MALE PORTRAYALS IN NEWSPAPER POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS
OF GREEK MP CANDIDATES

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The content of advertising messages is wholly controlled by the sender. The subject is projected in a manner of his own choosing, presenting a manufactured image that frequently does not entirely correspond with the reality. For maximum effectiveness, advertisements often make selective use of social and political stereotypes, beliefs and attitudes that are current in the specific society at the specific moment (Zotos and Lysonski, 1994; Jhally, 1995; Doulkeri, 2002). Advertising thus serves as a mirror of society, and advertisements and their messages reflect its values (Doulkeri, 2001: 154). The end result of the selective, exaggerated and monosemous projection of types and models through advertisements, however, may be to reproduce and reinforce existing models or it may be to impose new ones (Kellner, 1995; Zotos, 2000a; Doulkeri, 2001).

A review of the international literature yields a number of studies of the various male types that are projected in commercial advertising for television and for print media (e.g. Lysonski and Pollay, 1990; Zotos and Lysonski, 1994; Cohan, 2001). Similar research has also been carried out in Greece (Zotos and Lysonski, 1994; Zotos, 2000b; Doulkeri, 2001, 2002). There have also been studies of the way in which both sexes are projected in politics on the basis of pre-existing stereotypes (e.g. Kahn, 1993; Bystrom et al., 2004). No detailed studies of male portrayals in political advertising with specific categorization and quantitative data, however, have to date been published.

Research Objective – Questions - Methodology

The object of this paper is to record and analyse the predominant male portrayals in political advertisements, and specifically in the newspaper advertising of

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The research answers two questions:

(a) What were the portrayals that were predominant in newspaper political advertisements in the period in question?

(b) Was there a change in these portrayals over that period?

The research was carried out in eight daily newspapers, six national and two local. The nationals were _Avgi, Eleftherotypia, Kathimerini, Eleftheros Typos, Ta Nea, Rizospastis_, and the locals _Macedonia_ and _Thessaloniki_. The research covered all advertising of male MP candidates, elected and non-elected, during the six electoral campaigns that took place between 1989 and 2000, a period of osmosis of social, economic and political changes and developments in political communication in Greece. Each individual advertisement was counted as one, even if it appeared more than once. _Thessaloniki_ and _Macedonia_ newspapers, it should be noted, were not published during the 1996 campaign period.

Content analysis was the primary methodological tool used in the research. The quantitative record of findings is accompanied by quotations from advertisements, as examples, and a supplementary qualitative analysis.

There being no codebook for these portrayals, specific categories were constructed for the purposes of the study. These were based on corresponding studies in commercial advertising, on various references for male stereotypes in politics, and on references to characteristics that influence – positively or negatively – the image of politicians (esp. Schweiger & Adami, 1999: 361). These categories are presented in Table 1. The key features of each type are described briefly so as to avoid misinterpretation and overlapping.

The reliability of the scale was tested twice on a sample of 20% of the advertising inserts, by two people, using the coefficient of agreement _k_. Wherever the first decoding yielded a reliability of less than 0.70, the categories were redefined. At the second decoding, following the modifications, the reliability had risen to 0.89.

**Findings**

Table 2 presents the research findings relating to the types predominating in the advertising inserts used by the candidates in each campaign period and globally. The predominant portrayal in political advertising in the period covered was that of the
successful man (30.6%), followed by the dynamic-assertive politician (27.7%) and the visionary (20.2%). There were a few instances of candidates choosing to portray themselves as the ethical politician (7.4%) or the decent fellow (4.3%), and just one example of the good family man (1.1%). Finally, in 8.5% of cases it proved impossible to assign the model projected to any particular category.

1. Successful man
   - Emphasises to his professional capacity
   - Emphasises to his political achievements
   - Emphasises to his experience

2. Dynamic - assertive politician
   - Presents himself as actively promoting the interests of his constituents
   - Shows himself in action
   - Is portrayed against a backdrop of a specific location in the city

3. Visionary
   - Holds out hope for the future
   - Stresses his youth

4. Decent fellow
   - Gives weight to the average citizen
   - Appears ordinary, dresses simply

5. Good family man
   - Emphasises to the institution of the family
   - Appears with his own family

6. Ethical politician
   - Emphasises to ethics, transparency and reliability
   - Emphasises to preserving traditional values

7. Indeterminate

Table 1. The variables defining the types predominating in advertising inserts.
### Models preferred for advertising inserts by the candidates studied

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Successful man</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>7 (35%)</td>
<td>2 (28.6%)</td>
<td>9 (39.1%)</td>
<td>2 (100%)</td>
<td>1 (5.3%)</td>
<td>29 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic - assertive politician</td>
<td>4 (17.4%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>3 (42.8%)</td>
<td>9 (39.1%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (26.3%)</td>
<td>26 (27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>5 (21.7%)</td>
<td>6 (30%)</td>
<td>1 (14.3%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>5 (26.3%)</td>
<td>19 (20.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent fellow</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (10.5%)</td>
<td>4 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good family man</td>
<td>1 (4.4%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical politician</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (14.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
<td>7 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td>1 (5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3 (15.8%)</td>
<td>8 (8.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>20 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>7 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>23 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>19 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>94 (100%)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.** The predominant model types recorded in the advertising inserts used by Greek MP candidates in the ‘A’ electoral district of Thessaloniki in the period 1989-2000.
1a. The model of the successful man

As has been mentioned, the candidate model that predominated in the period studied was that of the successful man. The most prominent feature of the candidate image projected was either his professional capacity, his political achievements or his experience, educational background and/or social activity. In advertising messages of this type the emphasis was on who the candidate is, sometimes even to the point of including a concise *curriculum vitae*. The object of these advertisements was to demonstrate how capable the candidate was and persuade voters that he was worthy their vote.

In these advertisements the main message was reinforced by paralinguistic elements such as dress, stance, gaze and general appearance. The candidates were almost always portrayed in the dark suit, conservative tie and white or pale blue shirt that proclaim success, authority, reliability and trustworthiness.

Elements of the type of the successful man appeared in virtually all the advertising inserts, even if that was not the primary model. This does not appear to be accidental. The characteristic features of a candidate’s personality, such as his professional career, his experience, his intelligence and his ability to succeed, are inseparable constituents of his image and a basic selection criterion for the voter (Kapelou 2002).

In addition, this type also appears to be directly associated with the more general models of male identity prevalent in Greek society at the time and with perceptions of the ideal man. The predominant model was that of the independent loner with the mask of the hard and ultra-masculine leader, the man who is successful, indispensable, strong, masterful, powerful, highly intelligent, an ambitious achiever, rational and competitive, and totally in control of his emotions (Badinter 1994; Basch-Kahre 1999).

In their study of candidate advertising for the 2002 municipal and prefectural elections for Mayor and Prefect of Thessaloniki and Kastoria, Doulkeri and Panagiotou (2005) also recorded many features of the ‘successful man’ model. Moreover, studies of commercial advertising in the Greek media have shown that characteristics of this type, as described in the pertinent unit, were used with considerable frequency (Zotos and Lysonski 1994; Doulkeri 2001, 2002). Table 3 presents indicative examples of candidate advertisements using the model type of the successful man.
The first example projects two key aspects of the candidate’s identity: (a) that of the “acknowledged fighter” and (b) that of the university professor and president of the Medical Association of Thessaloniki.

The second example highlights a whole set of distinguishing features of the candidate’s identity, focusing primarily on his Pontic origin and refugee background. There are general references to his “long years of creative service” to the Pontic community, his experience and his effectiveness (“experienced and time-tested”), his steady character, his “sensitivity” to national affairs and his reliability and unswerving allegiance to the New Democracy party, the final object being to acclaim the candidate as the natural representative of the Pontic population of the “refugee city of Thessaloniki”.

### 1.b. The model of the dynamic-assertive politician

The second most frequently appearing candidate model was that of the dynamic-assertive politician. The candidates that opted for this model were depicted in their advertisements as out to get the best for the city, or as men of action, or were photographed against a backdrop of some city landmark, usually the White Tower. The high frequency of this type of advertisement is construed as resulting from a combination of two factors: (a) it is associated with the voters’ lively interest in improving conditions in the city of Thessaloniki, and (b) it is associated with a
perception of masculinity based, as mentioned earlier, on assertiveness, dynamism, courage, aggressiveness and competitiveness (Badinter 1994, Katz 1995, Basch-Kahre 1999, Doulkeri 2001). Table 4 presents two indicative examples of this type of advertisement.

Table 4. Advertisements projecting the model of the dynamic - assertive politician.

In the first example the candidate is shown addressing Parliament. The model of the dynamic-assertive candidate is supreme here: even the body language of the candidate expresses these qualities. The accompanying slogan, which reads “For a modern and human Thessaloniki”, reinforces the image. The advertisement suggests to the reader that the candidate is ready to fight for a better future for the city and its people.

In the second example the portrait of the candidate presents him as a calm, smiling, likable fellow, while the accompanying slogan portrays him as a determined, dynamic fighter. This advertisement also includes elements of the successful man politician and the friendly, decent fellow.

1.c. The model of the visionary

Some candidates opted for advertisements conveying a message focused on the vision of a better future. In these advertisements the candidates were presented as holding out hopes for the future or emphasising their youth. The type of the visionary
politician was usually coupled with a more casual, more youthful appearance, in marked contrast to the stereotypical uniform of the other candidates, with their dark suits, sober ties and white or pale blue shirt.

This model was used primarily by younger politicians in an attempt to differentiate themselves from their older fellows, who emphasised their experience and achievements. They sought to show that they were young and uncorrupted, eager to work, with new visions and ideas, to position themselves as the representatives of the younger generation, targeting primarily the younger voter and those (mainly women and mothers) interested in the future for the sake of their children.

Table 5. Advertisements projecting the model of the visionary.

In the first of the two examples shown below (Table 5), a casually dressed Konstantinos Karamanlis (now Prime Minister of Greece) is presented as an affable, unaffected and patently young man. Projecting the image of the visionary politician, he uses slogans designed to encourage voters to cast a vote for the future (“tomorrow, now”, “the future has never been so present”).

In the second example the candidate enlists his youth, the prospect of a better future, and even his personal charm in what is obviously an attempt to win the youth vote. Smiling, casually dressed, sharing the hopes, dreams and visions of the younger generation, and radiating charm, he creates a sense of cordiality and with his ‘feel
good’ manner promises the voters a better future for Greece ("tomorrow Greece will be more beautiful").

1.d. The model of the decent fellow

Sometimes – more frequently in the 2000 elections – candidates would opt in their advertising inserts for presenting themselves as ordinary, average citizens and voters. Their pictures would portray them as simple, unaffected, smiling, friendly, likable fellows. They were usually shown simply dressed, in shirtsleeves rather than suit and tie.

The messages in these advertisements, marketing oriented, focused on ordinary, everyday life and the problems of the average citizen. In them the candidate projects himself as an ordinary man, sharing the habits, lifestyle and visions of the electorate. He is like them, or perhaps a little better, and therefore understands their day-to-day needs. This manner engenders feelings of warmth towards the candidate, and creates a sense of familiarity between candidate and voter.

Aspects of this particular model were gradually adopted in more and more advertising messages. The candidates increasingly presented themselves as smiling and unaffected, targeting the fellow-feeling of the average voter.

Table 6 gives two indicative examples. In the first, although there are elements of the type of the successful man (the candidate is identified as a PhD and a university professor) and the wording is neutral, the predominant type is that of the ordinary, decent fellow. The candidate is presented casually dressed and smiling, and is referred to by the shortened form of his name ("Yorgos” instead of Georgios). This portrays him as a friendly, ordinary person, an image which is attractive to a great many voters.

The theme of the second example is basically the same. The candidate appears smiling, friendly, simple, approachable, casually dressed in shirtsleeves rather than suit and tie, and again is referred to by the shortened form of his name (“Harry” for Haralambos). This particular advertisement is accompanied by the slogan “for men and women and their hopes”, which orients the reader with regard to the candidate’s aspirations and priorities.
Table 6. Advertisements projecting the model of the decent fellow.

1.e. The model of the good family man

Although the institution of the family was a very powerful factor in Greek society in the period studied (Mousouri, 2000), for a large part of the electorate at least, the family was the focus of emphasis in only one of the advertisements used at that time. This is in strong contrast to commercial advertising, where the family as a value and the model of the good family man appear much more frequently (Zotos and Lysonski 1994; Doulkeri 2002).

Nor did any of the candidate advertisements project religion – also a very strong institution in Greece – as a primary theme. Although there were references to it, these were secondary, not primary\(^5\).

The sole advertisement based on the model of the good family man is shown in Table 7. This advertisement, which was used in the June 1989 elections, was not the candidate’s only advertisement in that campaign.
Table 7. Advertisement projecting the model of the good family man.

In it the candidate is shown with his wife and two children, all smiling and standing close together, the very image of the model family, brimming over with love and happiness. The presence of the two small children is a winning and heart-warming element. Standing behind and slightly above the others, the candidate is projected as a proud and happy father, and a pillar of the family.

This image is designed to generate favourable sentiments towards the candidate, especially among those who give particular importance to the institution of the family.

1.f. The model of the ethical politician

Politicians are often criticised for lack of transparency, corruption, cross-linkage, exaggerated campaign promises and saying one thing while doing another, all of which were the case in the period studied. Transparency, reliability, ethical behaviour and promise-keeping are things that voters want from parliamentary candidates (Kapelou, 2002). Some candidates, in their effort to differentiate themselves and win the favour of the electorate, projected as their pre-eminent characteristics their moral character, reliability and integrity. The message was often combined with emphasis on the preservation of traditional values, such as the family
or the Orthodox faith. This approach also highlights the identity of the candidate, focusing on his capacities and character traits.

The two examples that follow are typical of this type of advertisement (table 8). In the first the accent is on the candidate’s moral character and his commitment to preserving traditional values, including meritocracy, justice, the family and the Orthodox faith. The choice of classic, serious dress reinforces the primary message.

Table 8. Advertisements projecting the model of the ethical politician.

In the second example the candidate projects himself as the ethical politician, sincere, honest and serious, who “tells the truth and dares to act”. His direct gaze gives the impression that he is looking the voter in the eye, and his classic, serious mode of dress enhances the core message.

1.g. Advertisements with indeterminate model type

The survey also recorded a number of advertisements that could not be categorised. These were usually announcements, informing the public of some event or other activity involving the candidate. These advertisements were ancillary; the main message was elsewhere. An advertisement of this type is shown in Table 9 (on the left).
Table 9. Advertisements with indeterminate model type.

There were also a number of primary political advertisements in which the portrayal of the candidate projected no core message. These advertisements did no more than simply inform the public of the subject’s candidacy. The portrait of the candidate projected no specific model; there was no slogan encapsulating the candidate’s fundamental position: the advertisement merely stated the candidate’s name and profession, his political party, and, usually, some contact information. This type of advertisement was commonest in the earlier election campaigns, and generally concerned non-elected candidates. An example of this type of advertisement is given in Table 9 (on the right).

2. Changes in model preferences over the study period

As is clear from the findings set out in Table 2, the model of the successful man, which had predominated in all the preceding election campaigns, was discarded in 2000 in favour of the models of the dynamic-assertive and the visionary politician. These types presented a combination of personal features of the candidate with the benefits the voters could expect to reap by electing him to Parliament. The relative number of advertisements promoting the candidate as a ‘decent fellow’ also more than doubled in this campaign period.
There appear to be two reasons for this development: (a) the advertisements used in the 2000 campaign appear to be governed by a marketing orientation, with the focus shifting from who the candidate is to what the voters can expect to gain by his election, and (b) the change seems to reflect broader changes in predominant social models relating to masculinity and the ideal man, following the change in the role of women and their place in society. This change to some extent eliminated the representations of the past and delineated a “new masculinity” (phrase used by Badinter, 1994: 228), in which the ‘ideal’ man has to have certain characteristics that in the past were considered to belong exclusively to the distaff side. Traits like compassion, tenderness and humanity were formerly seen as womanish, or as signs of weakness in a man.

**In conclusion**

The model type appearing most frequently in the advertising used by MP candidates in the period 1989-2000 was that of the successful man. These advertisements stressed the subject’s professional characteristics and capacities. Elements of this model type were found in most of the advertisements recorded, even when it did not constitute the primary message.

The model of the dynamic-assertive politician was the second most frequently used type. That of the visionary politician, which also appeared fairly often, was particularly favoured by younger candidates. Occasionally – most frequently in the last campaign of the period studied (2000) – candidates chose to project themselves simply as decent human beings, identifying themselves with the average man.

Some candidates opted to project as their pre-eminent characteristics their good moral character, reliability and integrity, often in conjunction with emphasis on the importance of preserving traditional values. The institution of the family was used as the basis of a projected image in only one instance.

Over the course of the period studied there was a marked change in the type of message projected. The model of the successful man, which had predominated in earlier years, was virtually abandoned in the advertising of the 2000 election campaign. The types preferred in this period were those of the dynamic-assertive and the visionary politician, while the model of the ‘decent fellow’ more than doubled in frequency. This development is thought to be due to the growing dominance of the marketing concept, which by the 2000 election campaign had come to prevail, and
also to the gradual change in the perception of male types in Greek society. This finding, however, needs to be further studied on the basis of additional data from subsequent election campaigns, since it is based on a single campaign period.

Notes
2 Although these two newspapers were not in circulation during the 1996 election campaign, they were chosen because they were published for more of the relevant period than any other of the city’s dailies, and were generally the most popular.
3 There is a general reference to traditional values, although the specific reference is restricted exclusively to the institution of the family.
4 The White Tower is the symbol of Thessaloniki.
5 In their study, which covered the municipal and prefectural elections of 2002, Doulkeri and Panagiotou (2005) found that many candidates in Thessaloniki gave considerable weight to the institution of the Church and the Orthodox faith in their advertising. By contrast, no weight was placed on the institution of the family.

References


