

## Global brand advertisements and the representation of localization in the example of Turkey

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### Abstract

In the present-day world, globalization has increased the intensity of international competition, transforming the world into a single market. The concept of global advertisements, which gained importance parallel to globalization, is nowadays losing its status as the sole valid advertisement strategy for companies conducting business at a global level. The primary reason for this is the increasingly intense competition environment created by the entry of many new actors into the global and local markets, which has led global businesses to pay greater attention to the cultural variables of their target markets rather than just their economic variables. Culture represents all of the material and spiritual elements associated with a society, and can vary considerably from one society to another; in this context, culture is increasingly becoming the focus point of marketing and advertisements in the present-day world. One consequence of this new approach has been the entry of the concept of "glocal" into the advertisement literature.

To summarize, the concept of "glocal" involves the creation advertisements that bear the characteristic and local cultural features of the country where they are broadcast, while also closely adhering to a general global concept and goal.

This study focuses particularly on the representation of localization elements and prevailing ideologies in global brand advertisements in Turkey, a country that harbors a highly diverse multitude of different lifestyles, cultural backgrounds and traditions. This study evaluates local advertisement campaigns in Turkey for certain global brands according to their overall preferences and/or differences with respect to the local cultural elements they harbor and represent, and the ideological background for these preferences. This evaluation was performed based on several advertisement examples/cases examined through semiological analysis methods.

Keywords: Culture, Advertisements, cultural differences, Global Advertisement, Glocal Advertisement, Representation, Ideology.

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## 1. Introduction

The modernity project which appeared in the 18th century is to use the accumulation of knowledge created through the participation of free and creative individuals for human liberation and enriching daily life. Together with modernity, it was aimed to dominate the nature scientifically and to develop rational social organizational forms and rational ways of thinking. Modernity aimed to break loose from history and tradition, received the change projecting human creativity, scientific discoveries and individual perfection for the sake of human development positively, and required the temporary, instant and fragmented for the realization of modernization project (Harvey, 1997).

Modern life lives on many sources such as scientific, political, cultural, technical, and industrial revolution. Industrial Revolution involves the exclusion of humans from the production process because of machines replacing human labour (Jeannere, 1993). Despite the massification of production, the new role of the human, whose role diminished in this process, is to become the subject of mass consumption necessitated by the massification of production. Between 1880 and 1920, economies of developed countries adjusted to industrial production and mass consumption and outdated production methods were eliminated (Murdock, 1999). This period is named Fordism. During this period led by Henry Ford products were standardized and moving walkways replaced the stable belt conveyor (Murray, 1995). What should be taken into account is the term standardization, which expresses the standardization of the products. This term extended in time and set forth standardized consumption goods, standardized consumer culture and a consumer profile, the consumer's destiny was similarized to what was consumed and thus the continuity of the consumption process was ensured. Another significant factor for mass production industry as important as the continuity of consumption is that the principle of increasing production constantly depends on the same level of increase in consumption. According to Wernick "Setting the demand into motion to absorb new (and costly) commodities spreading everywhere with their abundance requires not only a widespread promotion but also radical changes in household habits, spending ways and domestic values. In order to help customers be adapted (and thus become consumers), advertisements were supposed to address directly the domestic cultural chaos caused by urbanisation and technologic and economic transformation of the household. In short advertising was a crucial element to increase and preserve effective demand and forced to adopt a pedagogical attitude" (Wernick, 1996).

Advertising played a major role in continuing and increasing consumption. Seeking new markets as an alternative to markets of developed countries which reached natural boundaries of consumption accelerated together with the economic globalisation and the whole world has become a single market since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. A global world includes a mass production and consumption industry and in every phase of the marketing of the goods global strategies are required. However, the problem is that what kind of marketing strategies may adjust to preferences and perceptions of the people with different cultural features? In this context as an alternative to the strategy "Think globally, act globally", which is implemented by many global brands these days and which was implemented during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "Think globally, act locally" strategy was developed. Turkey is not an exception to this global strategy.

## 2. Glocal Advertising Strategy as an Alternative

The global advertising strategy envisions the global market as a human; the products are global, but humans may not be global. Brands are global, yet there may not be a global or standard motivation to buy these brands or there are global markets but many consumption patterns might be local (Mooji, 2004). However, the current dominant advertising strategy may be defined as follows: In parallel with the escalation of rivalry in the global market global brands have strived to adjust to the rapidly changing conditions in their marketing and advertising strategies in order to receive more slices of the cake. At this point "Think globally, act locally" principle seems to have been adopted. In practice this

principle has been implemented with the appearance of an advertising concept in which global products are covered with local motives (which means local labour and values).

According to Zyman consumer and marketing experts cannot be regarded as an ordinary element or the first element among similar elements in the things-to-think list. They are the only thing worth considering. The other things including all significant strategies rank number two (Zyman, 2000). Since values, attitudes and beliefs represented by culture narrate how a group of people perceive the world; it would not be possible to comprehend ideas and behaviour regarding that culture without analysing those values, attitudes and beliefs (Barutcugil, 2011). Differences among societies or cultures, characteristics unique to a society and culture and characteristics that separate that society and culture from other societies and cultures can be observed by means of cultural indicators (Kucukerdogan, 2012). This concept defined as glocal advertising has not been used in all elements of advertising strategy. There is a cultural globalisation process at present which has ensured a global cultural standardization to a certain extent. Glocal strategy approach admits a balance and harmony between standardization and adaptation. As well as reflecting the necessities of the approach, global strategy takes into account local adaptation needs (Svensson, 2001)

Ritzer resembles the standardization and globalization of products to McDonaldization of the society and describes this process as “the domination of underlying principles of fast-food restaurants on a bigger part American society and rest of the world. McDonaldization does not only affect restaurant industry but also education, business, health, pleasure, regime, politics, family, and all other aspects of the society. McDonaldization showed all symptoms of being an unchangeable process by spreading into institutions and parts of the world seemingly not influenceable (Ritzer, 1998).

However, cultural standardization does not happen at the same pace of the standardization of products and a substantial part of the consumers are out of this generalization. This rate is more than global brands can ignore. It is important to emphasize that characteristics of the target group differ by countries to a nonignorable rate. One strategy successful in a country may not be that successful in another country because cultural features of target groups play a determining role in the process of developing marketing communication strategies. “Culture might play two roles in the period of change experienced among culture, company and consumer: preventer and facilitator.” In this situation, it would be an overstatement to claim that culture playing a preventer role is a resistance against cultural globalization. In the process of rural population moving to urban areas during the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the transformation from agriculture society to industrial society started with the Industrial Revolution and which still continues although elements of micro-level local culture have moved to urban areas, it has been oppressed by the urban culture supplied by global and popular culture, has been degenerated and disappeared under a kind of hybridization influence. This situation is a matter of adaptation to this culture rather than a resistance against culture diffusion. Adaptation problem applies to the generations before the first-generation. Individuals of the new generation bear different characteristics. They are open to intercultural interaction, are more open-minded and tolerant thanks to a number of media tools through which they can interact culturally. As the target group’s level of income increases, local culture elements in advertisements decrease, of which reason cannot be explained with the fact that the higher level of income and education is, the more defenceless the consumers are to global cultural elements. It can be explained with the abundant opportunities of accessing mass and global communication media and being more open to global cultural interaction. The tendency of conservatism inversely proportional to socio-economic status. In summary, the level of disappearance and hybridization of local culture elements increases at the rate of the development of global integration opportunities.

The fact that the rates of urban and rural populations approximate to each other even today and thus the redundancy of rural population in Turkey result in the fact that the level of education, travel opportunities and the rate of access to mass communication tools are low compared to the western countries. Similar factors mean that global interaction channels cannot penetrate into a great part of Turkish population. Therefore, this situation is not a resistance to global culture diffusion but a

strategy of infiltration to cultural codes under the protection of a relatively isolated life implemented by global brands. This gap arising from the collapse of what is traditional is filled by advertising and popular culture. Cultural commodities of which contents are identical are presented to the group by differentiating their external elements. Thus, some things are prepared for individuals categorized by their level of income, gender, abode, level of education, ethnic origins etc, everyone is presented with something by preparing various goods and it is ensured that no one escapes (cited from Oskay, 2014, p:309). This seemingly individualization process is an illusion similar individualization tendency of the modern man and a simulation as named by Baudrillard. According to Baudrillard individualization is contemporary of naturalization, functionalization. This whole process can historically be defined: Monopolist industrial concentration is what has started the dominance of differentiation by removing the real differences among people and by homogenizing individuals and products... Here, the difference cult is based upon losing the differences (Baudrillard, 2010). Heterogeneous individuals belonging to a homogeneous group similar to detergent brands divided into several different types among each other. Similarly, According to Levitt ethnic markets are a good example of this situation. Chinese food, pizza and jazz music are all over the world. They have turned into a market section seen all over the world. These do not conflict with global homogeneity (Levitt, 1983:92-102). Culture is being global; the change is that the sources have become abundant and various. In this sense global advertising strategy emerged as a result of the necessity of maximizing the sales by determining the characteristics that separate one culture from another and by knowing the cultures of countries in order for marketing and advertising activities to be maintained successfully and affect the target group. The purpose is to reach each potential consumer with purchasing power in the global market and make them consume.

### **3. Local Cultural Elements and Representation of Locality in Global Brand Advertising Samples**

“What happened to the coke commercial films starring Michael Jackson, Ricky Martin, Madonnashot in Atlanta and London and distributed all over the world? Why did our fellow aunt Ayse saying “Feel free, just eat” replace the world stars? Why did coca cola leave the discos and barge into iftaar tables? These advertisements are the product of a new marketing strategy activated by global brands recently... Yes, the fight is heating. While global products are entering the local market in their shalwars, local product are getting around in the global market in their cowboy hats.” (Dundar, 2003). “Think globally, act globally” approach caused companies to present their current ‘standard’ or unadapted’ products and services to new markets directly without doing deep marketing analysis regarding demand and needs (Erem, Tek, Gegez & Boru, 2004). These companies which went through standardization process in their marketing communication programs used the dubbed versions of commercial films shot in the USA or UK all over the world. Especially the commercial films of Pepsi Cola starring Michael Jackson were screened all over the world with the slogan “The choice of a new generation”. Today global brands have left “Think globally, act globally” approach behind. The current approach is “Think locally, act locally!” One of the most known samples of this strategy in Turkey is the commercial series starring Seda Sayan in Turkey.



Image-1: Pepsi Cola Advertising Sample From Turkey

In this film, Pepsi cola brand preferred a star addressing Turkish viewers instead of worldwide celebrities such as Michael Jackson. In 2000 in a public statement Coca Cola Head of Middle Europe and Asia Departments Cem Kozlu said, “We might have exaggerated this globalization wave. Globalisation ruptured us from local realities, suppliers. We have become a rather arrogant company managed by single centre in Atlanta with a single strategy” (Kozlu, 2000). As part of this strategy in the exhibition held by Coca Cola, interesting Coca Cola bottles were exhibited, one of which was publish in the official gazette. This was a bottle covered with blue beads, which is not found bizarre by us. In addition, we listened to the Coca Cola jingle versions including instruments and modes unique to Turkey. According to Kahraman, “Coca Cola is running a massive campaign. They are targeting millions of people. If this group is in Turkey, it cannot contradict with its culture and values. On the contrary, it should be at peace with is to address and affect the group” (Kahraman, 2003).



Image-2 and Image-3: Coca Cola Advertising Sample From Turkey



Image-4: LiptonCoca Cola Advertising, Sample From Turkey





Image-5: Lays Coca Cola Advertising, Sample From Turkey

Despite belonging to different brands, commercial films of global brands having local elements shown on Turkish TV channels have a lot in common in terms of emphasizing similar elements semiologically. In this sense I am in the opinion that it would be right to deal with the commercial films of four different brands simultaneously. Although these are not the only commercial films with local elements, they operating in food sector to a great extent is the first striking factor. Locality is not seen in commercials of luxury consumer goods such as automobiles, white goods etc, which can be explained with the fact that luxury consumer goods have standard structures globally and functions that do not differ by locality. Another reason might be that luxury consumer goods are required by the urban population mostly and that urban population is more open to global cultural interaction.

However, food sector is among the sectors to be affected by local values and consumption habits most. Therefore, it is possible to claim that local eating habits are rather effective on food advertising. In all the commercial films discussed here cultural and religious varieties such as ethnic origin, language and religion are included. As a country embracing a great deal of variety in terms of geographical and ethnic identities Turkey embodies more than one local cultural feature such that there are striking differences among cities, towns and villages in terms of eating habits, languages, accents and clothing and traditions. The fact that urbanisation process in our country was lower compared to western countries limits the formation of a mass culture and the rural population's integration with this culture, and causes the presence of closed cultures all over the country. Therefore, brands striving to reach all consumers reflect this diversity on their advertisements. Values such as unity and solidarity, affinity, family, and tastes are emphasized in advertisements. The star of Pepsi Cola commercial films Seda Sayan is a famous and appealing unifying element; and in Coca Cola commercial films this role is undertaken by religious values and family. In Lipton and Lays commercial films local labour theme was treated and the images of a traditional Turkish woman with her likeable accent who produced in Turkey for Turkey. All the images refer to origin, rural, tradition and family values. Although the products belong to global markets, they grow in Rize or Urfa and reaped by women of Rize. It is dried on housetops in Urfa, brewed in porcelain teapots, is the guest of honour on Ramadan tables and Seda Sayan drinks it.

The expression "Being from Turkey" is a familiar statement we come across in political discourse due to "one religion, one flag, one country" opening. Although is difficult to create one advertising language for geographies with a wide range of ethnic diversity, diminishing subheadings to common values is a solution. Whatever our ethnic origin, vision of world, dressing style is, we sit down to iftaar together, listen to Seda Sayan and drink tea. These common grounds are translated into advertising language as "We all eat Lays, drink Lipton, Coca Cola, Pepsi" As stated by Pratkanis and Aronson this is a brotherhood relationship. We are attracted to our brothers even if they are bad people. For instance "If you learnt that you were born on the same day with the mad monk of Russia Grigori Rasputin, what would you think of him? Rasputin was a religion-monger and swindler. Would you think of him positively just because you were born on the same day? A pair of experiment conducted by John Finch and Robert Cialdini shows what you would think" (Pratkanis, Aronson, 2007)

Such an effort of creating common grounds is the mutual ideology of politics and advertising. People sharing common values might be consumers bearing same consumption habits. According to Bourdieu social groups and culture have a mutually empowering effect. World is a multidimensional scope relatively differentiated by autonomous areas, in all of which individuals are positioned by the amount of their capitals (cultural, economic, social). For this reason, actors in the social scope are categorized by choosing clothes, food, beverages, sports and friends suitable to their positions and accord with themselves, and their tastes (Bourdieu, 1989). Their cultural universe creates positive or negative consumption necessities. Many of the current necessities such as eating, enjoying, behaving and consuming, loving what others love and hating what others hate in harmony with the advertisement are classified in wrong or negative necessities (Marcuse, 1997).

The aim of Glocal (Global - Local) advertisement is to make their brothers who share the same geography, language, table and culture make a choice even if it is tasteless, unsalted, second class, unnecessary and wrong.

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