike sings “Change to yellow, yellow is near. Let the yellow warm up your water<sup>10</sup>” (Davidquero, 2006). Since there is no literal translation to English, the translation is meaningless. In the original sentence, the diminutive is used for near and water.

Regarding chilenisms, they are used 41 times in 17 out of 20 videos. The most repeated is ‘*po*’, which is used nine times. *Po* is a discourse marker specific to Chile, originally derived from the word ‘*pues*’ and is used to reaffirm or add greater intensity to a sentence (Manni & San Martín, 2021). This word has no literal English translation, and its meaning is configured to the rest of the sentence. In one video, Spike yells at a company intern “wake up, *po*<sup>11</sup>!” (Lipigas, 2011a). In this sentence, the “*po*” serves the function of giving more emphasis to the command.

### 5.2.2. Chilean Cultural Symbols

These types of elements are repeated 78 times and are represented in Lipigas’ discourse in different areas, such as the *quiltro* dog, places in the country, typical food, Chilean music and football references.

The *quiltro* is defined by the Royal Spanish Academy (n.d.) as a “dog and, in particular, the non-breed dog”. The origins of this word come from Mapuche, where

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<sup>10</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: “Cámbiate al amarillo, el amarillo eshtá [está] cerquita. Deja que el amarillo te caliente el [la] agüita”<sup>10</sup> (Davidquero, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: “Despiertaaa, *po*!” (Lipigas, 2011a)

it means dog but nowadays, it can be to identify mixed-breed dogs or stray dogs, since is common to see quiltros on the street (La Tercera, 2013). These dogs are described as woolly, small to medium size and ugly (La Tercera, 2013). The word sometimes can have a negative connotation when referring to people or dogs, since they are 'ugly' and 'low status' but since they are typical from Chile, they are seen as symbols of the Chilean identity since the word, is comparable to the concept of mestizo, in terms of a mixture of different races (La Tercera, 2013). Although the word itself is never mentioned, Spike is a quiltro and he appears in all 20 videos analysed. Moreover, his father is also a quiltro dog, and many times when filming on the street, there are kennel dogs in the background. This symbolically also shows the cross-cutting nature of this type of dog, which is present throughout the country.

Another symbol of Chilean culture is *cazuela*, a local soup. This dish is defined as a perfect effect of cultural syncretism (Montecino, 2004). This traditional Chilean food, the basis of the winter diet of the popular world, incorporates ingredients native to the country and others from Spain. Montecino calls it "the hot 'embrace' of local and European traditions" (2004, p. 58). Although the dish is eaten all over the country, each region has its own variant, adding or subtracting ingredients, but retaining the base (Montecino, 2004). Again, the use of this traditional Chilean cultural product is a symbol of the union of differences. Although it is not prepared in the same way everywhere, it retains a fundamental base and the name also. The same could apply to Chilean identity. Although the appearance of people may change from north to south, there are common elements that unite them. The word *cazuela* appears three times in two of the 20 Lipigas videos. On one occasion, Spike even refers to one of the variants from the southern part of the country (AgenciaPuerto, 2011), called '*cazuela de pava*', where the soup is thickened with *chuchoca*, a strong corn flour (Montecino, 2004).

The sport that unites the country is football. In this sense, the members of the Chilean national football team are highly recognised in the country, especially those who have had important careers outside the country. In this line, it is not surprising that Lipigas has invested in hiring the footballer Gary Medel for a campaign. Ad hoc, Medel's nickname is 'Pitbull', due to his behaviour on the field. In one of the videos, Spike talks to Medel and tells him "Look, let me tell you one thing, from

dog to dog<sup>12</sup>” (Icuc9, 2010). Medel himself comes from a poor family and is very critical about certain aspects of Chilean society, as he has stated, if he had not been a footballer, he would probably have fallen into drugs or crime, just like his neighbours. (Emol, 2016). In a press release about the campaign, Lipigas explained that this collaboration was justified because Medel represented common elements with the brand, such as “passion, strength and commitment to Chile” (Ruiz, 2010, p. 22). In the same video, there are several references to football, including Spike telling Medel to wear a yellow T-shirt with an illustration of them framed in a heart before going to the field (Icuc9, 2010). Spike mentions to Medel that if he wears this shirt underneath the official national team shirt, he will achieve spectacular things (Icuc9, 2010).

### 5.3. Resignification of the Flaite

In a market-based society, the conception of society is altered, shaping the traditional major social problems to fit into what would now be individual problems, where each social actor in this society is responsible and deserving of their destiny (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022). A common idea that represents this is ‘the poor are poor because they want to’, implying that if they work harder and do not slack off, they will arise in life. This implies the idea of a meritocracy, ignoring the fact that we live in unequal societies.

In Chilean society exists the figure of the *flaite*, which appeared around 1990 (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022) to represent the young people in vulnerable communes outside of the capital Santiago (Martínez, 2017). Flaitees have a particular way of dressing associated with hip-hop and possess a particular slang which adopts similarities from the argot of the Chilean prisons (Martínez, 2017). It is essentially a derogative word which opposed to the group of ‘humble people’,

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<sup>12</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: “Mira, déjame decirte una cossa, de perro a perro” (Icuc9, 2010).

the Chilean way of referring to the ‘good’ poor people, the ones that work hard and adhere to the rules of society, eager for meritocracy to reward them (Martínez, 2017). But as Storey (2018) stated, “meritocracy is perhaps the great lie of class inequality” (p. 149). Especially in Chile where the prospects of young people depend majorly on their origins, e.g., the neighbourhood they were born and who their parents are (OECD, 2018). In one of the countries with more income inequality, social mobility is extremely hard, as “it would take six generations for the descendants of a low-income family to reach the average income” (OECD, 2018, p. 1). In Chile, a determining factor in whether a young person will complete tertiary education is whether their parents have a high level of education. If this is the case, then there is a 65% chance, while this figure decreased to only 13% at homes with little educated parents (OECD, 2018). In such a context, the few people that achieve success in any form are placed on an altar, winding up the meritocratic myth once again to maintain the status quo.

Poor people lack the symbolic power even to represent themselves as a group, so the representations that exist in the media and popular culture are those that come from the elite (Martínez, 2017), which are full of prejudices. The national discourse for *flaites* is one that dehumanized them, associating them with negative connotations that pictures them as armful, scary, and inferior (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022). In Chilean society, flaites are stigmatized in society, the media and popular culture, presenting ostensibly racist and classist elements in this discourse (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022). This level of symbolic violence is present in Chile, especially against poor people and people with darker skin (van Dijk, 2005). In the national ideological discourse, these people are associated with “criminality, violence, laziness, backwardness, primitiveness, stupidity, amorality, impertinence, and so on” (van Dijk, 2005, p.161). Flaites and their equivalents in other countries “share the social markers of class contempt in their bodies, their skin colour, their clothes, their morals, their language, their music, their names” (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022, p. 78)

Since they embody all of society’s ills, they are frequently the target of violent discourses (Bayón & Moncrieff, 2022) and even physical attacks. In 2005, a local radio started the campaign ‘Bump off a flaité’ [*pitéate un flaité*], which also

had a website (Martínez, 2017) and years later, this campaign was strongly promoted on social media. The campaign tried to link crime with flaites, so, following that logic, if all the flaites are gone, then there will be no more crimes. Associations like that lead to the naturalisation of a practice called ‘citizen detentions’, where, amid flagrant criminal acts in the street, people would catch the alleged attacker, who met the characteristics of the flaites, and torture them, taking justice into their own hands (Martínez, 2017).

In opposition, the elite privileged groups in Chile are called *cuicos*. This term is not necessarily related only to being rich, but rather having remarkable origins. An illustrative example of this is that the ‘new rich’ would not be considered cuicos, like in the case of rich football players. Many of the most recognized Chilean football players, like Arturo Vidal, Alexis Sánchez y Gary Medel, came from humble origins. In cases like this, applied the meritocracy myth, where because of their hard work and talent, they became successful in life. But due to classism and racism in society, they would not be considered cuicos even when they live in wealthy neighbourhoods. As one of the participants of a study about meritocracy in Chile stated, the difference between cuicos and football players like Arturo Vidal is that the first ones inherit their success from their parents, while the latter earn it through their own efforts (Peña & Toledo, 2017). For this reason, these characters enjoy the affection and respect of the people.

### ***5.3.1. Virtuous***

Probably the biggest discursive twist in Lipigas’ discourse is to give clear and consistent positive connotations to the flaites through an emerging symbol of this group, Spike. The construction of Spike’s personality traits revolves around him as someone who is profoundly Chilean, but who also has a background in international culture that he constantly brings out. One of the codes found in this category is the use of English, which Spike uses randomly and repeatedly in the Lipigas videos. The use of English was repeated 44 times in 14 of the 20 videos in the sample.

One of the most extreme and clearest examples is when Spike advises Barack Obama's alleged dog, Guaguack (Lipigas, 2012b). In the video aired in 2009, Spike is in his elegant and spacious office, together with one of his subordinates, when Guaguack calls him on the telephone (Lipigas, 2012b). Guaguack, a black Great Dane, is seated at a desk in an office with a similar setting to the Oval Office of the White House (Lipigas, 2012b). Initially, Guaguack greets Spike in English, saying "hello, it's me!" while the anthem of the United States started to play (Lipigas, 2012b). On the other side of the phone, Spike reacts by saying "Tsss, my friend Guaguack, *the president*" in mixed Spanish and English (Lipigas, 2012b). Afterwards, Guaguack communicates the reason for the call—in Spanish with errors and a marked accent from the United States—and he needs orientation to handle the Great Recession (Lipigas, 2012b). Meanwhile, Spike spoke English correctly, but Guaguack made some mistakes. Despite Spike's humble origins, he acknowledges that he has no formal education and that all his knowledge has been gained on the street (La Cuarta, 2009). Regardless, Spike is always portrayed as a natural leader, skilled, confident and assertive. In the previous video, Guaguack is shown as a novice, while Spike is the one with the experience, someone whom the leaders can identify as a natural leader.

In another scenario, Spike participates in a televised interview where the host, a Chilean actor and former deputy named Álvaro Escobar, asks Spike why he is the "people's candidate, the housewife's sweetheart", in the context of a non-specified election (Lipigas, 2013). On his chair, Spike replies "Tsss, simple. I do not promise, I fulfil" (Lipigas, 2013). Throughout the rest of the interview, Spike continues to come across as a confident and capable person. His humble origins are never an impediment to the tasks Spike faces. With no academic training, he is shown as superior to others who have had such training or are more privileged. Regardless of his analytical skills and leadership, Spike remains a relatable character for mothers. In his interactions, he is always in good spirits, cheerful, bubbly, funny and affectionate.

In a video where he is simulating a national presidential chain, Spike stands on a podium with many first-place medals hanging around his neck and the Andes Mountains in the background (Lipigas, 2012c). As a Chilean flag appears in one



corner, Spike addresses the "mommies of Chile" solemnly to announce that they kept their promises to include more tools on their website (Lipigas, 2012c). As a joke, every time he announces an improvement, he shouts exaggeratedly "and we deliver!" (Lipigas, 2012c). Finishing his speech, he pretends to be angry while saying "and if you don't like it...", and then abruptly changes his tone to a soft one and says, "call us at the call centre without a second thought, mommy" (Lipigas, 2012c).

Despite all the above, there is a great contradiction in Spike's personality. Although he is portrayed as a capable person and a leader, he is often unfriendly and haughty in his dealings with his subordinates, but never with mothers. Whenever he is addressed by a Lipigas worker, they always use the pronoun '*Usted*' (You) and called him 'boss'. In one video, Spike is in a delivery truck and out of nowhere shouts at Fabián, a Lipigas worker, to stop the truck in an unkind manner (Lipigas, 2012e). Intuitively, Fabian complies, and Spike tells him that he is not easy to recognise, but that he wants to congratulate him on his work as they have been awarded again (Lipigas, 2012e). Abruptly, Spike backs off and says "Actually... just for doing your job. Hey, who told you to stop? Speed up"<sup>13</sup> (Lipigas, 2012e).

### ***5.3.2. Embrace his Identity***

Historically, the most vulnerable socio-economic groups in Chile have been omitted in many aspects, including the study of their characteristic way of speaking (Sadowsky, 2022). The consequence of a discriminatory society has "engendered intensely negative attitudes towards the speech of the lower socioeconomic strata" (Sadowsky, 2022, p. 105). On the other hand, these groups are so marginalised and excluded that it is difficult to involve them in research because they often live in dangerous areas (Sadowsky, 2022).

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<sup>13</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "En realidad... por hacer tú pega no más. O'e y quién te dijo que pararai? Aceleera" (Lipigas, 2012e).

One of Spike's most notorious linguistic traits is the sound of the phoneme 'ch', which he pronounces as 'sh' with an excessive mark. In Chile, the pronunciation of 'ch' is linked to a person's socio-economic status because, in addition to the standard, there are two phonetic variations associated with opposite socio-economic strata (Vivanco, 1998). One of them corresponds to the pronunciation mentioned above, the 'sh', which is like the English pronunciation. This is linked to the rural world and the lower strata of society (Vivanco, 1998). The social stigmatisation is so profound that there is a phenomenon of overcorrection, in which the speaker pronounces 'ch' as 'tch', which is linked to the elites (Opazo & Jaque, 2014; Vivanco, 1998). In the same vein, even words of foreign origin that should be pronounced as 'sh', such as sushi, are pronounced as 'sutchi' because of the stigmatisation of the phoneme 'sh' (Opazo & Jaque, 2014).

Those who pronounce 'ch' as 'sh' are mocked, scorned and seen as ignorant. In this stigmatised context, Spike's over-emphasis on the 'sh' phoneme is a reaffirmation of his identity and a sign that a person's socio-economic background does not influence his or her value in society. Among the linguistic errors Spike uses the most, this is one of the most repeated. For example, one of the ways Spike often responds is by adding the interjection 'shaaa' to the beginning or end of a sentence. This element is similar to 'tsss' in English and is used 13 times in 10 of the 20 videos sampled. Another example of linguistic errors in pronunciation is the aspiration of the 'd' and the 's'. An example is the sentence "I make him late for work every day<sup>14</sup>" (Estudiolamusical, 2010) in Spanish.

In Lipigas' advertising discourse, there are subtle gestures that mock the affluent classes. For example, in a video that simulates a tense moment in a strategic office, a clerk in a short-sleeved shirt and no tie is seen receiving a telegram (Lipigas, 2011b). His superior arrives, wearing a long-sleeved shirt and tie, and takes the telegram out of his hand without speaking to him (Lipigas, 2011b). In turn,

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<sup>14</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "A e'te [este] otro, lo hago llegar to'o' [todos] lo' [los] día' [días] tarde a la pega [trabajo]" (Estudiolamusical, 2010).

a new superior arrives, wearing a shirt, tie and blazer, and the same action is repeated (Lipigas, 2011b). This man, who is respected by everyone in the office, arrives at Spike's office, referring to him as 'boss' and hands him the telegram (Lipigas, 2011b). It is manifest then that Spike's authority is not based on symbols associated with elites, such as formal dress or ways of expressing oneself. Despite having a humble and uneducated background, Spike heads the Lipigas pyramid and commands respect within the organisation. His presence and authority are so great that even when he makes mistakes in his speech, no one corrects him or makes fun of him.

Another element is the phenomenon identified as "Kevinism" in Germany, which consists of the stigmatisation of certain names of English origin as being associated with the lower social strata (Gebaur et al., 2012). Chile is no stranger to this phenomenon and Lipigas takes ownership of it. Among the fictitious names used in the videos are Darwin (AgenciaPuerto, 2011; Lipigas, 2011a), Edith (Lipigas, 2012a), Kevin (AgenciaPuerto, 2011) and Liseth (AgenciaPuerto, 2011). On the other hand, there is also Gary Medel (Icuc9, 2010), who is a real name.

## 6. Discussion

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This research focuses on investigating the strategies used by brands to build identity value by addressing social tensions to perform identity myths in advertising videos. Since “discourse constitutes society and culture” (Wodak, 2001, p. 141) and advertising discourse is a parallel of society it is necessary to discuss how brands are addressing social groups by personification them in advertising. The video advertising created by Lipigas starred by Spike, pictured the power dynamics of Chilean society since he challenges some aspects of the dominance and the reproduction of the national ideology driven by the elites. In this context, the discourse proposed in Lipigas’ videos could build identity value by representing and trying to change the image of the marginalized classes that historically have been ridiculed, criminalized and portrayed with negative attributes.

As stated by Pineda et al., (2022), Holt's proposed guidelines are still valid in terms of how to become iconic in terms of using social conflict to perform a myth identity that is aligned with non-dominant groups. In the same way, the use of anthropomorphic characters is positioned as a strategy that facilitates the mobilisation of new values through symbolic language. On the other hand, these same characters, when well-constructed and in tune with the group they seek to represent, can become icons in their own right.

In the case of Lipigas, these strategies, together with the articulation of the three identified themes –the exaltation of women, representation of popular Chilean culture and resignification of the flaute– explain the creation of identity value in the audience and the positioning of the brand as iconic in Chile. In this line, the choice and performance of the identity myth framed in current social tensions also have a profound influence. As in the case of the representation of children in brand commercials that target them, the protagonists of the identity myth are portrayed as

capable, intelligent and superior to other groups (Vergara & Vergara, 2012). This can be interpreted as part of a wave of social and cultural changes in advertising (Vergara & Vergara, 2012). But in this type of advertising discourse, there are also contradictions (Vergara & Vergara, 2012). While Lipigas proposed a different discourse from the dominant one, Lipigas' ultimate intention is not to push for social change. This new discourse is part of a marketing strategy to become more relevant to its target audience. And even in the novelty of its vindication of Chile's marginalised classes, where the flaute is promoted as a subject of rights and positive connotations rooted in Chilean culture, this discourse is still strongly marked by gender stereotypes, where housework is not seen as work but as a way for mothers to show affection to their families and where all the tasks fall under their jurisdiction. Whereas in the case of men, specifically fathers, they simply do not exist. If they are included in the narrative, they contribute nothing to the family dynamic and are also portrayed as individualistic. A stark contrast to the mothers, who give their all, even sacrificing themselves, for their children.

In this case, Lipigas created a good flaute symbol through the use of symbols that are transversally accepted as part of Chilean cultural identity - such as traditional food, language or figures from popular culture - that appeal to pride in national identity, thus generating a unifying discourse (Pineda, et al., 2022) among heterogeneous citizens. But at the same time, it kept intact some fundamental characteristics of the flaites to promote the identification process. So, Spike has several elements that are related to the lower classes. From his voice, tone, vocabulary and intonation to his idiosyncrasy, all these elements are aligned to portray this group.

In such a harsh society, where the hope of upward social mobility is extinguished at every turn, there is no other step to take but acceptance. For a long time, the group of humble people, the 'good poor', aspired to resemble the elites in the way they spoke or dressed and move away from the symbols of poor people that come from popular culture. Lipigas proposes an identity that embraces the popular and the historically marginalised as a way of creating identity value. Here, we find a different construction of Chilean identity, where the elements of the process of

mestizaje acquire a new positive value and are also identified as elements that help the social cohesion of the nation.

Unfortunately, this discourse proposed by Lipigas has its limitations. Of particular concern is the way in which women are constructed, where their value lies implicitly in their role as mothers. Another reflection of society is the lack of social punishment for macho attitudes where men develop their professional lives at the expense of a woman staying at home supervising household chores and children.

## **6.1. Future Research**

Future studies on this topic include, for example, the valuable perspective that non-dominant groups have on representations of their identity in advertising that seeks to position social issues. In the particular case of Lipigas' advertising strategy, it would be interesting to continue the research line of this study and see how it has evolved and how it has adapted to the new social context. In this way, see the changes that have been made to the personification of Spike. The videos analysed in this research date back almost a decade and in this time, issues such as gender roles in advertising have been severely challenged. Taking this into account, this would also be an interesting line of research to investigate.

## 7. Conclusion

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Regarding the first theme, the exaltation of women, this is achieved by putting mothers on a shrine and giving men a negative image. Regarding the glorification of mothers, the conclusion is that women are directly linked with motherhood, household, and children. Although they are positively represented in Lipigas' discourse, an important contradiction can be identified. The role of women in Lipigas' videos responds to gender stereotypes. On the other hand, there are only two exceptions where women are not at home and that is when they are working. Of these two cases, only one enjoys her work (Lipigas, 2015c), while the other acknowledges that it is a demanding job (Lipigas, 2015e). Another conflicting aspect is that the negative effects of the workload at home and in the workplace are praised and shown as aspects that are part of the mother's role. As Paola acknowledges "well, being a working woman and a housewife is difficult but, at the end of the day, you have to do it every day<sup>15</sup>" (Lipigas, 2015e). There is no space for reflection or venting, as every time a mother figures start to touch on these issues, they stop themselves because they know that they are responsible for their families.

On the other hand, concerning the negative portrayal of men, while the mother was loving, self-sacrificing and always present at home, the figure of the father is portrayed as distant, uninterested, and absent from the home. The man's role, then, is focused on work. In none of the videos is there any clear criticism of the men's negative behaviour - except in the case of the sleeping father - nor are there any consequences. Another contradictory element is the construction of

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<sup>15</sup> My translation. Original transcription in Spanish: "Bueno, ser una mujer trabajadora y una dueña de casa igual e' [es] difícil pero igual en el fondo hay que cumplirlo todo' [todos] los días po [pues]" (Lipigas, 2015e).

Spike's character as macho. He is supposed to be an ally of women but replicates behaviours that harm them. He is a virile dog, who flirts with many women and has relationships with at least two female dogs. While he is affectionate with women and his own father, this affection is not replicated in his relationship with his children, whom he treats coldly.

When it comes to the second theme, the representation of popular Chilean culture, specifically regarding language, the use of Chilean Spanish is used as a bridge to generate identification between Spike and the audience. Despite the informality of Spike's speech, the words that fall into this category are used by the majority of Chileans. Although Spike is representing a socially marginalised class, the use of these words allows him to anchor himself to a majority group of the population. Following the same line, when it comes to cultural symbols, Lipigas uses Chilean icons in its discourse as a way of generating unity and identification with a broad audience, as the company has a presence in most of the country. While there is an important challenge in generating unity within the country due to its diversity, Lipigas knows how to recognise strong symbolic elements that represent the Chilean popular identity.

With regard to the third thematic axis, the resignification of the flaute, this is achieved based on two principles: showing him as a virtuous figure and validating his own identity. Regarding the first point, Spike is constructed as a character who comes from a humble background but has a great capacity to handle people and situations. Despite being a manager, he is still involved in the daily tasks of ordinary workers, going to houses to deliver gas balloons to mothers. In this sense, Spike is close and affectionate with his target group. However, there is an important class contradiction here, since his treatment of those under him in the Lipigas hierarchical pyramid is not always the best and he is often arrogant and even a little disrespectful, but always under the shield of his playful personality. Despite this, nobody bothers with him, although this can also be interpreted because of his high power within the company.

In this context, despite having consolidated his career and risen to the top of the organisational pyramid at Lipigas, Spike remains true to his origins. He does not pretend to be someone he is not, nor is he ashamed of his flaute identity. On the



contrary, he is proud. Spike believes that this practical knowledge of life is the key to his success, to the clear detriment of purely theoretical or academic knowledge. Consequently, Spike has no inferiority complex towards anyone and constantly shows his confidence. Similarly, Spike's superiority over people associated with more privileged classes is shown in several situations.

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