

Standardisation Versus Cultural Adaptation: The Case of Language of Advertisements in Turkish and German

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ABSTRACT

In the course of globalization, there are more and more companies that sell their products internationally. In particular international branded products have achieved a major upturn in the Turkish and German markets in recent years. A functioning international advertising is one domain where it is significant to distinguish between standardized - formally and content wise identical - and differentiated -adapted to the respective country. On the other hand, it is questionable whether standardization can be successfully implemented in all countries. Numerous factors with regard to country-specific characteristics - such as culture, underlying values and the form of society - play an important role here. The foundation of standardization is formed by an identical core message in all countries and has the goal of addressing and indirectly influencing the audience. Thus, an advertising message represents the decision maker about the (in) efficiency of the advertisement or (non-) consumption of the product. Today, the product is attached to less functional, but mainly subjective characteristics that are supposed to cause emotions. This is especially true for branded products, as they try to build trust and build a bond with the consumer. Nevertheless, since often formal and content elements of the commercial - depending on the culture - can cause different interpretations and emotions, special attention must be paid to country-specific features and differences, especially when designing standardized commercials. However, it is possible to circumvent these cultural peculiarities by resorting to universal appeals. With this viewpoint, the present study aims to find out to what extent commercials are standardized or culturally adapted within the context of international comparison between Turkey and Germany.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign markets operate at increasingly high speeds due to intense competition. For businesses, it is difficult to turn people living in different regions of the world into customers, and to ensure the continuity of the relations developed with them. However, businesses which can achieve this are able to become world brands. A business can acquire the strength that will turn into a world brand through the international marketing mix program it implements. In international marketing mix programs, marketing managers take decisions regarding products, their price, place and promotion. Within the scope of this study, we focus solely on the product aspect of the mix. As product decisions include global brand creation and global product development, they occupy a critically important place in marketing mix decisions. For this reason, managers of businesses that will be active in foreign markets must decide whether they will attempt to appeal to each market with a standard product without performing any changes to their current products, or whether they will adapt their products according to the conditions of the country they are trying to address. In this context, businesses follow the

standardization product strategy in certain markets, while following the adaptation product strategy in others. However, by comparing the respective strengths as well as the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the two strategies, businesses must determine the extent they will benefit from each of these strategies in their products.

A winning approach in the global market is to benefit from each strategy in relation to the existing conditions and circumstances. A common approach nowadays is to interrelate these two strategies and use each as much as it is necessary. The extent to which a business should adhere to one of these strategies will, fundamentally, depend on the product characteristics, consumer behaviours, environmental factors and the market structure. The first of these strategies is to identify, examine and evaluate product adaptation and standardization. In the theoretical part, the fields of culture, international marketing and adaptation will be focused on. This chapter will help to understand the following topics such as differences between cultures, how the cultural factors affect consumer behaviours, the main concepts of international marketing and the structure of adaptation. In addition, it will be shown how product standardization and adaptation strat-

egies are performed in global markets by providing some examples from Turkey and Germany. ("Journal of business research-türk" Archieve, 2014). In short, the aim of the paper is to analyse what strategies do marketing departments of brands in turkey and Germany follow for advertising and how the style, structure and language of advertisements differ between turkey and Germany. Furthermore, the paper also intends to discuss the key reasons describing the primary differences between the particular advertisements.

METHODOLOGY

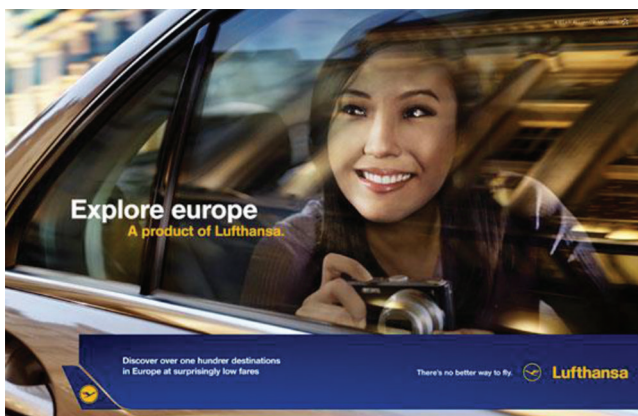
For this study, the content analysis technique is used in order to explore the language, style and structure of advertisements elicited from Turkish and German context. It is a widely used qualitative research technique and considered as the most suitable research method for studying communication artefacts, which can be in the form of texts, various pictures, audio or video. (Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge, 2009)

The main source of data used in this paper is secondary data, which represent published data made available to the general public. This paper adopts the purposive sampling which is widely used in qualitative researches for the identification and selection of information-rich cases. A range of advertisements of different brands active in both countries (i.e. Germany and Turkey) were collected and compared in order to select, on the one hand firms which standardize their advertisements globally and on the other hand companies which are most suitable to show the clear differences and procedures of ads in Germany and Turkey. Coca Cola, Burger King and Magnum were selected as the companies following the adaptation strategy in the context of advertising. By contrast, companies practicing the standardization strategy are identified as Volkswagen, McDonalds and Knorr.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Content Analysis of Cultural Adaption

It is often indicated that promotional activities resulting from globalization must meet new requirements. The worldwide marketing of products and services means dealing with consumers from different cultures. One issue that arises in this context is related to whether international advertising can be standardized for all countries (Levitt 1983).



This is supported by the fact that standardization is an important prerequisite for transnational market strategies and has a high potential for reducing advertising costs. A potential drawback of this basic attitude is the implementation of a standardized advertising campaign without consideration of country-specific characteristics. For instance, people are in their languages, sensations, tastes, values, virtues, etc. characterized by their respective culture and thus they may have divergent interpretations and completely different understandings. For example, the advertising slogan "Come in and find out" of a perfumery chain *Douglas* aims to encourage customers to come into the business because they will find the right product here. What has led to the desired success in English-speaking countries could be misleading in other countries. On the basis of investigations, one has to understand the saying here rather in the sense: "come in and try to find out again". The language culture has made the difference and counteracted the advertising (Hollensen 2004).

In order to reach and appeal to potential customers in countries with various cultural backgrounds, the product to be advertised needs to be created and executed in view of cultural influences

The increasing globalization process is forcing national activities of companies expand to the international level. This seems to be closely related to price and cost-reducing aspects as well as competitive advantages.

Why cultural adaption of products?

Standardization through cost orientation leads to savings at the international level. Although this often results in homogeneous marketing activities and price advantages due to the achievable economies of scale, the danger of standardization lies in the fact that the respective consumer needs tend to be insufficiently taken into an account (Yalcin and Cimendag, 2012).

If only the advertisement corresponds to the attitudes of the society, the advertising goals can be implemented. The same applies to the style of communication. Factors such as religion, value systems and traditions play a major role in here. Only by taking these aspects into account can the advertising be properly designed.

The photo below shows an exemplary campaign by Lufthansa on how a uniform strategy can be transferred to



another country under appropriate cultural adjustments. The aim of the campaign is to position the Lufthansa company “[...] as a quality airline with a broad range of products and services”. This positioning is aimed at transnationally, but the target markets are addressed in a differentiated way (Surugiua, 2015).

Topics of the ad are pertinent to different customer needs. The first photo (left) shows a typical image of an Asian tourist with a camera in his hand, driving straight through a (European) city. The ad says: “Discover over one hundred destinations in Europe at surprisingly low fares”. As can be inferred from this slogan, Lufthansa is promoting low prices for tours around Europe.

The second photo (right) shows a father reading a bedtime story to his daughter. The picture is accompanied by the line “Former closing time - a product of Lufthansa”.

From this it can be deduced from these visuals that advertising activities in the international environment lead to peculiarities. Thus, on the one hand, advertising in foreign cultures is perceived differently, on the other hand, different communication styles are needed (Surugiua, 2015).

1. Adapted advertising using the example of Coca Cola

Coca-Cola, one of the leading brands in standardized advertising, has reconsidered the marketing strategy and adapted it to the cultures:



“Our local marketing strategy enables us to listen to all the voices around the world. Whether you’re a student in the United States enjoying a refreshing Coca-Cola, a woman in Italy taking a tea break, a child in Peru asking for a juice drink, or a couple in Korea buying bottled water after a run together, we’re there for you.”

The brand Coca-Cola is adapted in the respective writings of various languages:

The advertisement is changed to suit each individual culture. Although it keeps almost the same structure, certain as-

pects are changed. For instance, when compared to the case of Africa, the use of celebrities can be observed more in India, where football is people’s one of the biggest passions. This allowed Coca Cola to maximize its profits. (Coca-Cola, 2011)

In Turkey, coca cola is seen as a refreshing drink. The advertisings are presented as a national drink and appeals to all people. The family is at the forefront and the same theme is repeated every year. Coca-Cola also has an advertisement in Turkey which has a traditional ceremony where all people with a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds are included. It appears to be a successful advertisement that effectively expresses fuss, waiting and enthusiasm for meal preparation with rhythm (Coca-Cola, 2011).

1. Adapted advertising using the example of Burger King

Burger King’s promotional campaigns differ from one country to the other depending on the market conditions. They are altered in a way which suits consumer attitudes, culture and many other factors in that market. For instance, a Burger King’s ad in which bikini girls were advertising a Texas bacon double whopper was banned in New Zealand and described as being “too sexy”. This fact strengthens the argument that promotions need to be adapted as per a country’s uniqueness (Rein, 2009).



In Turkey Burger King is one of the most important restaurant chains and offers various options of menus. During Ramadan, Burger King offers the Menu “Sultan campaign” throughout Turkey. Soup, traditional dates and water is offered in “iftar” in addition to the regular menus. There are also several Turkish desserts. The advertising contains an Ottoman character that the voice over is used (Antar, 2014).



2. Adapted advertising using the example of Magnum



MAGNUM

In contrast to collectivist nations, such as Turkey that like to share needs or similarities in groups, individualistic cultures prefer to keep things for themselves.

The Magnum brand, for example, has advertised an ice cream variety in Germany with the slogan “I share many things, but not everything”. Additionally, individual interests can be recognized. This ice cream brand has used its approach as illustrated in the German advertisement.



“I share many things but not everything.”
Magnum- after Dinner Langnese, Germany
(Türkyilmaz, 2006).

Content Analysis of Standardization

The standardization of products across cultures is increasingly becoming an important issue which managers of global firms are encountering nowadays. As international marketing in the 21st century receives significant scholarly attention, it seems that the cost benefits and administration of standardization strategies have simplified the international marketing approach as well as being an attractive choice for many firms.

When advertising in different countries, businesses face a strategic choice between standardization or adaptation of

their advertisements. The topic of standardization versus adaptation has received wide research attention in the field of international business communication and international advertising.

When it comes to advertising, the debate has centered on the question as to whether the same advertisement can be utilised in different countries or whether it should be adapted to each of the different countries where it is used. Cross-cultural research suggests the use of the standardization approach in countries with similar cultural characteristics and the adaptation approach in countries with highly diverse cultural characteristics (Ryans and Ratz, 1987).

Why standardization of products?



Volkswagen. Das Auto.

The use of the same advertising message for each market or small changes. Advertising professionals who advocate this approach believe that the needs and desires of consumers are the same throughout the world. In line with this view, although the methods of fulfilling the requirements are perceived in a different way, certain market segments in different nations tend to be culturally similar. For this reason, the same message can be used for the same market segments. This approach involves using common names, avoidance of advertising differences and designing culturally sensitive advertising messages. The most crucial difference between adaptation and standardization is that standardization helps to reduce the cost of the operator, while adaptation helps to meet local needs and demands almost exactly and thus it is projected to increase income (Lewitt, 1983).

1. Standardization in the case of Volkswagen

As Volkswagen is a multinational company, which operates globally, it is considered as a good choice to include it in the present case study since most people are familiar with the company and its global success.

The word “das Auto” in the slogan utilised in this commercial refers to the word “car” in German. German cars are well known for their quality and reliability. In order to emphasize that the vehicle is German made, the company decided to use the slogan “das Auto” internationally (“Ads of the World” Archive, 2012).

2. Standardization in the case of McDonald’s



When McDonald’s operations advertising on the basis of standardization are examined, it appears that it has fully implemented the standardization approach. It is possible to indicate that the universal display in advertisements puts the foreground, which, in turn, emphasizes institutional colours

and conveys advertising messages directly. In line with the standardization approach, advertising text also identifies corporate identity by choosing the colours yellow and red. McDonald's uses the word "yellow M", which they call "golden belt" in all advertising visuals and has a special font ("Ads of the World" Archive, 2013)

3. Standardization in the case of Knorr



Knorr is considered to be a good choice for this case study as it is active globally.

The company wants to be able to appeal to the taste of the customer without sacrificing quality and flavour in its products and to give the desired satisfaction as its priority. Another goal of this company is to place this subject in the mind of potential customers as high quality, low price and quite delicious products. In this sense, Knorr has set a standard position in the minds of consumers worldwide. In different national markets, Knorr ready soup products are positioned in the same place and form a standard image. This company makes use of uses the same logo in every market of the country where it enters. The logo keeps all the elements such as the location on the package, size of the letters, colour preferences. Even the picture of the soup in the dish, and its position on the package are in a certain order and remain the same. In sum, it is apparent that that Knorr is transformed into a global brand with the standard approach that it implements on the whole world scale. From a brand name standpoint, the company seems to have used Knorr as a standardized approach in every brand name with a few exceptions ("Ads of the World" Archive, 2016).

CONCLUSION

To put it in a nutshell, in today's society, the decision whether a business should pursue a strategy that is standardized across national markets or adapt to individual national markets is of high importance for every business and it is an issue debated frequently. It goes without saying that there is a myriad of relevant factors that determine the selection of appropriate international advertising strategies and tactics. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. One helps, for example, businesses to keep their practices homogenized and easier for employees to keep up with X, while the other one is a window to endless opportunities. For businesses that have tighter budgets, the standardized approach tends to be more useful as strategy development entails on time investment and the business can take it in multiple markets. While the adaptation strategy comes with a number of chal-

lenges, pulling it off successfully can exponentially increase the company's foothold in the market. By taking the advantages and risks of each separately into account, companies can better judge which one suits their unique business and market needs. Another and a very common way is that neither standardization nor adaptation is seen in isolation from each other. Instead, they should be seen as two ends of the same field, where the degree of a firm's strategy can range between them. In compliance with this perspective, the decision to adapt or standardize the advertisements could be tailored to the target situation, market and time.

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