42 - ALTERNATIVE BODILY PRACTICE AND YOGA: RELATIONS BETWEEN MEDIA AND CONSUMPTION

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Introduction

The field of Physical Education encompasses different forms of exercises and bodily activities. Alternative bodily practices, highly influenced by *yoga*, are some of the available possibilities. They do not only feature so-called soft approach for a varied public, but also operate as complementary work regarding the field of coaching and sports. It is common for many athletes nowadays to carry out complementary work based on oriental practices like *yoga*, seeking for concentration and stress control. But this is a relatively recent fact. Quite many strange procedures regarding this practice were common in the 60s, when eastern world influences started affecting the western world. *Yoga* or similar practices were considered too different to have the same *status quo.* The situation is quite the opposite nowadays, when there is strong appreciation of this universe, both in the offer of spaces for *yoga* or alternative practices in a general way and also in the promotion of media images inspired in *yoga*.

From those observations arouse the curiosity to investigate whether *yoga* promoted in publicity by the printed media in commercial magazines would reflect the acceptance of this practice and the establishment of its ideals as objects of desire by the adept public. Such acceptance could have influence on Physical Education, considering that there is substantial increase in the number of Physical Education teachers who practice *yoga* or have even graduated from *yoga* instructors' courses. The proposed objective in this survey is to identify the relation between the presence of *yoga* in the publicity by the printed media and the ways this practice is assimilated in the western culture. Would *yoga*, shyly accepted at the beginning, become the object of desire so strongly that it has turned out to be an element ranking among the consumption goods in modern society? Would the presence of *yoga* in publicity represent the definite entry in western society *status quo*? Can this fact be taken as an indicator of mix between two cultures? How is *yoga* represented in printed publicity? At first, these are some of the questions that this survey intends to answer.

Defining alternative

After the 60s, the experience with the topic of the so-called alternative practices stemming from eastern culture allows the identification of the insertion of this influence in several spheres of human knowledge in western society. Fields such as anthropology, sociology, alternative medicine, therapies, physical education, and psychology, among others, make us realize that there are many implications related to the tribe of alternatives and there are different interests among the researchers. Topics such as the body, aesthetics and health, from this perspective, lead to a line of discussions in its own, and feature strong connections between them. Several types of knowledge meet at the field of alternative topics. The alternative can be situated and understood as the heritage of the eastern culture, especially the Hindu culture, with the representation of *yoga* as a strong pole of irradiation of ideas. The influence of Chinese and Japanese culture is also identified, but the point to be stressed in this survey is the Hindu culture.

One of the scholars in this field, the psychologist Jane Russo (1993), in her PhD thesis on social anthropology, defined alternative complex as the set of eastern influences in several practices, ranging from bodily to divinatory ones. The term 'alternative' reminds us of the counterculture movements, with alternative propositions for life. In spite of the indication of the 60s, with the hippie movement and previously, the *beatniks*, several authors related the onset of the alternative movement to Romanticism (BONI; LACERDA, 2007). In western world, the 17th century Romanticism movement apparently opposed the idea of rationality, although some authors such as Campbell (2001) remark there is some complementarity of conceptions rather than radical opposition. If we take the alternative as a consequence of eastern traditions; consequently, opposed to the rationality represented by orthodox western scientific knowledge and to the positivism mind, we have identified the marks of Romanticism within this universe.

As *yoga* is a very popular eastern practice nowadays, it can be focused to conceive the body in an alternative movement. According to *yoga* culture, the body is conceived as the starting point or means to reach transcendence or approach divinity. In the western world, where a more concrete notion prevails, the body can be conceived as an end, not as a means, principally if we associate the use of the body image with publicity, in several forms. One of the languages of the alternative is self-construction. The prevailing discourse is the one related to well-being. The one who identifies more intensely with the resources offered by the alternative practices for the body's work can easily move to this segment. Becoming alternative has conquered some prestige. The onset of the alternative movement, marginalized and associated with counterculture, has got rid of the stigma it had as strange. Several of the practitioners' expectations have changed.

There are *yoga* practitioners nowadays who seek only a new form of bodily work. The practice of *yoga*, originally related to the search of transcendence and strengthening of spirituality has turned out to be seen as soft gymnastics (LACERDA, 2001; BONI; LACERDA, 2007). The subtle aspects of practice represented by the search of transcendence have become restricted in some cases. Several centers of eastern practice and *yoga* have become sophisticated and were incorporated by the consumption market. The practices that were formerly at the margins of the hegemonic preference can be seen now as display and manifestation of acquisitive power. Centers as Nirvana and similar in the city of Rio de Janeiro demonstrate this change. The alternative universe offers the individuals the possibility of enjoying one day or longer in urban *spas*, undergoing relaxing and beauty treatments at high costs. The previous assumptions of the alternative, like becoming beautiful inside and outside, has changed (LACERDA, 1995). Nowadays individuals want to become beautiful outside in order to be seen. Our society is voyeurism-oriented, so, it is important to be seen. It can be stated that immediateness and consuming practices have reached the alternative.

It is possible to start thinking that in the alternative's tribes, these have the signs of spirituality the western way: eastern consume the western way. It can be the beginning of the process that makes *yoga* the object of desire and find out that *yoga*'s traditional objectives - such as the body as a means to reach other instances in different situations - have also mixed with merely bodily objectives (BONI; LACERDA, 2006).

Consume and media

The body has been studied for a long time, since Vesalius, with the first anatomic knowledge, to Foucault, Merlau-Ponty and many others who discuss issues related to corporeity. For Mauss (1974), the body is the place of different forms of sociability and it reflects social life of a community. The body is a great and permanent producer of senses, and it cannot be merely considered from a biological viewpoint. The human being is symbolic par excellence, and the body has multiple meanings. As an example, we can think of identifications that are made with the models of bodies, with chosen clothing pieces or with promoted publicity.

Discussion about the bodies involves the signs of our times. Contemporary views on corporeity display nuances only currently available. Conceiving the body according to the western point of view reminds us of different implications. The body, as we conceive it, is a modern invention that makes it a phenomenon. It is a receptacle of influences of the health movement, of the aesthetical dimension and of the different forms of language and manifestations of corporeity, all of which are included in a capitalist, consumption-oriented, social, historical context. The axiom "you are your body", or better, you are its form, creates a constant concern. There are many kinds of resources for the body treatment and care, from radical to mild procedures. There are permanent offers. The temples of the body, in a Laschian sense, are spread around the cities (LASCH, 1983).

Eastern tradition is oriented to "being" and the western tradition is oriented to "having". To judge from practices in our consumption-oriented society, we may affirm that in the western world, it is more important "to have" than "to be". From this premise we can establish the relationships between consumption and hedonism. The purists experience *yoga* by keeping away from the consumption-guided style. They study seriously and engage in a very expressive personal involvement. However, from observation, we can conclude that the total number of purists is lower than the number of those who practice it inadvertently. In spite of the fact that the purist practitioner disagrees with the idea of the practice related to a merely material aspect, the strong forces of a society metaphorical comparable to a torrential river are stronger and determine effects beyond the desire or judgment of many of its adepts.

The variable of consumption is easily detected in the relations between the body, health, aesthetics in current society, and the alternatives are not immune from these demands. Attention was attracted by the publicity pieces in the last two years. At first it was possible to observe some signs of stimulation to consume in advertised materials specifically appropriate to the *yoga* practicing public. A documentary broadcast by GNT doc., cable TV, on September 30th, 2007, entitled "*Yoga*: a good business" shows 18 million people practicing different kinds of *yoga* in the United States. Sports *yoga* championships are promoted by a Hindu who lives in America. Specific products for *yoga* are advertised and easily sold according to that population's demand. By association, a great variety of other products is related to images and symbols of *yoga* in the advertising campaigns, ranging from cars to cookies.

The acceptance of the alternative by western society and the mix[1] resulting from the encounter of two cultures generated consequences in consumption that have practically established in their own. It is a circular mechanism, including seducing adverting, stimulating consumption and again the consumption to increment the advertisement piece. As the number of spaces offering alternative practices is really high, the insertion of *yoga* in publicity is understandable. *Yoga* is fashionable.

Fashion, in its literal meaning of prevalence of a certain fact, has always existed in every society. But in the occidental model, with the profile of what we understand as fashion nowadays, the concept was defined in the 18th century. For Campbell (2001), the existence of models is related to the role of manipulation in the creation of the European fashion model. The meaning component of the new approach was that fashion "was deliberately and consciously aimed at controlling the market, keeping the consumer's interest and generating a new demand" (MCKENDRICK *et al. apud* NOVAES, 2006).

Fashion in the occident features peculiarities and changes that have been evident along time. In the 17th and 18th centuries, changes would last generations or many years before new habits or costumes were adopted regarding fashion. New perceptions related to speed and acceleration of individual rhythm itself started being established later, together with very fast transformations in the form and styles, ending up by adopting evanescence as a new sign of time. .Fashion is currently seasonal, regarding clothing, physical activities, and leisure practices, among many other aspects. Every summer there are new modalities of physical activities, even if they are based on Wittgenstein's tool box, in which the elements are constant, but re-organized in different ways. (LACERDA, 1995)

For Campbell (2001) modern consumers are insatiable regarding goods, and they must learn the economic tension, that is, they must understand that their desire will never be satisfied. That satisfaction can never happen because of the apparently endless process of daydreaming about the product. The search based on imagination is always frustrated, for reality does not correspond to the dreamed expectation and a new search is started.

It is difficult to find a theory to explain the reasons for consumption. According to Campbell (2001), the theories available are punctual and disregard history. The author states that anything beyond the mechanism of consumption stimulus/acquisition response, which rules the theory on consumption in modernity, is to desire consumption, from which individuals muse about a certain product and start pursuing what they have imagined. Nevertheless, the real is always beyond one's search, and its frustration renews the desire to reach what was imagined. Campbell (2001) highlights this mechanism ruled by sensations and feelings, much more than the real desire for the product. There is always an expectation that the next acquisition will make the individual happy. The author bases his theory about the consumption on signs of modern hedonism, setting different meanings regarding hedonism in traditional society. For Campbell (2001, p. 62)

The idea that human beings, for some reason, have a natural inclination to display insatiable insufficiency does not have any support in history or anthropology. Quite the opposite, if there is such a thing such as a normal standard on these issues, it is the traditional set of stable and limited family needs.

For this author, the manipulation-oriented theory to explain consumption is incipient, and does not account for reality. Discovering dreams and desires is not simple. Individuals react in varied forms and they are not easy to suggest: "what the producers of goods and services manipulate through their agents are not the consumers or their needs, but, at least at first, the symbolic meanings that are related to their products" (CAMPBELL, 2001, p. 73). The hedonist concept of consumptions takes ways that establish the presence of expectation, imagination of the desires. The relations of acceptance of *yoga*, transforming it in object of desires and consumption may be, in the *yoga* case, associated with the Romantic Movement, with the tradition of distance from rationalism. The capitalism perspective is hedonist and can also be associated with a non-rational sphere.

There are simultaneous attitudes towards bodily practice nowadays. There is a stoic side that rules that one must undergo pains to become beautiful, and at the same time, there is a will for pleasure with agreeable things such as massage and relaxing that point to a hedonist side. Can we ask what makes us increase the consumption of *yoga*? As the first hypothesis or reflections, there is the health movement that implicitly foments self-control explicitly, the desire of well-being, in a hedonist view of society in which well being and pleasure are the rules of life, the different languages and demands of society.

The acceptance of oriental culture created a facilitating agent for the spreading of a more sophisticated consumption

mentality regarding eastern products, practices and philosophies. The sophistication of *yoga* and alternative bodily practices create new languages that can attend the expectation of new demands. As the movement for health has highlighted the value of well being, the door is open to the *yoga* boom.

Methodology

This survey is included in the line of social representation as conceived by Jodelet (2001). It is a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory study, considering the content analysis from the point of view of Bardin (1979) and the imagistic analysis as conceived by Joly (2004). It takes the semiotic theory into account and proposes to identify the plastic, iconic and linguistic symbols that lead to the interpretation of images anchored in written messages. The selected material considered the *yoga* image associated with different types of publicity, involving a wide range of products. Eight publicity pieces of different sources were analyzed. The sources were: magazines Veja, Nova, Revista de Domingo issued by O Globo, real-estate newspaper and a package issued by MacDonald's from 2006 to 2007. MacDonald's package was chosen because that fast food chain is one of the great representatives of capitalism in the contemporary world.

Analysis and conclusion

The analysis of plastic elements in the advertising pieces was defined by colors, dimension of the ad, size of the image, layout and hierarchical disposition to the publicity reader's vision. The plastic aspects function as the basis of support for the message that has to be communicated. The iconic aspects are related to analogies and identified scheme of figures in the images. However, as the images may be occasionally polysemic, the written or linguistic message represents an issuing support which enables the reader, as a receiver, to be reached by that which the publicity aims at (JOLY, 2004).

It can be considered that the association of *yoga* images with the products creates the expectation of a need because it is related to the idea of well being. *Yoga* tradition teaches that the body needs well being so that the other levels and dimensions can be reached. From that point on, one can understand the use of images of *âsanas* and symbols related to the universe of *yoga*. There seems to be an association of the idea of well being with the need of consumption of the advertised product. The *yoga* body is associated with well being, the well being is a need to have a good life; consequently, products related to the image of *yoga* can awaken the desire to consume that determined product.

Regarding the plastic elements, there is a prevalence of images with clear lighting, picturing mornings and illuminated environments. The range of dimensions goes from wide, open spaces and a few indoors spaces, associated with open paths. The iconic aspects allow identifying the use of *yoga* classical position, the lotus position, the female figure with the eyes closed, harmonious and mild silhouette, indicating tranquility and security. The inverted positions and the balance are associated with the vitality and energy, highlighting natural products as appropriate for all ages. In the linguistic message, the main feature lies on the words: lightness, balance, confidence, tranquility, healthy, evolution, awareness and security. For Campbell (2001), the bodily practices that associated pleasure with health, vitality and beauty promise to eliminate the uneasiness caused by the look of the other. They emphasize the effort, determination and discipline, making the individual responsible for the choice of the product and the results attained from this choice.

According to Campbell (2001), the advertised products are associated with a style of life, with a social status, with a subjective ideal, with a tribe. The idea in this principle is that when the consumers acquire the product, they also conquer affiliation to that specific tribe. It is concluded that the elements shown in the images indicate status and values desired by society. As *yoga* is able to reinforce this association, one can suppose that by acquiring the products, these values will be incorporated to the consumer's life.

Key words: alternative bodily practice, yoga, media, consumption

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ALTERNATIVE BODILY PRACTICE AND YOGA: RELATIONS BETWEEN MEDIA AND CONSUMPTION

ABSTRACT:

Yoga practice has become very popular in the last decades. The academy spaces offer different types of *yoga* practices at the same time and space as aesthetical and modeling practices are available. Frequent inclusion of *yoga* in publicity, associating it with different products in the alternative universe indicates the assimilation of the eastern influence and of this practice. This study aims at identifying how *yoga* is represented in the printed media in the form of publicity pieces. Magazines and newspapers between 2006 and 2007 were used. The hypothesis is that *yoga* previously considered a strange practice in our culture has not only been accepted, but has also become the object of desire as a consumption good. This is a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory survey. The sample was made up by eight publicity pieces of everyday products. The theoretical reference is based on Barthe (1971) and on Campbell (2001). The interpretation of the data was made according to the imagistic

analysis by Joly (2001), considering the plastic, iconic and linguistic message and the contents analysis (BARDIN, 1977). One can identify the prevalence of the lotus position and the classical *yoga* balance, female and male figures with harmonious, flexible and active forms as an iconic element and the linguistic message highlighting the words: balance, lightness, freshness, tranquility, health, vitality, confidence, security and awareness. It was concluded that the elements associated with *yoga* represent values desired by consumers and offered by *yoga*.

KEY WORDS: social representation, yoga, media, consumption.

LA PRATIQUE CORPORELLE ALTERNATIVE ET LE YOGA : RELATIONS ENTRE MÉDIAS ET CONSOMMATION

RÉSUMÈ:

Dans les dernières décades il y a eu une grande popularisation de la pratique du yoga. Les spaces des académies offrent de différents genres, au même temps e espaces pour les pratiques esthétiques et modélistes. La frequente inclusion du yoga dans les publicités en associant des différents produits à l'univers alternatif, indique l'absorption de l'influence orientale aussi bien que cette pratique. Cette étude a eu l'intention d'identifier comment le yoga est représenté dans les médias imprimés sous la forme de publicité. On a utilisé des revues commerciales et des journaux entre 2006 et 2007. On présente comme hypothèse que le yoga, autrefois considéré une pratique étrange à la culture occidentale, a été accepté parmi les biens de consommation. Il s'agit d'une recherche qualitative, descriptive et d'exploitation. La demonstration a été composée d'huit publicités des produits d'usage quotidian. Le référentiel théorique a été basé sur Barthes (1971) et sur Campbell (2001). La interpretation des données a été faite d'après l'analyse imagétique de Joly (2001), étant donné le message plastique, iconique et linguistique et de l'analyse de contenu (BARDIN, 1977). Il est possible d'identifier une prédominance des positions de lotus et d'équilibre, comme message plastique, qui marque l'image classique du Yoga ; figures féminines et masculines de formes harmonieuses, flexibles et actives comme élément iconique et le message linguistique détachant les mots : équilibre, légéreté, frécheur, tranquilité, santé, vitalité, confiance, sûreté et conscience. On est arrivé à la conclusion que les éléments associés au yoga représentant des valeurs désirées par le consommeur ou offertes par le yoga.

MOTS-CLÉS : représentation sociale, yoga, médias, consommation.

LA PRÁCTICA CORPORAL ALTERNATIVA Y EL YOGA: RELACIONES ENTRE LOS MEDIA Y EL CONSUMO

RESUMEN:

En las últimas décadas hubo una gran popularización de la práctica del yoga. Los espacios de las academias ofrecen diversos tipos, al mismo tiempo y en el mismo espacio de prácticas estéticas y modeladoras. La frecuente inserción del yoga en la publicidad asociando diversos productos con el universo alternativo, muestra la absorción de la influencia oriental y de tal práctica. Este estudio pretendió identificar cómo el yoga se representa en los medios de comunicación impresos bajo la forma de publicidad. Para eso, se utilizaron revistas comerciales y periódicos entre 2006 y 2007. Se presenta como hipótesis que el yoga, que antes era visto como una práctica extraña a la cultura occidental, fue aceptado y deseado entre los bienes de consumo. Esta es una investigación cualitativa, descriptiva y exploratoria. La muestra fue compuesta por ocho publicidades de los productos de uso cotidiano. Las referencias teóricas se basaron en Barthes (1971) y en Campbell (2001). La interpretación de los datos fue hecha partiendo del análisis de imagen de Joly (2001), considerando el mensaje plástico, icónico y lingüístico y del análisis de contenido (BARDIN, 1977). Es posible identificar un predominio de las posiciones de loto y de equilibrio como mensaje plástico, marcando la imagen clásica del yoga; figuras femeninas y masculinas, de formas armoniosas, flexibles y activas como elemento icónico y el mensaje lingüístico destacando las palabras: equilibrio, levedad, frescor, tranquilidad, salud, vitalidad, confianza, seguridad y conciencia. Se concluyó que los elementos asociados al yoga representan valores deseados por el consumidor y ofrecidos por el yoga.

PALABRAS-CLAVE: representación social, yoga, medios de comunicación, consumo.

A PRÁTICA CORPORAL ALTERNATIVA E O YOGA: RELAÇÕES ENTRE MÍDIA E CONSUMO

RESUMO:

Nas últimas décadas houve uma grande popularização da prática do *yoga*. Os espaços das academias oferecem diferentes tipos, ao mesmo tempo e espaço de práticas estéticas e modeladoras. A freqüente inserção do *yoga* em publicidades associando diferentes produtos ao universo alternativo, aponta a absorção da influência oriental e dessa prática. Este estudo pretendeu identificar como o *yoga* é representado na mídia impressa sob a forma de publicidade. Foram utilizadas revistas comerciais e jornais entre 2006 e 2007. Apresenta-se como hipótese que o *yoga*, antes considerado uma prática estranha à cultura ocidental, além de ter sido aceito é desejado como bem de consumo. É uma pesquisa qualitativa, descritiva e exploratória. A amostra foi composta por oito publicidades dos produtos de uso cotidiano. O referencial teórico baseou-se em Barthes (1971) e Campbell (2001). A interpretação dos dados foi feita a partir da análise imagética de Joly (2001), considerando a mensagem plástica, icônica e lingüística e da análise de conteúdo (BARDIN,1977). É possível identificar um predomínio das posições de lótus e de equilíbrio, como mensagem plástica, marcando a imagem clássica do *yoga*; figuras femininas e masculinas de formas harmoniosas, flexíveis e ativas como elemento icônico e a mensagem lingüística destacando as palavras: equilíbrio, leveza, frescor, tranqüilidade, saúde, vitalidade, confiança, segurança e consciência. Concluiu-se que os elementos associados ao *yoga* representam valores desejados pelo consumidor e oferecidos pelo *yoga*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: representação social, *yoga*, mídia, consumo.