

## Original Research Reports

# The Past as a Means of Persuasion: Visual Political Rhetoric in Finnish Dairy Product Advertising

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## Abstract

This study investigates the role of advertising and visual rhetoric in political persuasion. Analysis of Finnish dairy product video advertisements from 2010–2016 focuses on those that exploit time as the main reference framework. A better understanding of how advertising is used as a tool of political persuasion is sought by exploring the following questions: How are advertisements used in political communication? How is time used as a means of persuasion in advertising? What role do visual rhetoric and social representations have in the process of persuasion? The analysis shows how advertisements objectify work as a tradition and anchor it as a Finnish value. The results show how advertisements employ enthymeme as a major rhetorical tool to assert that the tradition of Finnish employment is under threat but the consumption of Finnish dairy products and favouring a pro-agrarian policy would ensure that the tradition is transmitted to new generations. The contributions of the study are twofold: First, the combination of social representations theory and classic rhetoric provides a theoretical and analytical perspective for the analysis of visual rhetoric in political persuasion. Secondly, by exploring the advertisements as political communication, the study shows how commercials are used to advocate ideological and political projects, such as certain kind of agricultural policy – an angle largely overlooked in the previous research of social and political psychology.

**Keywords:** visual rhetoric, political communication, social representations, advertising, visual analysis

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Persuasion and argumentation have been the focus of social psychology since the early days of the discipline (Billig, 1987). However, research in this field has mainly focused on verbal and textual material. Today, the growth of visually mediated communication, for example in social media, has made visual images a current topic (Arruda, 2015). In everyday life, visual rhetoric appears in multiple forms and advertising is one of the more pervasive. Means of visual communication are openly used in political marketing in election campaigns for example, but advertisements of everyday products can also be harnessed to convey subtly ideological and political arguments and should be considered as an object of political psychology.

Howarth, Andreouli, and Kessi (2014) highlight the need for combining social representations and political psychology. As they have stated it, the social representations approach “depicts a social world that is always a social and political construction” (p. 30). In the present paper, we aim to demonstrate political aspects of everyday advertising by focusing on Finnish dairy product advertisements exploiting time as the main reference framework. Previous research (e.g. Williamson, 1978; Meyers, 2009) has shown that advertisers can use history to shape how we perceive the past and the present – and how we orientate to the future. Temporal narratives and references to history are valuable material for political argumentation as they are related to issues such as social identity, tradition and a sense of continuity (e.g. Sani et al., 2007; Smeekes, McKeown, & Psaltis, 2017).

Food production and agriculture are highly debated topics in Finland and in many other European countries. These debates often stem from the influence of the European Union, which has given impetus to the concern that national food cultures and production are doomed (Holtzman, 2006). In addition, justification of agricultural subsidies (relative to subsidies for other livelihoods) has caused debate among EU countries. As a result of these discussions, dairy products are not just everyday consumer goods: they are also symbols of political controversies (e.g. Boisard, 2003).

The present study contributes to the field of the political psychology by exploring the ideological dimension of everyday consumer goods commercials. By combining the concepts of consumption, national identity and nationalism, the present study provides a social scientific perspective to consumer nationalism (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018). Instead of focusing on verbal communication, the present study approaches political persuasion from the perspective of visual rhetoric by combining the social representations approach (Moscovici, 1961) and classical rhetoric (Aristotle, 1991). We aim to show that the combination of social representations theory and rhetoric can provide a theoretical and analytical perspective for the analysis of visual images.

## **Social Representations, Classical Rhetoric and Visual Rhetoric in the Political Communication of Advertisements**

Social representations theory, first introduced by Serge Moscovici (1961), explains how new phenomena are made part of social knowledge. Briefly put, social representations are the stock of understanding people share in the form of common sense theories about the world. They correspond to “a system of values, ideas and practices” (Moscovici, 1973, p. xiii), which includes not only the mental image of the phenomenon, but also the use of this knowledge in practice.

Social representations are formed, transformed and maintained through three processes: anchoring, objectification and naturalisation. The anchoring process draws strange and unfamiliar ideas into ordinary categories and images, setting them in a familiar context. To anchor means classifying and naming something (Moscovici, 1984). Through the process of anchoring, a phenomenon is given meaning in a culture-specific and value-laden way. Objectification, on the other hand, is a process whereby something abstract is transformed into something almost physical and concrete, which may take the form of a symbol, a metaphor, a figure, a person or a group (Wagner et al., 1999), such as the logo of a political party (de Rosa & Farr, 2001). Naturalisation means that a new phenomenon becomes ordinary and acquires a place in the social reality (Philogène, 1999). The naturalised object, e.g. the colour associated with political orientation (red – left wing [de Rosa & Farr, 2001]), becomes an instrument that can be used to categorise – an anchoring point for other concepts and objects.

The focus in social representations allows for analysing the construction of shared meanings. However, in the present study, in order to analyse how these shared meanings are employed to specific purposes of persuasion, we rely on ideas of classical rhetoric (Aristotle, 1991). Central to Aristotle's perspective on rhetoric were the notions of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. In addition to taking a stance that was morally trustworthy (*ethos*) and providing proof in support for an argument (*logos*), Aristotle (1991) argued that a successful rhetorician should also be able to arouse feelings (*pathos*). Together, these elements can constitute an *enthymeme*, a form of argument that calls the audience to complete the aimed message (Smith, 2007).

In this paper, we argue that social representations and classic rhetoric are compatible approaches that can strengthen each other. Social representations are formed to enable common communication and orientation towards the world, while rhetoric seeks to influence these shared representations in a manner consistent with the purpose of the speaker. Social representation theory enables scholars of rhetoric to understand how the shared conceptions of reality have emerged through communication and the research on rhetoric helps social representations scholars to take into account motivational aspects of communication, to understand the strategic construction and use of particular representations, for example, for political needs. Albeit it may be too straightforward to claim that social representations deal merely with the content and Aristotle's concepts with the form of rhetoric, they provide two different, but interconnected perspectives to persuasion. While the former approach clarifies *what* is persuaded, the latter addresses *how* it is persuaded. Together these two approaches, as we will demonstrate in this paper, allow to analyse the social psychological functions of rhetoric.

Argumentation, as the action of reasoning in support of an idea, can be conveyed through several kinds of modes of expressions. For example, verbal argumentation entails mainly the use of words (either written or spoken) in communication, while visual argumentation is expressed or communicated pictorially, by images, symbols or other nonverbal signs. Most visual arguments are of multimodal nature: although they include verbal elements, the message can be understood only by taking the visual into account (Blair, 2015, p. 218). This idea echoes with social representations theory. According to Moscovici (1985, p. 92) all images and concepts cannot be translated into language which means that while representations often manifest themselves in language, they do not necessarily have to. In other words, although social representations are often communicated verbally, they are also manifested visually in photographs, images, drawings, symbols and other signs (de Rosa & Farr, 2001). It is also worth to note that the argument is rarely conveyed solely through verbal or visual communication, and accordingly, Kjeldsen (2007) recalls that in the analysis one should take into account the *rhetorical situation*, the context of communication.

Politicians and advertisers have long known how to take advantage of the illusory and emotive power of visual communication. In many respects, visual images are useful tools in the process of forming everyday knowledge: they can initiate a process of constructing social representation, they are easy to communicate to a wide audience, and they can make abstract phenomena concrete by giving them visible form. In other words, visual images are seen as working as a source, a medium and the product of social knowledge (de Rosa & Farr, 2001). From the perspective of persuasion, images serve several functions. Firstly, photographs have an especially strong reality-evoking effect (Barthes, 1977), which means that a visual message is a good way to produce a *presence* – one of the goals of classical rhetoric (Hill, 2004). Compared with verbal forms, which use descriptive language to help an audience form a mental image of something, in visual form the presence of that something is more easily measured, as the audience can see the object themselves. Shelley (1996) calls this a *demonstrative mode* of visual rhetoric.

Secondly, words are seen as involving rational processing, while images work through emotive pathways. Even if visual images can be used to appeal to rational thinking (e.g. graphs or figures), they tend to be processed in a more indirect way (Joffé, 2008). Hill (2004) argues that one reason for their emotional capacity of images is their vividness. Regarding vividness and its levels, statistics and other abstract forms of communication are the least vivid forms while photographs and moving images with sound are among the most evocative. Vividness makes visual images, especially film, useful tools for telling narratives – sometimes considered as an elementary means of human communication (Liu & László, 2007). According to Blair (2004), these characteristics can make visual communication rhetorically more powerful than verbal or textual communication.

However, visual persuasion can fail if the images chosen do not resonate with an audience's conceptions (Blair, 2004). This is one point where social representations and visual rhetoric meet. In trying to convince an audience of an argument, it is necessary to anchor the claim to socially shared knowledge (Smith, 2007). Once the connection between visual image and intended meaning is created, the image can be used, even in an abstract form, to trigger associations with this shared meaning (Hill, 2004). Myths and naturalised social representation are useful reference points, as they are so widely shared that the social interpretation comes before individual evaluation. Naturalised knowledge is taken for granted, meaning that it is difficult to contest and is thus an attractive tool for advertisers (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016). To ensure the desired association, a visual message is often framed with a descriptive verbal message which can make claims for something (Barthes, 1977). Shelley (1996) calls this interpenetration of visual and verbal argument a *rhetorical mode* of visual rhetoric.

The present paper endeavours to integrate social representations theory, classical rhetoric and visual rhetoric in an empirical analysis of advertisements as a form of consumer nationalism, an angle largely overlooked in the previous research in political psychology. However, before going into the empirical analysis, we describe the historical context of the present study.

### The Context of the Study: The Politicisation of Dairy Production

Recently there has been a growing interest to explore intertwining of nationalism, promotion and consumption of food. Everyday products and companies, which have acquired a deep-rooted position in the culture, are effective material for political persuasion as they combine elements such as tradition and cultural and national identity. (e.g., Autio, Collins, Wahlen, & Anttila, 2013; Castelló & Mihelj, 2018). Advertising can be seen as an invitation to construe and maintain social identities, as well as a form of banal nationalism. Banal nationalism refers to the notion that everyday representations of a nation are used to produce togetherness among the group which shares those images (Billig, 1995).

Castelló and Mihelj (2018) define consumer nationalism as everyday social and cultural implications of economic nationalism and as a mode of banal nationalism. Furthermore, they make a difference between political consumer nationalism (PCN), which refers to an aim of affecting a nation's economy by means of consuming, and symbolic consumer nationalism (SCN), which refers to reproduction of nationalism by means of consuming. Consumer nationalism can make even the most mundane consumer goods a topical issue. As Holtzman (2006) states, food has the "ability to tie the minutiae of everyday experience to broader cultural patterns, hegemonic structures, and political-economic processes, structuring experience in ways that can be logical, and outside of logic" (p. 373).

In Europe, the continuous debate concerning dairy production and agriculture is often closely connected with the issue of balancing nationalism and internationality. Boisard (2003) shows how the discussion of Camembert

cheese in France represents a struggle between traditions and reforms in which Camembert symbolises French national identity vis-à-vis the impact of the European Union. In Finland too, the dairy production debate is strongly connected with the effect of the EU, yet it has deeper roots in the country's national history.

The present study focuses on the dairy advertisements launched by Valio, the biggest Finnish dairy company. The company's history is closely related to national history and identity in Finland: co-operative dairy production in Finland dates back to an agrarian political movement in the early twentieth century when Finland was under Russian regime. Farmers saw co-operatives as a means of increasing their economic autonomy, which in turn helped to strengthen the economic base for an independent Finnish economy. The company's patriotic ideology was set forth in its fiftieth anniversary history as follows:

"The danger threatening our fatherland and the need to improve the economy and cultural life in the countryside led to an unprecedented national enthusiasm and a feeling of togetherness in our country half a century ago. This strong national awakening gave birth to the co-operative . . . . The creation of economic well-being strengthened the inhabitants' love of home and country. . . . Let's continue this work as a blessing for our country and our people" (Simonen, 1955, p. 397).

The quotation emphasises that the company strives to work for Finland and for Finns and to raise patriotism among them. As a result of this history, the company has acquired a special position in Finnish society as a kind of national symbol (Tillotson & Martin, 2015) and thus it has rhetorical power to influence not only consumer culture, but also wider opinions.

Even though, the association between domestic dairy production and Finnish nation originates from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Finland's EU membership in 1995 made domestic dairy production a highly topical question. Before that, Valio had practically no competitors in Finnish dairy market but new situation brought Swedish-Danish Arla and French Danone to Finland. According to Tillotson and Martin (2015) even 99% of Finnish farmers voted against joining the EU. To defend domestic production, a farm subsidy system was built. Since that time, the money spent on farming has been a continuous topic in Finnish political debate.

Even though Valio's main task is to process and distribute dairy products, it also has a special reason to promote the preservation of a *national* agricultural policy. Valio is not a typical corporation, as it is owned by dairy co-operatives, which in turned are owned by the Finnish dairy farmers. The company thus benefits farmers, not investors. Advertising has been a central way to promote the company's multiple goals. Since the 1980s, Valio has been one of the top advertisers in Finland based on the money spent on advertising and its visibility in the media. (Latostenmaa, 1997).

The topicality of the agricultural policy as well as the historical position of dairy producer Valio in Finland provides a reasonable starting point for analysing the visual rhetoric of the company's advertisements. The present study seeks a better understanding of how visual rhetoric is used in political persuasion to construct and maintain social representations.

### Material: Advertisement Videos

To promote its goals, Valio uses all advertising formats, from printed newspaper advertisements to videos on television and the internet. The last two forums have increasingly begun to overlap; advertisement videos shown on television are also made public in different video-sharing websites on the internet. Valio has its own channel

on YouTube, the biggest video-sharing browser. Since 2010, the company has published over 600 videos, which by the end of the year 2016 had been viewed more than 11.5 million times.

The material for the present study were collected from Valio's YouTube channel. The first step was to watch 608 videos (from the years 2010–2016), which were subjected to a rough content analysis on the basis of whether or not time appeared as the main frame of reference. In the advertisements time, or “narrative and history” (Williamson, 1978), means that the persuasive message is communicated by referring to temporal dimensions, specifically the past, the present or the future (Williamson, 1978, pp. 152–166). Forty-eight advertisements were identified as using time in their narration and were thus selected for further analysis.

Since the focus of the present study was on the use of visual rhetoric in the advertisements, the next step was to restrict the material further. Blair (2004) warns that visual rhetoric researchers should be careful not to stretch the concept of an argument too far, as it is not reasonable to see all visual material as expressing persuasive arguments. Blair argues that one task of persuasive argument is to present premises that support the presented claim instead of just trying to evoke a positive association with the product. Earlier, Shelley (1996) drew a distinction between demonstrative and rhetorical visual arguments. The demonstrative mode uses visual form to show an audience something concrete, while the rhetorical mode creates verbal and emotional associations between the elements presented. For the final, in-depth analysis here, the material was limited to those advertisements that presented an argument and was not simply promoting a certain product. Following the above-mentioned criteria set forth by Blair (2004) and Shelley (1996), four campaigns (15 advertisements) were selected for a final analysis.

## Method

The videos were analysed by combining the social representations approach with semiotic analysis (see e.g., Moloney, Holtz, & Wagner, 2013). Veltri (2015) has recently placed the central concepts of semiotics, denotation and connotation in parallel to elementary processes of social representations theory, objectification and anchoring. Hakoköngäs and Sakki (2016) have further developed these parallels by equating semiotic myth and naturalised social representations.

From the perspective of the social representation approach, denotative description shows how the communicated topic (e.g., milk) is objectified. In the analysis below, excerpts and brief descriptions of the plot demonstrate this denotative level. By objectifications we refer to objects (e.g., a field), symbols (e.g., Finnish flag), persons/groups (e.g., a farmer), metaphors (e.g., family) and tropes (e.g., “as pure as milk”) that are used to concretise the communicated topic (Wagner et al., 1999). In the second stage, the analysis focused on connotations referring to cultural meanings associated with the concrete elements presented (denotations). This step informed us how the process of anchoring is utilised in the advertisements. Usually, the process of anchoring is described on a rather general level as a process of drawing a new, troubling phenomenon into an old, familiar system of categories (Moscovici, 1984). Previous empirical studies demonstrate that existing social objects, beliefs, values, world-views, imaginary, social norms and even emotions can serve as anchors for new or somehow troubling objects or phenomena. In this study, for the sake of clarity, we lean on the meaning-making function (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016) of anchoring and regard them as broader patterns of meanings related to values, beliefs or norms (e.g., Finnishness, tradition). However, we are aware that the processes of anchoring and objectification are interwoven and partly simultaneous, as are the associative and concrete sides of connotation and denotation, but yet distin-



guishable as two phases in the formation of a social representation for the analytic purposes (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016; Lloyd & Duveen, 1990). The third stage involved identifying the myths that serve ideological aims in the visual narratives. The myths utilised naturalised social representations and collective memories, which are so widely shared and deeply rooted that they may not be processed critically (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016).

The identification of objectifications and anchorings in the advertisements was followed by a rhetorical analysis. Smith (2007) has suggested that Aristotle's rhetoric can be used to explain the construction of visual argument. In practice, this phase included a data-driven close reading of our material by following strategies in figure of speech manuals (see: Silva *Rhetoricae*, n.d.). Thus, we started with a more comprehensive list of rhetorical devices but ended up using a smaller number of devices that consisted of Aristotle's three appeals – *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* – and rhetorical tools of a *metaphor*, *synecdoche* and *enthymeme*. In the context of visual rhetoric, Smith (2007) emphasises the important role of enthymeme, i.e. arguing for probable truths, and states that *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* are dimensions of enthymeme. She notes that to be persuasive enthymeme must appeal to shared cultural conceptions of the intended audience (Smith, 2007). Thus, identifying Aristotle's three appeal in the advertisements made it possible to observe the possible use of enthymeme.

The process of gathering and transcribing the material was an important part of the analytical procedure. The visual material analysed in the present study, namely advertisement videos, is multimedia by nature, which makes it necessary to investigate the relationship of each individual element within a structure of all the elements (Barthes, 1977). Typically, videos included moving images, narration (voice), text and music/sound (see Excerpts below). The overall message of the advertisement came from the combination of all these elements, while the rhetorical message can be considered as something greater than the sum of these parts. For purposes of analysis, the contents of the advertisements were transcribed. The transcriptions were written in five parallel columns including the main dimensions: time, moving image, narration, text and sound. The parallel transcriptions made it possible to analyse the interrelated construction of the elements in each video. With moving images, there are always more elements than is possible to describe verbally and for that reason making the transcription the researcher had to interpret which elements were the most important from a rhetorical perspective, i.e. which elements were aimed to present an *argument* not just describing the promoted product (Smith, 2007). The transcription process was repeated several times, and each time the transcription and rhetorical analysis were specified.

The analysis follows three stages. Firstly, the objectifications and anchors of the advertisements are identified. Secondly, their rhetorical functions are analysed. Finally, all advertisements are discussed together as one entity in order to elaborate on their underlying myth, i.e. the grand narrative, and the main argument that they present. To avoid unnecessary wordiness in the analysis, only the terms of social representations and classical rhetoric have been used, but semiotics functions as a broad background from which to critically read the visual material.

## Analysis: Blue and White Milk

The analysis shows that time was used as a frame of reference in two ways in the advertisements. Firstly, it was utilised in campaigns showing farmers and ordinary people describing the continuity of production and consumer traditions. Secondly, it was used in the series of advertisements featuring a Finnish celebrity, the former NHL player Teemu Selänne, describing success and expertise in the past and in the future. All of the advertisements selected claim that consuming dairy products is something that belongs to Finnish tradition and is required for

good life and success. In the analysis below, we will first identify the objectifications and anchorings after which we demonstrate how, together with rhetorical devices, these shared meanings are used to persuade audience.

## Continuing the Tradition

Tradition and unbroken continuity between generations of farmers was central to the series of Valio advertisements launched in 2014. The advertisement “Young farmers” (2014; Excerpt 1) begins with an explicit reference to Finnish history. During the first thirty seconds, the narrator connected the distant past to the present (“a new generation”) and also drew a line to the future:

Excerpt 1

*Young Farmers (2014)*

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/ sound
00:03	Valio's logo A view of fields, a road A woman is	Narrator: For over one hundred years Valio's milk has come from the Finnish countryside. We are fully owned by Finnish farmers. Behind our milk stand Finnish expertise and around 7,400 Finnish farms. On these farms a new generation is stepping into the shoes of the old. They have a positive attitude to the future.	“Valio is a Finnish company.”	Guitar sounds in the background
00:22	putting on her shoes.	---	---	---
00:36	Close-up of a man	Interviewed: For two years we have been co-owners of the farm. My parents are still co-owners.	Name of interviewed and the title “Farmer”	---
01:29	A man and two children in a cowshed	Physical strain has decreased as a result of technology, but the amount of work and its binding nature have remained.	---	---
02:01	Cows milking in the cowshed A farmer walking	Valio is definitely a source of pride. That we can produce high-quality Valio milk for Finns is a value in itself. Narrator: Valio is securing Finland's dairy production and the viability of its countryside. We employ more than 30,000 Finns in the country and in cities.	---	The guitar music grows louder.
02:06	steadily into a house	---	---	---

In Excerpt 1 the main objectifications are the company and generations of producers (farmers) (00:22; 00:36; 01:29) which are presented visually as well as by a metaphor of “stepping into the shoes” (00:22). Milk production is objectified in images depicting countryside (00:03) and in images of cowshed (01:29) and cow milking (02:01). These objectifications acquire their meaning through anchoring them to values of pride (02:01), tradition (00:03; 01:29), continuity (00:22; 00:36), work (01:29) and Finnishness (00:33; 00:22; 02:01; 02:06). Below we discuss how tradition, continuity and Finnishness are constructed and used in the persuasion, while we elaborate more the role of pride and work in the subsequent Excerpt.

Finnish tradition is the most pervasive anchoring in the advertisement. In the opening line the narrator says that the product has come “from the Finnish countryside” (00:03) for more than a century. Rhetorically, this represents *ethos* and confirms the company's credibility by mentioning its long experience. Along with the narration the visual images of countryside (a road: 00:03) suggest that milk has come from this background, and the video evidence testifies to an existing place on this very road. Later the continuity of generations is strengthened with the *metaphor* of “stepping into the shoes of the old”, which is concretised with an image of shoes (00:22). The verbal narration



refers to the past generation (“parents”) (00:26), and the visual image implies that the narrative will continue into the future (children) (01:29).

The full story is framed with “Finnishness” in the first twenty seconds. The scene exploits repetition by mentioning the “Finnish countryside” where “Finnish farmers” do “Finnish work” for a “Finnish company” (00:03–00:22). In the closing lines, the same message is repeated by adding exact numbers “30,000 Finns” (02:06), a way of appealing to *logos*, persuading by reason. The interviews with farmers in the film serve the same purpose: the interviews are done in a documentary style with close-up images and captions in which personal information about the interviewees is presented in the form of a narrative. Visual tools as well as an everyday manner of speaking are convincing ways of conveying the truthfulness and then the sincerity of the company. Not only are there appeals to *ethos* and *logos*, but also there is an appeal to *pathos*, the emotions: as a summary of the interviews, a farmer states that the company is a source of pride in milk production and the work is a value in itself (02:01).

A similar narrative form, namely interviews with farmers, was used in several advertisements. In the campaign released in 2016, farm owners tell their story. Excerpt 2 demonstrates a narration in which the temporal dimension reaches into an even more distant past than in Excerpt 1:

#### Excerpt 2

*We Owners – Juntti Brothers (2016)*

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/ Sound
00:00	River, a summer landscape	I have always said that this farm will sell milk as long as water flows in the River Tornio.	The farm's name. Tornio, Finland. Established 1765. The company's logo	
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01:16	A view of a modern cowshed. Two men working	This farm is two and half centuries old. The first owner began selling milk here in 1765. My brother and I are now the ninth owners. And the tenth has already been born.		
01:20				
---	---	---	---	---
03:06	Farmers stand in the doorway of a cowshed and look towards the camera	We have done this kind of work since we were children. And it's a point of honour. It is a point of honour to continue the work of past generations.	"We owners"	Speaker's voice trembles
03:18				

Most of the objectifications and anchors used in Excerpt 2 are similar than in Excerpt 1. In this Excerpt, anchoring to the tradition of work is strongly emphasised by the visual rhetoric. As in Excerpt 1, the first scene in the video is an iconic view of the Finnish countryside. However, here the place is located both verbally and by the text conveying the truthfulness and appealing to *logos*. The opening line is a *metaphor* – “as long as water flows in the River Tornio” (00:00), which is emphasised with a view of the river. The message is that practically nothing can prevent the continuity of tradition. The text (“Established 1765”) implies that the tradition started centuries ago, a notion repeated later (“in the year 1765” [01:16]) to strengthen the credibility of the speaker (*ethos*). The future is included by stating that the next owner has already been born (01:20). In the context of a long history (“the first owner began in 1765” [01:16]), a baby suggests the unbroken chain of generations. *Pathos*, appealing

to emotion, is used throughout and reaches a climax in the closing lines when a farmer, in a trembling voice, states that to continue the work of past generations is an honour (03:06). The intended message, strengthened by text specifying that these men have been farming since childhood, is meant to convince the audience that the work shown in the advertisement is a vocation, not a compulsory way of earning an income, but an “honour” because of the tradition of milk production in Finland. The *pathos* and the visual images depicting the farm construe an idea that by consuming the products the consumer can support and get involved in the honoured tradition.

Excerpts 1 and 2 demonstrate the Finnish tradition connected with farm work. In 2011 the company launched a campaign promoting a butter-vegetable oil called “Oivariini”. The series presented the consumers’ side of the tradition. In the four advertisement videos an unnamed family is spending a summer day in a red cottage and its green garden. Excerpt 3 describes the advertisement “Grandmother’s pancakes” (2011):

#### Excerpt 3

##### *Grandmother’s Pancakes (2011)*

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/Sound
00:10	An older man is sitting on the stairs of a red cottage. The sun is shining.	Man: It sounds like Grandmother’s recipes are in use. Grandmother was strict about what she ate. She accepted only pure Finnish ingredients. She always said that others can eat what they eat, but our people eat from their own soil.	The product name	Flies buzzing, sounds of cooking
00:20	Pancakes are in the pan. A younger couple are preparing food.			
00:22	Older man on the stairs. New-born baby in a child’s seat beside the man.	Don’t laugh. Grandmother was always right. Woman: Father, come eat.		
00:28	The sun is shining. Packets of the product			A baby’s voice
00:30	scattered around the garden.			
00:33		Narrator: Only Valio Oivariini is made of Finnish butter and rapeseed oil without additives.	The product’s name. Text: “Naturally, without additives”	
00:40				

In the Excerpt 3 the most obvious message is that the product is healthy and of high quality: “Naturally, without additives” (00:40). However, at the same time the advertisement introduces consumption as a tradition. The main objectifications are images of three generations (00:10–00:20), red cottage, sun and pancakes (00:10–00:20, 00:33). “A red cottage and a garden plot” anchors to the happiness of living amid nature, to countryside, summer and to tradition. A country summer cottage scene is an important element in Finnish oral tradition and symbolises Finnishness in the context of food: according to [Autio and colleagues \(2013\)](#), Finns associate local food with summer holidays and summer cottages. In the 2000s, for urban Finns, summer cottages represent their main connection to agricultural Finland. Visual images and verbal narration imply that this is the summer home of three generations; in the opening lines the main character recalls their grandmother, now gone (“grandmother was” [00:10]); later a young couple (00:20) and a new-born baby (00:22) imply the next two generations. Grandfather draws an image of a cohesive family following its traditions (“Grandmother’s recipes in use” (00:10) and of children

representing the future. As in the Excerpts above, objectifications of family anchor to generational continuity. However, as we will discuss below, these images can be also used for other persuasive purposes.

The grandfather uses the noun “our people” (*porukka*) (00:10) and refers to “our own soil” (00:20) in which the original words (*omasta maasta*) are not restricted to land, but also can be understood as *metaphor* referring to nation and country. At the beginning of the line, this connection between tradition and nation is hinted at with the mention of “pure Finnish ingredients” (00:10); in the closing lines the association is strengthened by the statement that only this product is made with ingredients from Finland (00:33). The idea that products from one’s own soil or country are probably better than products from the soil of others (00:20) is verified by the earlier reference to a grandmother “who was always right” (00:28). The rhetorical device in the campaign is based on a *synecdoche*, a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole: the family represents the nation (see also: [Pickering & Keightley, 2014](#)). *Synecdoche* is accompanied with *ethos* and *pathos*: the knowledge of predecessors is transferred to new generations. There is a sorrow of generations passing but also the happiness of the continuation of the family. In contrast to Excerpts 1 and 2, the people are not named, but rather represent ordinary Finns just as the red cottage objectifies the idea of a Finnish summer cottage and can be interpreted to appeal *logos*: the people, consumers, presented are just like you and me, and thus trustworthy.

## Expertise From Generation to Generation

Excerpts 1–3 demonstrate campaigns which present ordinary people (consumers) and farmers (producers) as the carriers of Finnish food traditions. A distinctively different use of time as a frame of reference appears in the campaign ads that feature a former Finnish ice hockey player, Teemu Selänne. Selänne, who is one of the best-known NHL players in Finland, was recruited for the company’s advertisements already in 1992 ([Latostenmaa, 1997](#)). A new series of advertisements in which Selänne played a major role was released in 2012. In some, he is shown watching junior ice hockey players practising, while in others he is sitting at a bar drinking milk. In Finland, ice hockey is a source of national pride and ice hockey players are considered representative of that pride. In these advertisements, the association between time, Finnishness and tradition is conveyed both verbally and visually.

In the video “Teemu and a glass of expertise” (2014) (Excerpt 4) Selänne talks about the preconditions for success. The temporal dimension is construed visually. At the end of the film these elements are connected with Finnishness.

### Excerpt 4

#### “Teemu and a Glass of Expertise” (2014)

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/Sound
00:03	Selänne sits in a darkened ice rink, holding a milk carton and looking into the distance.	The voice of Selänne: There is no shortcut to happiness. It’s the result of hard work.		Sound of ice-skating growing louder.
01:24	The lights come on. Young players ice-skate around the rink.	And the fact that you want to learn.		
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01:42	Selänne and junior players raise their glasses of milk at the bar	Finnish grit [ <i>s/su</i> ] combined		Voice of a sports commentator [in English].
01:44	where other customers are watching the ice hockey game.	with skill is quite a good combination. There are two elements like... it is		

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/Sound
01:50		unbeatable.	Blue and white	
	The last scene: A milk carton on the	A female narrator: Skill requires work.	proficiency/	
01:53	ice. A milk glass slides next to the carton.		purity/ milk/	Solemn music
	Blue and white colours. The	And Finnish milk produces more Finnish		surges.
02:00	company's logo.	work.		

In Excerpt 4 ice hockey (00:03–01:42) generations of players (01:24), raising a glass (01:42), skill and grit (01:44) and the colours blue and white (01:53) are used as objectifications, which anchor to competition, continuity, togetherness, a work ethic and Finnishness, in respective order. The opening scene implies that a former ice hockey star is remembering the past as he sits in an empty ice rink (00:03). The voice verbalises his thoughts when suddenly the film shows that the story is not over; rather there are new players training on the ice, just as the former star trained in the past (01:24). The colouring of the scene – white ice and the players' blue shirts – explicitly evokes the colours of the Finnish flag. At the end of the film, Selänne and young players meet at the bar (01:42). This scene is a direct reference to Valio's advertising video of 1992 (Latostenmaa, 1997) and shows that the company has already construed its “own world”, which is assumed to live in the memories of the audience.

The main rhetorical device used in the advertisement is *pathos*. Emotions are appealed visually, verbally and with the music. Selänne's words connect Finnishness with know-how and “true grit” (*sisu*) (01:44), a term which has strong national connotations for Finns. In the closing lines the narrator, in relation to the earlier narrative, associates success in sports with dairy production by saying that dairy production helps to provide work and to promote the skills required for success (02:00). Here success and the glory associated with it are emphasised by solemn music that swells in volume until the end of the film (01:53). Visually, the last scene is strongly associated with the colours of the Finnish flag, blue and white and emphasise national pride. The company has regularly utilised these colours in its advertisements over the years (Latostenmaa, 1997). In the Excerpt 4, the association is clarified by the text “blue and white proficiency” (01:50). In the closing line *rhyme* associates two attributes (“expertise” and “authentic”) with a noun (the product milk): in Finnish the words are *taitoa – aitoa – maitoa*.

In the last example (Excerpt 5) “Teemu and Virtanen's heritage” (2014), sports are juxtaposed with other kinds of work and with success in science, another source of national pride.

#### Excerpt 5

##### “Teemu and Virtanen's Heritage” (2014)

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/ Sound
	Selänne is sitting at a bar.	Selänne: Hi	Teemu, a legend	
00:04	Three people dressed in white laboratory jackets come into the bar.	Women: Hi	Tiina, a professor	
			Tuomas, a PhD	
			Riina, a PhD	
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00:16	Woman points to Teemu's NHL ring and places a golden Nobel Prize medal on the counter.	Women: You have a nice ring. Selänne: Thanks. You have a nice medal.		

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/ Sound
00:24		Women: We have that. It's Virtanen's heritage. Selänne: Let's drink in honour of that.		
00:30	Selänne and the scientists raise their glasses of milk.	Narrator: Seventy years ago, blue and white expertise was rewarded a Nobel prize. A. I. Virtanen worked in Valio and		Solemn music surges.
00:35		his heritage is honoured by the quality of the company's work	Company's logo.	
00:40		today.	Blue and white milk.	

In Excerpt 5 the ice hockey player and the scientists (identified in the captions [00:04]) meet in the bar as old friends. Laboratory jackets (00:04), NHL ring and Nobel Prize medal (00:16) are objectifications which anchor to professionalism and heroism. The ring refers to international success in sports, while the Nobel Prize medal introduced in the next scene is shown as a parallel to that (00:16). Raising a glass (00:30) is an objectification which anchor to sense of togetherness. Showing off the medal, the professor says, “We have that” (00:24), referring to the company where the former scientist Virtanen worked and left a heritage common to all Finns (just as the achievements of Finnish athletes, symbolised by the ring, are common to all Finns). Finnishness is emphasised with blue and white colour and in the closing lines, where the narrator intones, “blue and white expertise was rewarded . . .” (00:30). The *metaphorical* set-up implies that in all fields of life, Finnish endeavours lead to success (and that milk is once again a background agent). The music plays a significant role by creating a solemn atmosphere in the banal setting of a bar (00:30). In a similar way to Excerpt 4, the main rhetorical device is *pathos* associated with national success. Anchorings to professionalism in science and sports also appeal to *ethos* and *logos* by giving the message a morally trustworthy sense and relying on the expertise.

## Discussion: An Enthymeme – Threat to the Value of Finnish Work

In this section, we investigate the political purposes that are served by the uses of visual rhetoric and social representations that we demonstrated in the analysis above. At the level of product promotion and social representations of food, the advertisements respond to the anxiety and worries about modern food production by showing visual evidence (demonstrative mode; Shelley, 1996) of the conditions of the farms as well as the strong commitment of the farmers to producing fresh and high-quality food (see Autio et al., 2013). At this level, the campaigns draw on time and tradition to create a positive social representation of certain products. This is the obvious level of advertising rhetoric, as we have seen in our analysis above, but not the sole as we discuss next.

The advertisements also had a more pervasive purpose than to wait for an immediate consumer response. Objectification of the continuity of generations of farmers, consumers and ice hockey players was anchored in Finnishness, tradition, work and pride. The overall objective of Valio's use of time as a main frame of reference in these advertisements seems to have been to build schematised associations among these four anchors with visual and verbal cues (rhetorical mode; Shelley, 1996). The overall theme is the quality of Finnish work confronted by unspecified “others”. In semiotic terms, the concept of “Finnish work” represents a myth, the roots of which are allegedly found in the distant past. Mythical work is presented as a value in itself, one which created national pride and success: “That we can produce high-quality Valio milk for Finns – that is a value in itself” (Excerpt 1). Boisard (2003) shows how the discussion of Camembert cheese in France represents a pervasive struggle between tra-

ditions and reforms in which Camembert symbolises French national identity vis-à-vis the impact of the European Union. Similarly, the Finnish dairy production in the advertisements analysed represents a contradiction between the tradition and a new threatening situation of free market. The primary implication of the message demonstrate symbolic consumer nationalism (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018): that the company, or the consumption of its products, will transfer its value to future generations and thus secure the Finnish tradition.

Rhetorically, the argument conveyed overall in the campaigns utilises an *enthymeme*. Enthymeme refers to the omission of one premise of an argument, which is to be completed by the audience. It appeals to expressed logical propositions but also to emotions and character and is constituted by combination of other rhetorical devices: *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* (Smith, 2007). Here the two premises, identified above, are that a) work is a value in itself, and b) Finnish dairy production is securing that value. The logical obscured claim, implied by the stated premises of value and its preservation, is that Finnish work is somehow threatened. The threat is not mentioned nor is it presented visually in the advertisements analysed – if one does not count references to “other products” in the food production or associations with beating the “other” team in an ice hockey game. The audience is assumed to be completing the narrative. In the 2010s, a threatening “other” could, for example, be cheap imported foreign food during the prolonged recession in the country. In recent years in the editorials of the main Finnish newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, imported food production has been described as an uncontrolled force of nature and imported cheap surplus milk has been named as a flood that “flows to the market” (Hakoköngäs, 2015, pp. 36–37).

The overall argument construed by the series of advertisements, namely ensuring the continuity of Finnish work, has clear political implications. The advertisements contribute to the public discussion on the problematic situation of imported food (Hakoköngäs, 2015). However, employment for Finns is an issue that involves more than the increasing quantities of imported goods. In Finland the question of subsidising the economically declining countryside, the so-called regional policy, has been debated since the deep structural changes in Finnish society in the 1960s. As a result of EU membership, in the past two decades the debate has focused especially on farm subsidy system. However, the so-called regional policy also concerns more general issues of supporting rural areas by subsidising the infrastructure. We interpret, that the subtle aim of the analysed advertisements is to encourage policy that would maintain regional policy support.

This interpretation is supported by earlier studies, which have shown that the value attributed to local food is concerned not only with health and environmental issues, but also addresses a rural policy sector that supports local livelihoods and maintains a heritage (Autio et al., 2013). In the material examined here, by construing images of the countryside as a precondition for Finnish employment and future success, the commercials are doing their part in the continuous discussion of social representations of farming and food in society. The advertisements analysed here cover most of Howell's (1991) definition on politics of nostalgia: “time and place, mood and message, politics and consumption and capitalism and pleasure” (p. 262). By following Castelló and Mihelj's (2018) conceptualisation, the analysed advertisements serve both political (PCN) and symbolic (SCN) consumer nationalism in their communication: the enthymeme encourages the audience to consume domestic goods in the commonweal (PCN) and the advertisements in general construct and reproduce a narrative of Finnish tradition of work (SCN). Furthermore, the fact that time and memories play a central role in the argumentation demonstrates how the commercials rely not only on existing representations of the past, but also on intentionally construing temporal narratives that connect the past, the present and the future (Meyers, 2009).



## Conclusions

The present study has focused on visual political rhetoric in the context of Finnish dairy advertising. The exploration has examined advertisements that use time as their main frame of reference and has identified rhetorical devices utilised to create arguments. The advertisements were found to have used *enthymeme* as their main rhetorical tool (Smith, 2007) in creating a narrative of threat to Finnish employment. They combined both demonstrative and rhetorical modes to produce a strong persuasive argument (Shelley, 1996) and served both political and symbolical consumer nationalism (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018) to shape social conceptions of farming and of the Finnish countryside. Finnishness was a central anchor in the advertisements, objectified verbally and visually by the colours blue and white. Even if the form of the communication is new – all the advertisement videos are modern in filming style and visual settings – the content of their messages still serves the same patriotic purposes that led to the establishment of the company over one hundred years ago (Simonen, 1955).

In the present paper, we attempted to combine social representations and classical rhetoric to provide a way to analyse visual rhetoric in political persuasion. Our analyses showed that visual rhetoric employs shared cultural knowledge (Smith, 2007), i.e. commonly accepted objectifications, such as images of national heroes, colours, countryside and nature, which are emotionally appealing to their audience. These objectifications acquire their meaning in values of tradition and continuity, pride and work, and togetherness and Finnishness – serving as anchors that have a great persuasive power. Our analysis suggests that the emotional power of advertisements leans on the use of visual images and music in particular, and is created in combination of pathos, logos and ethos, which are elements of the main rhetorical tool, *enthymeme* (Smith, 2007).

In line with Howarth and colleagues (2014) we argue that social representations approach brings to political psychology a sharper focus on everyday culture and mundane construction of social meanings. On the other hand, political psychology forces social representations research to take into account the political nature of production and dissemination of social representations (Howarth et al., 2014). To complement the analysis of social representations with rhetorical devices, thus, responds to the need of social representations theory to broaden its focus on the functions of shared meanings to emphasise what social representations do in political settings (Howarth, 2006).

It should be remembered that advertisements may serve multiple ideological purposes simultaneously. In the present study, the material was restricted to selected videos using time as the main framework of reference. Besides convincing an audience of the patriotic value of domestic food production, the advertisements also advocate on behalf of the whole dairy industry in the context of consumers' growing interest in vegan products and broad concern about animal-based products. By examining how advertisements use not only time, but also other factors such as health, safety, taste or cooking as referential frameworks would reveal other ideological purposes that might be served. The other limitation of the present study is its focus on the analysis of the advertisement material only. The reception studies (e.g. Pirttilä-Backman & Kassea, 2013) have shown that the audience can actually interpret the same advertisement in many different ways. In the context of rhetoric and visual persuasion it is worth to underline Moscovici's (1984) remark that individuals are not passive receptors, but on the contrary, "they think for themselves, produce and ceaselessly communicate their own specific representations and solutions to the questions they set themselves" (p.16). To use Kjeldsen's (2007) conceptualization, instead of showing the effect of certain campaign, the present study has strived to analyse a certain rhetorical situation in the specific context of national consumerism.

The social representations of agriculture and the countryside are continuously debated in Finland. The changing social context and consumer preferences also require changes in rhetorical devices. A longitudinal analysis of the company's advertisements would show how the form of visual rhetoric has adapted and the content preserved in changing situations. Previous research has suggested that Valio's advertisements have had a significant effect on the formation of Finnish symbols and social identity (Latostenmaa, 1997). A longitudinal analysis would deepen our understanding of how commercials are shaping not only our consumption habits, but also serving subtler ideological and political purposes in everyday life (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018). In general, the wider use of visual approaches in political psychology and consumer nationalism studies would show how the visual rhetoric we perceive in different media can act as a vehicle of banal nationalism

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