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Iconographic analysis of the myth of Lilith in advertising

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Abstract

Introduction: Western culture has traditionally promoted an androcentric view of women that pigeonholes the latter in different conceptual stereotypes based on the good-evil binary opposition, including the one that depicts women as evil itself: the myth of Lilith. **Methods:** An iconographic analysis has been performed to identify and classify the different iconographies used to depict this myth (a total of nine). After this first analysis, the study offers a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the inclusion of this myth in the advertising of the different commercial sectors. **Results and conclusions:** The myth of Lilith is used the most in the fragrance, audiovisual and fashion sectors. The iconography that is used the most to depict Lilith is as a woman-object of desire, 38%, followed its depiction as a serpent-woman, 21%, as a serpent's female lover, 12%, and as the personification of death, 8%.

Keywords

Lilith; iconography; women; advertising; gender; mythology.

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Translation by **CA Martínez Arcos** (Ph.D. in Communication from the University of London)

1. Introduction

The image of women is a cultural construction that has been forged over centuries, through the incorporation of different iconographies created from an androcentric point of view, and distributed and imposed through the power of images. Such iconographies have been mostly perpetuated by the history of art and, currently, by the media.

Current female myths are ancient symbolic representations, in which any modification of the symbol would involve the deconstruction and reprocessing of new female iconographies that represent current female identities. The first necessary step to eradicate a cultural identity imposed on women through the standardisation of an iconography based on patriarchal myths is to reinterpret the images in question to identify the different myths that are represented and the treatments given to them in advertising.

The interpretation of the female myth of Lilith is developed from an androcentric perspective that has been transmitted from generation to generation over the centuries. Graphic design is a communication tool to represent cultural identity, and it combines art, design and persuasion (Reina, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to identify the cultural identity represented by the images and their capacity to silently manipulate, since the message that images transmit is not only visual but also intellectual. They represent the cultural identity of a particular society that has been imposed on women, and have great power of manipulation and persuasion. We must not forget that one of the main features of images is their great power of suggestion in all cultures. Thus, based on the different female iconographies that appear in graphic and editorial design and, by extension, in advertising we could talk about female captivity (Villarreal, 2010).

The persistence of the female myth of Lilith in the visual arts has become a constant iconographic resource in the advertising of different business sectors, and it often goes unnoticed as it is deeply rooted in society's collective imaginary as an object and a subject. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out a visual analysis that identifies the depiction of this myth in advertising and its meaning, in order to deconstruct ancient, as well as contemporary, patriarchal myths.

The main objective of this article is to show that the patriarchal myth of Lilith still persists as a selling technique in the advertising campaigns of various commercial sectors. For this reason, we have formulated the following specific objectives: to identify and analyse the iconography of the myth of Lilith in contemporary advertising, to classify the different iconographies in which Lilith can be identified, to quantify the advertising products that use the image of Lilith, and to analyse in which of these images Lilith is depicted as an erotic figure.

2. Theoretical framework

Some research studies on female iconography have studied the iconographic elements associated with women from a gender perspective (Bornay, 1990, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2009; Castañer López, 1993; Ulierte Vázquez, 1998; Sauret Guerrero, 2007; Aumente Rivas, 2010; Maluenda Toledo, 2010,

etc.), and have shown that in all of these iconographic elements the good-evil dichotomy is present, personified in the female figure of Mary and Eve or Lilith (sometimes mistaken by and identified as Eve). Although the topic of Lilith in literature has been extensively studied, the interrelationship between this mythological female character and the visual arts has been studied to a lesser degree, standing out the works of Bornay (1990), Camps (2011) and Eetessam (2009), which focus on the representation of the female myth in 19th century art. Zuriaga (2013) addresses the evolution of this female myth, while Lenaers (2013) analyses different myths focusing on the mirror as an iconographic attribute.

In the existing good-evil dichotomy, advertising has overexploited the image of women related to evil, unifying different iconographies in the archetype known as the *Femme Fatale*. This figure has been a protagonist not only in the visual arts, but also in the rest of the arts. Erika Bornay (1990), in her book *Las hijas de Lilith* (“Lilith’s daughters”), identifies the archetype of the *Femme Fatale* as the iconography of desire and male misogyny. The desire embodied in women, who are turned into objects of desire, something that has been repeatedly done by advertising and promotes the objectification and degradation of women.

This representation of women in advertising, a symbolic collection of the personification of evil, feeds on various iconographies that have survived from ancient times to this day. This collection includes the iconography of Lilith, without a doubt one of the most exploited images. As Eetessam (2009: 233) points out, “Lilith became the icon of the woman located outside the circle of correctness, the *Femme Fatal*, the prostitute, the perverse perverter”. The same author argues that the myth of the *Femme Fatale* represents a strong and dominant woman of great beauty, capable of turning men into weak victims of her perversions, and leading men to their doom, and to hell.

The woman is, then, the absolute protagonist of evil, of everything that is *prohibited to good women*, of what is considered sinful by the Church. Female iconography repeatedly uses symbolism associated with sexuality, lust, eroticism, sin, etc. The origin of this female iconography associated with evil was Lilith.

“The alphabet of Ben Sirak (Koltuv, 1986, pp.37-52) is the oldest known record about Lilith. In this manuscript, dated between the VIII and X centuries BC, Lilith is described as the first mythical wife of Adam. Lilith was unknown in early Christianity despite the fact that she had appeared in the literature of the early centuries of the Christian era. More recently, however, Lilith fertilised the imaginary of the Jewish and Christian community with ideas about a she-demon who caused wet dreams in chaste young men and was responsible for the premature death of new-born children. Lilith also appears in the Zohar (Koltuv, 1986, p.17-35) the Book of Splendour, a cabalistic work of the XIII century which constitutes the most influential Hasidic text. She also appears in the Talmud, the book of Jewish tradition. In the Zohar, Lilith was described as a Succubus. Wet dreams were cited as a visible sign of her presence, of a man's carnal union with Lilith.” (Engelhard, 1997: 32-33). (Maspoli & Ponstinnicoff, 2007: 10) [1]

The origin of Lilith, dates back to the Assyrian-Babylonian culture. She is a creature identified as a she-demon, a seducer and man-eater, capable of attacking men while they sleep. But to make her an even more evil being, Lilith also attacked the women who had just given birth and their new-borns.

This last feature placed Lilith against the figure of motherhood and the image of good, which reinforces the aforementioned dichotomy.

There are various literary references about Lilith. The book of Genesis points out that God created a man and a woman, both equally: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” [1: 27]. This woman is Lilith, not Eve, since the latter was not created as equal but from the man’s rib:

Genesis 1 describes the creation of a man and a woman in the image of God, and Genesis 2 describes how a woman is created from Adam’s rib. The affirmation of Adam himself seems to suggest between the lines (“This is now bone of my bones...”) that *this* woman is the one and that the other one is not.

Lilith appears in the Old Testament when Isaiah narrates God’s judgment against Edom:

“Wildcats will meet hyenas, the goat demon will call to his friends, and there Lilith will lurk and find her resting place.” (Isaiah, 34: 14) (Bible of the Pilgrim)

Lilith also appears in the Zohar as the she-demon and mother of demons, as a demon who kills children and seduces men, as the opposite of chastity: as promiscuity.

“Because when the Other Side saw it, that just when it planned to do so, the Side of Holiness was ahead; then the Other Side went to wander, along with all of its hosts and legions to observe those who exercise their conjugal rights naked and under the candlelight. As a result, all children born of this sexual act were born epileptic, because they are possessed by spirits that come from the Other Side. And these are the naked spirits of the wicked who are called demons. These are hunted down and killed by Lilith.” (Zohar, XXI, 251)

“The Holy lamp began to speak: “I’ve seen the oppressed” (Ecl.” 4: 1). Who are the oppressed? They are the new-borns that disappear from this world. It is not the Angel of Death but Lilith who kills children, she begins to caress them and smile to them and then kills them.” (Zohar, III, 233-b)

The literature defines Lilith as the first wife of Adam, converted into a demon, a sexual man-eater, and a killer of newborns. Visually, this character can be represented with different iconographies, playing a prominent role within the visual arts and currently in advertising, where her iconography remains hidden behind the advertising deception of *a new Eve*, which aims to show an image of a more free, independent and liberal woman, but nonetheless uses old disguised iconographies that revive an ancient and androcentric image of women.

3. Materials and methods

In the acculturation process of our society, graphic and editorial design, and by extension advertising, play a protagonist role in the creation of the public image of women as an advertising element. Based on an initial iconographic analysis, we selected 66 images that are related to the mythical creature called Lilith and were published in the early 21st century. In the first selection of

images, Lilith was identified through various iconographic elements (serpents, felines and elements related to the devil, like horns and wings, etc.). The choice of these images was the result of searching for the Lilith archetype in advertising in various internet search engines, mainly Google. The search focused on concrete terms such as woman, advertising, ads, Lilith, serpent, vamp, witch/hag, femme fatale, feline, she-devil, she-demon, as well as groups of words such as, beverage ads, perfume ads, car ads, etc. After collecting the images through an iconographic method, a database was created in Access for the purposes of this study. The database contained the following fields: number in catalogue, name of the identified myth, commercial sector, company advertised, production year of the ad, website where the image was found, pre-iconographic analysis (what can be seen), iconographic analysis (what it means), technical data, related images (if any), other comments, and identification.

The iconographic method enabled the reinterpretation of the images. “The cultural, religious and commercial tradition has formed the cultural conventions that act on our eyes as interpreters of the narrative. Iconography provides us with the understanding of images, and without this interpretation it would sometimes be impossible for us to perform a correct reading or decoding” (Pérez & Cao, 2000: 46). The iconographic method was developed by different authors (Panofsky, 2005; Gombrich, 2003, etc.) but it was art historian Erwin Panofsky who laid its foundations and argued that the work of art, in this case the images, must be analysed as a complex cultural expression, distinguishing three levels: pre-iconographic, iconographic and iconological. In the pre-iconographic level a first reading is carried out to describe what is contemplated; the iconographic level will enable the identification of the theme and its cultural tradition, and the iconological level examines the ideas that hide the images in a particular cultural context.

Once the database was created, the 66 images were catalogued. Three of them were dismissed: one because it was published before the year 2000 and the other two because they were part of a movie frame. Thus only 63 images were examined, individually, to identify the business sectors they belonged to, their chronology, technical data, icons, and their iconographic elements, which allowed us to identify the different iconographies of the mythological character known as Lilith.

This classification is based on previous identifications of the myth of Lilith in the history of art (Bornay, 1990; Eetessam, 2009; etc.). For example: "in some representations, Lilith appears as a winged female figure with long hair. In others, the lower part of her naked body has the form of a serpent tail. In the Zohar and in different sources, Lilith is called the whore, the perverse one, the false one, and even the black one." (Bornay, 1990: 26).

Based on the previous, we identified nine iconographies used to represent this ancient female myth. These different forms of representing the myth as described below:

1. The serpent woman. The history of art has depicted Lilith as a serpent woman, i.e. a woman with the lower body of a serpent/snake. This first iconographic category covered the ads in which women appeared as a hybrid between woman and snake (the poster for the film “HISSS”) and those more evolved iconographies in which a woman was dressed in snakeskin print fabrics (Dior’s Hypnotic Poison perfume ad).
2. The woman lover of the reptile/the devil. The emblematic animal par excellence of the woman is the serpent. "Lilith, is the paradigmatic woman of the iconography of the

"perverse" in terms of her behaviour; she is not only the prematurely emancipated woman, who flees from the tutelage of her husband, and seduces other men, even demons, but instead, her exterior appearance is described as having two of the most recurring symbols in the iconography of the Femme Fatale: the long hair, as an erotic fetish, and the serpent as ally and lover, when the serpent is the evil transvestite; or when she is in complete symbiosis with the serpent to tempt or destroy other people" (Bornay, 1990: 299). The perversion associated with Lilith as the devil's lover is an iconographic representation that throughout the history of art was identified with women whose sexual organs were sucked by a serpent, and this was associated not only with perversity, but also with lust. This iconographic category includes all those images where the serpent placed in or over the female sexual organs with a clear erotic attitude (Roberto Cavalli's *Oro* perfume ad)

3. The feline-like woman or the woman accompanied by a feline. Bornay (1990) also identifies Lilith with a lustful and feline sexuality. Among the names associated to this mythological figure is tigress. This is the reason why this iconographic category includes images of women in a sexual attitude accompanied by felines or images in which women are dressed in feline print clothing (Avon's *Instinct* perfume ad, starring actress Megan Fox).
4. The she-demon. The iconography Lilith as a winged demon comes from the Assyrian-Babylonian culture. The most recent example is the poster of Disney's *Maleficent* movie.
5. The mother of the serpent or the mother of demons. Legend has it that Lilith joined the Devil and gave birth to a race of devils, and so we identified in contemporary advertising those images depicting Lilith as the mother of devils, or those that included women giving birth to devils (snakes). This category included the poster of the third season of the *American Horror Story* TV series.
6. The woman as object of desire. This includes the depiction of women as a prostitute or a whore, but not with a submissive attitude when it comes to lust. Bornay (1990) also defines Lilith as the whore, the perverse one, the false one, the black one. This category includes the *HEAT* perfume ad, starring Beyoncé, and the Yves Saint Laurent's *Opium* perfume ad.
7. The vamp: "Around 1900, men saw in the vampire the image closest to the fearsome *New Woman*, hungry for sex, power and money. The term "vamp" which is still used to refer to the femme fatale emerged during this time" (Bornay, 1990: 285). This category includes the ad for Roberto Cavalli's *JUST* male fragrance, starring model Georgia May Jagger and the Brazilian model Marlon Teixeira, and the 2011 ad for Dior's *Hypnotic Poison* perfume).
8. The personification of death. The idea of Lilith as a killer of men and even newborns, includes in this iconographic category those images in which woman is the cause of or is related to death, as for example in Dior's *Poison* perfume ad, in which a woman reflected on a mirror creates an optical illusion that shows a skull, which is a synonym of death.
9. Witch. Throughout history, witches have been accused of being the Devil's lovers. They are generally ugly and monstrous beings. This category includes the poster for third season of the *American Horror Story* TV series.

After establishing these categories, however, some ads could be classified in more than one iconographic category. Bearing the previous in mind, after classifying the ads in the most adequate iconographic category, we selected three ads to exemplify the survival of the myth of Lilith in advertising, more specifically in perfume advertising, which is the sector that perpetuates the myth the most. The chosen images are: the ads for Christian Dior's *Hypnotic Poison*; Roberto Cavalli's *Gold*, and Yves Saint Laurent's *Opium*. The first ad has been chosen to present an apparently very clear iconography, with iconographic elements that are well known in Western culture; the second was chosen because it uses advertising as a subliminal element that allows us to carry out a complete iconographic reading; and the third was chosen because it is one of the most criticised ads as it was deemed to be *too sexual* and *degrading for women* by the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA).

After the iconographic analysis was carried out, we considered it was necessary to establish which business sectors used the myth of Lilith in their advertising and how they represented it, in order to observe and compare the survival of the myth in contemporary advertising. To this end, we selected nine qualitative categories to identify different iconographic forms in which the mythological character Lilith could appear in the different commercial sectors: as a serpent woman, as the serpent's lover, as a feline woman or a woman accompanied by a feline, a she-demon, as the mother of devils, as a female object of desire, as a vamp, as a woman personifying death, and as a witch.

The application of these qualitative categories allowed us to produce graphics that show clearly the persistence of the myth of Lilith in contemporary advertising and the different iconographies it represents. In some cases, more than one iconographic variable appear in the same image.

4. Iconographic analysis of the mythological figure of Lilith in advertising

4.1. Lilith in graphic advertising

Without a doubt, Lilith, disguised in the iconography of the *Femme Fatale*, is the absolute protagonist of advertising, especially in sectors like the perfume industry, which uses this iconography the most due to its great sensual and sexual nature.

The French company Dior exploits this image in its ad for its *Hypnotic Poison* perfume (Fig. 1). To identify this myth in the ads it is necessary to identify the different iconographic references contained in the image. This first example includes different iconographic attributes like the serpent, the forbidden fruits, the apple-shaped perfume bottled, the female body moving like a snake, and the snakeskin-like dress. In a pre-iconographic analysis, these attributes allow us to associate the protagonist with Lilith.

In this case, beauty and sensuality are embodied by actress Mónica Bellucci, the star of this 2008 advertising campaign. She is an iconic pretty, successful, confident and seductive woman. In the ad, she appears in a medium close up, lying down but with her head up, showing her beautiful face and gazing at the viewer, who will fall head over heels for her spellbinding beauty. Her sensuality is increased even more by her full lips and her long hair caressing her shoulders. The power of seduction of this image lies in the actress's graceful posture and sensual face, framed with a mane that is sensually blown away, while she projects a seductive gaze (Serrano de Haro, 2000). The main feature of the image is its sensuality.

The actress's powerful and firm gaze dominates the viewer, who is the victim of her great power of seduction. Her body is sensually and softly embraced and seduced by a serpent, whose head is directed towards the bottle of perfume, whose design resembles the forbidden fruit. The apple is an iconographic element that is associated to Eva and not Lilith, however the serpent and its attitude make viewers associate her with Lilith. The image shows an iconographic evolution or transformation. Both characters, Lilith and Eve, share iconographic elements that in certain occasions can lead to misunderstandings: Eve does not maintain a relationship with the serpent; her sin was disobeying God and eating the fruit from the tree of wisdom. However, Lilith does have contact with the serpent (the devil), as she is a serpent herself, the lover of the devil, and a demon. The interpretation of the apple would be associated with sin, although in reality there is no apple, but a bottle of perfume that resembles the shape of an apple, which represents the sin that the ad is encouraging viewers to commit. The body and skin-tight dress of the actress imitates the serpent in shape and colour. The serpent, wrapped a large halo of seduction, is the one encouraging sin. One of the iconographic ways used to depict Lilith is a seductive woman who is seduced by the serpent, by the Devil, who embraces and possesses her body.

It is important to remember that advertising is a form of communication that aims to awaken desires, to motivate people and lead to consumption. Therefore, advertising has a specific function, based on planned objectives. It has a specific intention, which is made manifest, and when its functionality is disposed, it loses its essence (Tallarico, 2000: 187).



Figure 1. Ad for Dior's *Hypnotic Poison* perfume.

The website of the French company describes this perfume as seduction, an alliance between attraction and spectacular elements, between magic and audacity, fascination and enchantment. This seduction and temptation has been personified by the protagonist actress under the artistic direction of O Tyen. The viewer doubts whether the actress is or not the serpent. The woman-serpent relationship as an iconographic feature of the sensual Lilith is a constant in advertising. “This reptile of multipurpose symbols, including the principles of femininity and evil inherent to the earthly dimension, became one of the most recurring emblems of the iconography of evil women, both in the novel genre as in the visual arts” (Bornay, 1990: 30). For example, two of Franz von Stuck’s works, *Sensualidad* (“Sensuality”) (1891) and *El Pecado* (“The Sin”) (1893) exhibit great similarities with Dior’s ad.

Bornay (1990) argues that the figure of Lilith in 19th century art is linked to the origins of sex-phobia and misogyny, justifies society’s insecurity and fear towards the *New woman*, who emerges as a result of the new sociopolitical circumstances. It is important to remember the socioeconomic situation of women in the late 20th century and early 21st century, in which women are presented as a free and liberated, as a new Eve depicted in advertising as a successful woman. However, it is necessary to wonder whether there is insecurity and fear, just as in the 19th century, towards this new Eve, who is the absolute protagonist of 21st century advertising, since advertising reinterprets ancient female iconography which continues to stereotype women from an androcentric perspective.

In the following example the serpent is also the main iconographic attribute. We are talking about the ad for *Oro* (“Gold”) by Roberto Cavalli (Fig. 2), which is a provocative image with warm tones. It shows a woman outdoors, in the public space, which has been historically a masculine space, so that when a woman is represented here she is associated with immorality and prostitution. This woman displays a very sensual attitude that is accentuated by her long hair, which “is an erotic and fetishist element” (Bornay, 1994), her open mouth, her face in ecstasy, and her scarce and sheer clothes. The most erotic elements are her open legs and the serpent moving sensuously over one of her legs and her upper body. This is an iconographic attribute not only associated with Lilith, but with the perfume itself. Its great erotic and sexual charge is emphasised by the protagonist’s caressing of the serpent over the part of its body that covers her vagina. It is possible to argue then, that this image shows the devil’s lover, Lilith.

Both figures, woman and serpent, make up a horizontal line that breaks the verticality of the bottle of perfume, which can be seen as an analogy of the phallus, which is an advertising resource that has been already explained. It is important to remember that advertisers consider that sexual stimuli act with great immediacy when it comes to contemplating an ad.

The visual ambiguity of this ad forces us to perform a more complex reading, since the serpent plays a double role: on the one hand, it is an icon of the perfume, as it part of the bottle design, and on the other it is the symbol of the devil, and it is associated with the seductive and sinful woman. Moreover, the sneaky serpent can also be interpreted as a phallic symbol.

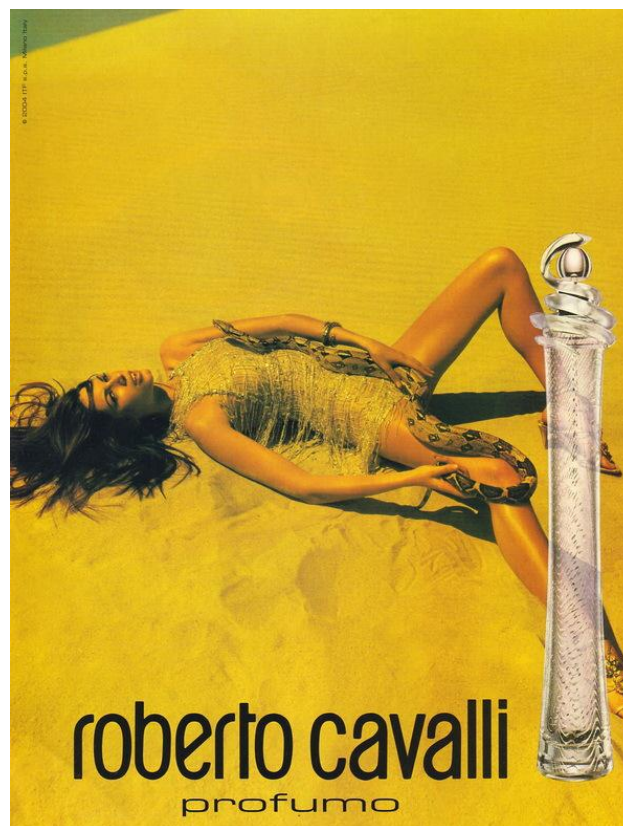


Figure 2. Ad for Roberto Cavalli's *Oro* perfume, rotated 90 degrees.

The ad's erotic cocktail is emphasised even more by the shadows around the female character, particularly the shadow between her legs, which seems to penetrate her crotch, although we would have to turn the picture 90° to see the shadow as a penetrating phallus. In this ad the woman is used as a synonym of sexual object, which is the image promoted by this type of advertising.

The third example is a controversial ad released in 2000 by Yves Saint Laurent for its *Opium* perfume (Fig. 3). The ad was partially censored as it received a large number of complaints for being *too sexual* and *degrading for women*, according to the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA), the independent body responsible for regulating advertising content. The controversy favoured the advertising campaign developed by Tom Ford, the creative director of Yves Saint Laurent, and photographer Steven Meisel.

The ad shows the link between three elements: sex, desire and fragrance. The actress depicting Lilith is Sophie Dahl, whose voluptuous body is shown naked and in a sexual posture. Her body is decorated with various pieces of jewellery and high heels. She is lying on a bed of blue velvet with her legs open and her head laid back. The first clue to identify her as Lilith is her posture in a state of ecstasy, which is an identifying feature of the *Femme Fatale*. In addition, she exhibits certain physical characteristics associated with Lilith: red hair, green eyelids, etc. To dismiss any doubt, it is necessary to analyse the iconographic elements of the image.



Figure 3. Ad for Yves Saint Laurent's *Opium* perfume.

One of the elements that define the iconography of this mythological character is the serpent, but this ad also includes a fetishist element that goes almost unnoticed but is necessary to highlight in the iconographic reading of the image: the golden high heel shoe.

The iconographic influences of this ad can be found on Titian's painting *The Bacchanal of the Andrians*, curated at Madrid's National Del Prado Museum.

It is important to remember that, as stated by Tallarico (2000), advertising frequently borrows elements from and establishes trans-textual relationships with works of art.

“The analysis of perfume advertising (García, Baños & Fernández, 2011) allows us to deduce that perfumes are promoted through subjective and fantastic narratives that reproduce mythic tales and contain references to specific cultural archetypes; in general terms, we can say that perfume advertising updates classic myths, adapting them to the present time and to its target audience.” (Fernandez, Baños & García, 2014: 411).

The use of women as elements of sexual attraction is a constant element in advertising, which relies on certain myths to justify this use. This has allowed us to classify different iconographies that have inherited from the myth of Lilith –a serpent woman, a serpent's lover, a feline-like woman, a feline's lover, a she-demon, the mother of demons– who is offered to the viewer as another object, a vamp, a witch, and a synonym of death.

4.2. Lilith in advertising products

The results confirm the survival of the myth of Lilith in contemporary advertising, an androcentric model that continues to exploit this myth as another publicity element. As shown in the following figure, the perfume industry is the one that uses the most this iconography with a high erotic and

sexual charge. The perfume industry is followed by the audiovisual sector (movies and series) and the fashion industry.

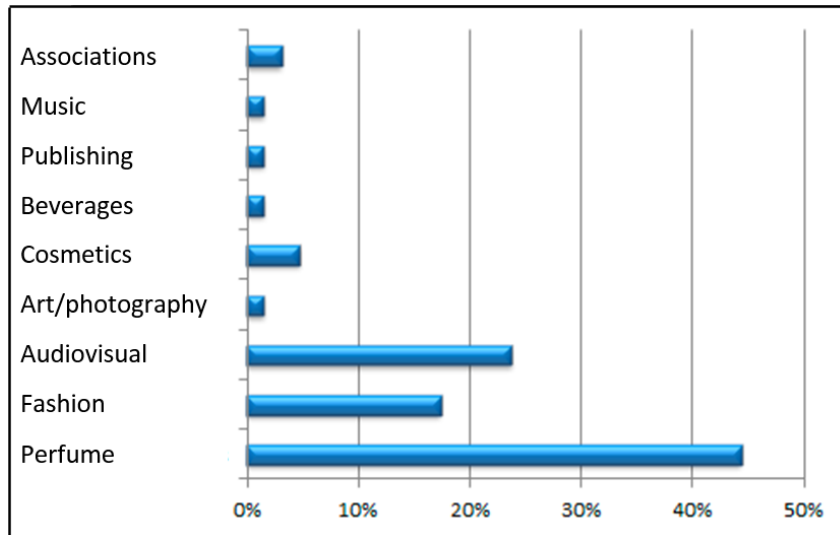


Figure 4. Iconography of Lilith across commercial sectors. Source: authors' own creation.

Figure 5 classifies the treatment given to the figure of Lilith, identifying two incarnations: one as an erotic figure that acts as subject-object, and as an antagonistic and terrifying figure. The perfume industry depicts Lilith in an erotic way in the majority of cases (in 93%) and in a terrifying, yet highly sexualised, form in a minority of cases (7%). Meanwhile, in the fashion sector Lilith is represented in an erotic way in 100% of cases. Finally, in the audiovisual sector Lilith is represented in a very erotic way in 13% of cases and in a horrifying, yet mostly eroticised, way in 87% of cases.

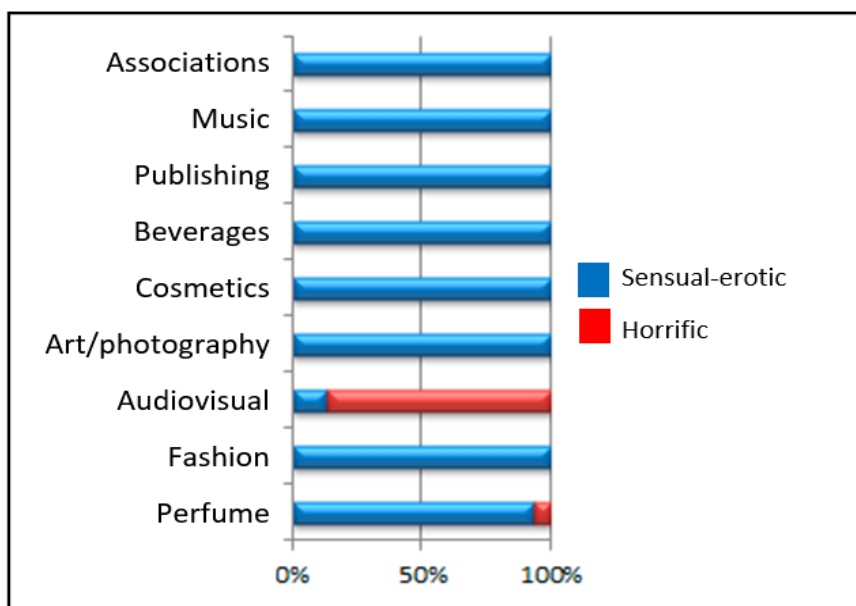


Figure 5. Sexual and horror iconography of Lilith. Source: authors' own creation.

The image of Lilith is sensual and erotic in all sectors. In the perfume industry she is constantly used to provoke lust, sin, etc. However, the audiovisual sector exploits the scary aspect of the myth, although in almost all cases this depiction includes a quite erotic appearance.

In relation to the iconographic diversity used to depict Lilith in advertising, we identified nine different, yet often interrelated, iconographies: the serpent woman, the serpent’s woman lover, the feline-like woman or the feline’s woman lover, the she-demon, the mother of the serpent or a demons or demons, the woman as object of desire, the prostitute or whore (but not with a submissive attitude when it comes to lust), the vamp, the witch, and the personification of death (Figure 6). The four iconographies most commonly used to depict Lilith are: woman as object of desire (38%), the serpent woman (21%), the serpent’s woman lover (12%), and the woman as a synonym of death (8%).

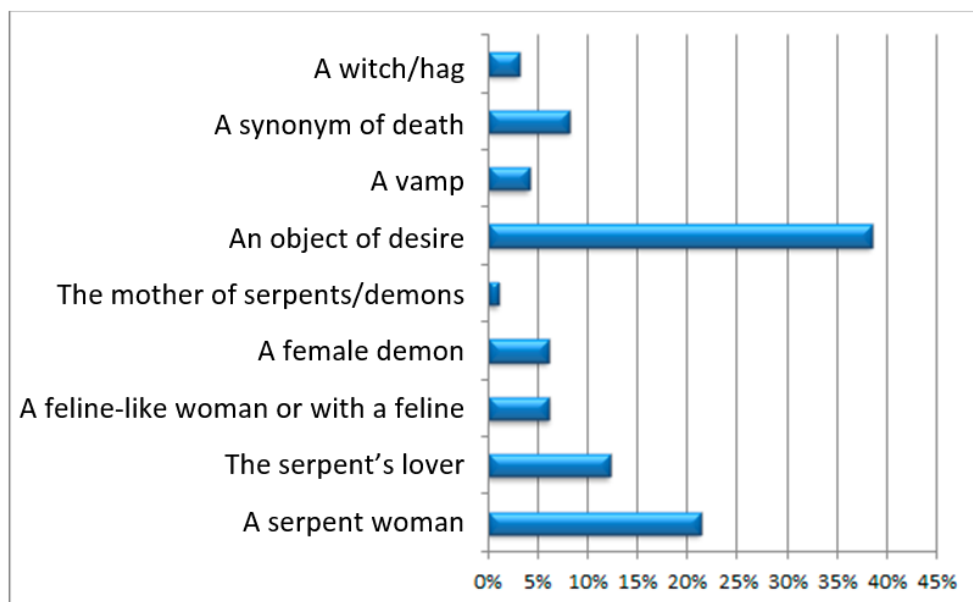


Figure 6. Other iconographies of Lilith. Source: authors’ own creation.

5. Conclusions

Throughout the history of art, a good-evil dichotomy has been used to conceptualise women. This dichotomy has been personified in the image of the Virgin Mary, presented as a role model for all women, and the character of Eve (usually confused with Lilith), who is associated with evil, sin, sexuality, etc. This dichotomy is still present through the visual arts, and more specifically in advertising.

The main contribution of this research study is the confirmation of the existence of the ancient iconography of the myth of Lilith in early 21st century advertising. The iconography, created from an androcentric perspective, perpetuates old female stereotypes. These iconographic prejudices are disguised in advertising through the introduction of the iconography of a *new Eve*, who is presented

as a contemporary, pretty, liberal, hard-working and successful woman. However, this new character actually hides the reinterpretation of the old myth of Lilith, under the same androcentric perspective that has prevailed throughout history.

After the review and analysis of the iconographies related to Lilith, we identified nine different types. The study has confirmed that the figure of women promoted by the advertising industry is an updated version of ancient female iconography. In these iconographies, women play a double subject-object role, since they are represented as a sexual objects (so we could talk of sexist advertising), whose roles range from objects of desire and terror. Women are still used as synonyms of desire, sin, lust, and death.

The use of this iconography can be identified in different advertising sectors, being the perfume sector the one that exploits this myth the most. The iconography changes according to the product advertised: in perfumes and fashion the image of Lilith remains very erotic and sensual, while in cinema and television series Lilith acquires a more terrifying look without losing her sensuality, which is conveyed through skin-tight clothing and fetishist elements.

This study concludes with the confirmation that the image of the myth of Lilith, and by extension of the Femme Fatale, has not evolved but continues to represent the same androcentric concepts of the iconography of Lilith identified in the 19th century by Erika Bornay (1990). The depiction of women in contemporary advertising, at the beginning of the 21st century, has been inherited from the 19th century representations. Lilith is, thus, still depicted as a synonym of sin, lust, desire and death.

6. Note

1. Original text: “O alfabeto de Ben Sirak (Koltuv, 1986, p.37-52) é o registro mais antigo que se conhece sobre Lilith. Neste manuscrito, datado entre os séculos VIII e X a.C., ela é descrita como tendo sido a primeira esposa mítica de Adão. Liliht é desconhecida do cristianismo primitivo embora tenha aparecido nos primeiros séculos da era cristã. Mais recentemente, contudo, Lilith fecundou o imaginário da comunidade judaica e cristã com idéias sobre um demônio feminino que provocava a poluição noturna nos jovens castos e ainda era a responsável pela morte prematura de crianças recém nascidas. Lilith também aparece no Zohar (Koltuv, 1986, p.17-35) o Livro do Esplendor, uma obra cabalística do século XIII que se constitui no mais influente texto hassídico. Ela aparece também no Talmude, o livro da tradição judaica. No Zohar, Lilith era descrita como um sucubus. As poluições, com emissões noturnas, eram citadas como um sinal visível de sua presença, isto é da união carnal do homem com Lilith.” (Engelhard, 1997: 32-33). (Maspoli & Ponstinnicoff, 2007: 10).

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