
When cultural differences operate in a similar manner: an analysis of cultural reflection in advertisements in Britain and Iran during periods of cultural upheaval

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Extended Abstract

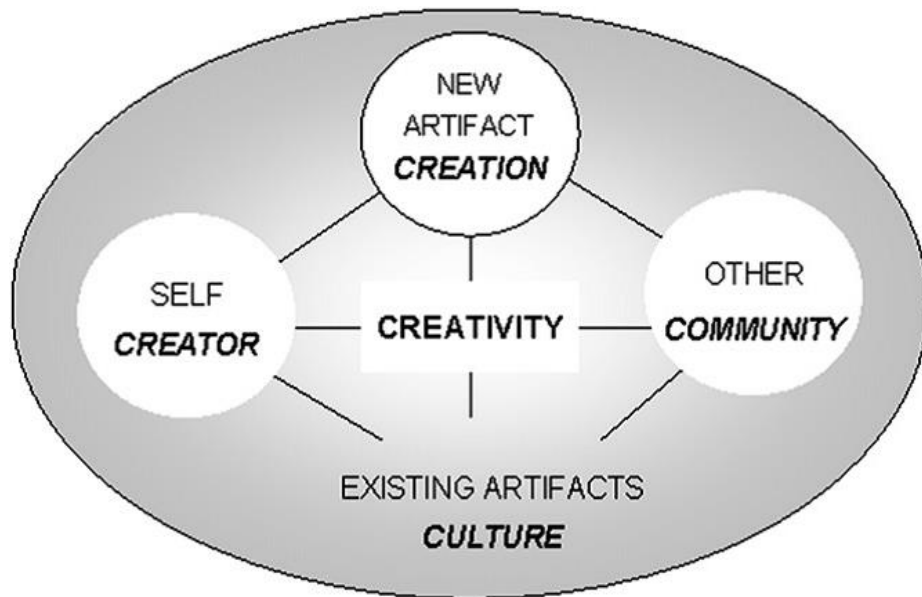
This paper aims to study the role of socio-cultural elements in shaping advertisements in Britain and Iran as both developed and developing countries. This research endeavour stems from two grounding evidences; one is the importance of cultural aspect in shaping marketing practices (see Layton 2007) while most of the extant studies are done in western contexts and the second is the importance of creativity in advertising (El-Murad and West 2004). Hence, in this research by using archival data before and after two formative events in the aforementioned countries (i.e. 1939 World War II in Britain and 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran), and adopting Glavenau (2010) framework regarding creativity as cultural participation, and Moeran's work (2011) regarding the role of socio-cultural conditions on creativity in cultural production sites like advertising, the aim is to show the manifestation of socio-cultural elements on ads and claiming that ads can shape and being shaped by the culture (i.e. ads as cultural artefacts). The findings also can provide a good standpoint to consider how advertising practitioners can use cultural elements as a source for crafting new ideas that can be introduced to the culture.

Literature Review

According to Banks et al. (2002) creativity in commercial creative industries can vary according to the nature of the internal workplace culture and the external social and economic conditions within which the firm operates. Referring to Moeran's work (2011), there are different conditions that impact upon on creative industries (i.e. the cultural production sector and its component industries in his terms), namely: the available materials, time, space, and the prevailing social, representational and economic conditions. In sum, as Moeran (ibid) stated, the process of creativity in the cultural production sector in general, including advertising, centers around choosing new and relevant combinations which is influenced by the existing conditions in the social world in which they are sited. The strength of each condition and the formulated conventions embedded within them depend on their social milieu.

This is in line with Glaveanu's work (2010), whereby creativity is seen as a complex socio-cultural-psychological process in which creators, by working with "culturally impregnated" materials (symbolic resources) and having a relationship (dialogue) between self (creator) and others (community) through intersubjectivity -a space between the creator and community- can create new artefacts that are evaluated as new and significant by members of the community (ies) at a given time (figure 1).

Figure 1: A proposed cultural framework of creativity (Glăveanu 2010, p.12)



Although creativity in general and specifically in advertising is considered to be participation in culture and be formed and form the culture, the studies are mainly conceptual and lack any empirical analysis (e.g. Glăveanu 2010). Hence, in this study by relying on two formative events in both developed and developing countries, the aim is to look at how cultural elements are used and reflected in advertisements. This can not only help advertising practitioners in understanding the way in which cultural elements can be used as a source for their idea generation but also can help historians to explore the socio-cultural conditions of a specific era by analysing the advertisements in that particular time.

Empirical approach and methods

In the following parts, a brief description of the contextual situation in Iran and Britain is presented to give an informed stand for comprehending the data and the analyses.

Subsequently, and some examples of advertisements from both countries before and after the stated formative events are illustrated and analysed.

Empirical settings

Contextual situation in Iran before and after the Islamic revolution

The 1979 Islamic Revolution and the overthrow of the Iranian monarchy: This put a stop to the rule of Shah of Iran, who by allying with the west and specially America, was trying to achieve modernization and westernization for the country. The revolution gave rule to clerics and conservatives who, under their leader Ayatollah Khomeini, came to power (Curtis and Hooglund, 2008). The conservatives became the powerful forces in politics and economics of the society, and the religious beliefs came to control of everything from businesses to people's lifestyles (Sadjadpour 2012). This is to the extent that all the institutions, including media, are under control of Islamic state (BBC, 2013). For example, for an advertisement to receive approval, depending on its form, it has to have confirmation from the appropriate governmental institution; with TV and radio commercials being approved by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting and billboards and other public press releases being certified by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance according to the Islamic rules (Tehran Bureau contributor, 2013). Thus, when creatives produce creative works, they need to rely heavily on graphic design and abstract art and less on copy to accomplish their goal of creativity. By so doing, they are employing implicit and indirect techniques to get their message across to the audience. Moreover, this may be a means to reconcile any potential conflict arising between, on the one hand, creative work and outside the box thinking, and on the other, imposed rules and routine inside the box thinking. This approach lends power to art over copy in the process.

Contextual situation in Britain before and during World War II:

The 1930s represented a period of global economic depression and European political turmoil which led Britain and her allies to pursue a policy of appeasement with respect to Nazi Germany's territorial ambitions in an attempt to avoid another war with Germany (Brendon 2000). Ultimately it became clear to the British government that appeasing Germany was not preventing their expansion, and as a result, on September 3rd 1939, Britain

(along with France) declared war on Germany, in response to Germany's invasion of Poland, beginning a war with Germany which would last until May 1945 (Roberts 2010). The initial reality of the war was very different from what had been expected. The expectation was that a future war would begin with, and be dominated by, massive, unstoppable air raids, which would cause high levels of civilian casualties (Jones et al. 2004; Roberts 2010). This onslaught did not happen, however (Mackay 1999).

After the completion of the invasion of Poland, there began what Andrew Roberts describes as a "six-month hiatus on land", a period known as the Phoney War (Mackay 1999; Roberts 2010, p. 35). According to David Clampin during the Phoney War "people were apt to disregard the war, as far as possible and persist with living as normal life, outside of the war, as possible" (Clampin 2014, p. 74).

The Phoney War was, at least in regards to military action on land, a period of inactivity, but it marked a period of profound social and economic change on the home front, as Britain's society, economy and industry adapted to the conditions of total war. The threat of air raids prompted both a blackout and an evacuation of "mothers, children and cripples from London and other major centres" even before the war was declared (Calder 1969, p.32). Quickly rationing and control of many foods, and other products such as clothing and fuel, was introduced in order to reduce imports and allow for increased military production and transport (Edgerton 2012).

Much of the impact of these measures on the home front fell more heavily on women than men, partly because of the prevalence of traditional gender roles, but also increasingly because men were joining the military, either voluntarily enlisting or being conscripted. Women were increasingly expected to fill the resulting gaps in the civilian workforce (Longmate 1971) and to undertake non-combatant roles in the military services to release

men for the frontline (Morgan and Evans 1993) the expectation was however, that their domestic responsibilities would not be sacrificed (Clampin 2014).

The phoney war ended with the German invasion of Denmark and Norway in April 1940, followed by the rapid conquest of France and the Low Countries (Roberts 2010). For just over a year following this, Britain faced the prospect of fighting the war alone, anticipating (although not necessarily fearing) German invasion (McKinstry 2015) coming under increasing air attack over the summer and winter of 1940 - 41 as the Blitz began (Calder 1969). Many civilians had joined the civil defence services (Calder 1969), but most simply endured the fear and disturbed nights of alerts and all-clears spent in often damp, unhealthy and uncomfortable shelters.

This period of isolation ended when the Germans invaded the USSR in June 1941 and then declared war on the USA in December of the same year (Roberts 2010). While the immediate prospects for victory were not bright (Roberts 2010), as David Clampin (2009, p.67) states “as the prospect of defeat began to recede, people began to lift their heads and look beyond the struggle for survival toward a post-war world”.

These three distinct phases (Phoney War, Britain standing alone and expectation of victory) can be seen as representing different attitudes to the war, The Phoney War was characterised by uncertainty and anxiety about when the fighting would begin (Zeigler 2002) along with a good deal of denial (Clampin 2014) of the realities of war. When Britain ‘stood alone’ the mood moved towards uncertainty, but this decreased over the summer of 1940, as the strength of the country’s defences increased and the Battle of Britain was won (McKinstry 2015), similarly the period of the Blitz began with fear, but moved more towards stoic endurance, which although not universal tended to match the ‘myth of the Blitz’ (Calder 1991), although care was still taken to avoid ‘nerviness’. Following the entry of the USSR and

the USA into the war, expectation of, and impatience for, victory grew along with an anticipation of a post-war reconstruction (Clampin 2009).

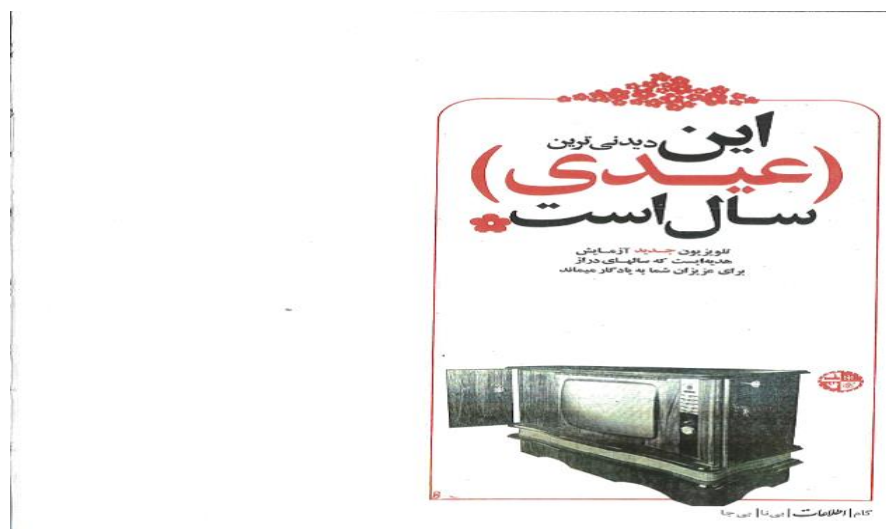
Data collection, analysis and preliminary findings:

Below some example, based on advertisements before and after Islamic revolution in Iran and advertisements before and during World War II in Britain are presented and analysed:

- *Reflection of Cultural elements in advertisements before and after the Islamic revolution in Iran:*



Picture 1: Billboard advertisement after the Islamic revolution in Iran



Picture 2: Newspaper advertisement before the Islamic revolution in Iran

As can be seen in picture one (1) there is less copy and more visuals. This can be as the result of heavy hands of government in Iran on all the institutes including media which are under control of Islamic state (BBC, 2013). For example, for an advertisement to receive approval, depending on its form, it has to have confirmation from the appropriate governmental

institute; with TV and radio commercials being approved by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting and billboards and other public press releases being certified by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance according to the Islamic rules. Therefore in order for advertising practitioner to convey their message with their audience, that might be in contrary to the rules and accepted logics of the society, they need to rely on indirect and more abstract ways. Hence, this indirectness and abstract expressions in being creative in advertising in Iran leads to the dominancy of art over the copy as the former is a more implicit way of communication (see Schapiro 1937).

Also, the main colour used in the advertisement in the first picture (see picture 1) is green which refers to green movement. Both advertisements in picture one and two are for the Persian New Year. In the first picture the slogan is “like spring, always be green” which refers to Green Movement and the notion of spring that could remind people about the Arab Spring up risings as well as the Green Movement in 2009 when the presidential re-election of Mr Ahmadinejad caused a huge demonstration by the opposition (Liberals), as they claimed the elections were rigged.

However, in the second picture the slogan is “this is the most visible gift for the new year” which directly is related to the product and does not have any twist and refers to pre revolution time in Iran when Iran was experiencing more freedom and was more a liberal country (see Curtis and Hooglund 2008).

Likewise in the below examples which are advertisements about feminine product (i.e. hair spray), we can see that in picture three which is an advertisement after the revolution the indirectness and use of mainly visuals are dominant whereas in picture four that is an advertisement after the revolution copies freely talking about the benefits of the product and related picture without any indirectness can be seen. Again this can refer to the imposition of Islamic rules in the country that ban the presence of females in advertisements and the difficulty for advertising practitioners to directly communicate their message with their

audiences and thus need to rely on abstract means of communication which mainly would be visuals rather than copies.



Picture 3: Billboard advertisement after the Islamic revolution in Iran



Picture 4: Newspaper advertisement before the Islamic revolution in Iran

Reflection of Cultural elements in advertisements before and during world war II Britain:

The 1930s turmoil did little to dent the British sense of humour, which was reflected in the advertising of the time, as can be seen in Picture 5. The use of puns and cartoons or photo strips in advertisements, were popular both before and during the war.



Picture 5: Newspaper advertisement before the start of World War II

The period of the Phoney War, in part because of the pre-war expectations discussed previously, but also because of the concerns about when military action would start, led to a certain level of fear or uncertainty, nerviness or depression as many ads of the time described it, (see Picture 6), not necessarily about whether Britain would win the war, but about "the lack of activity" (Zeigler 2002). While Picture 6 advertisements features an alcoholic beverage, hot drink brands, such as Ovaltine also positioned themselves as nerve tonics or nerve food (Clampin 2014). It is worth noting that while both these advertisements feature women, this is not the case with all advertisements of this type, which seem to feature no gender bias.

NERVES!

IN these trying times unsteady nerves take a specially heavy toll of mental and physical energy. Do not let such weakness continue. Start at once taking a wineglassful of Buckfast Tonic Wine at least twice a day. Its calming, soothing and restorative properties will feed the starved nerves, and confidence and vitality will soon return. Buckfast contains medicinal ingredients not to be found in any other tonic wine. Buy a bottle today.

Sold by Wine Merchants, Licensed Grocers and Chemists.

Large Bottle 6/6
Half Bottle 3/9

As my difficulty in obtaining supply for some of my stockists as J. Chandler & Co. (Buckfast) Ltd., 11-12, Finsbury Street, London, E.C.2.

BUCKFAST TONIC WINE

BUCKFAST TRADE MARK

MADE BY THE MONKS OF THE FAMOUS BUCKFAST ABBEY.

Picture 6: Newspaper advertisement from the Phoney War.

Increasingly, the changes during the Phoney War, were reflected in advertising, for example the role of women in industry and the military was increasingly shown, see Picture 7. Picture 7 demonstrates however, the expectation (also shown in many advertisements) that women had a duty to be beautiful, a theme also featured heavily in women's magazines during the war (Donnelly 1999) along in many cases with the expectation that any active role women were to play in the war, was very much expected to be secondary to their other responsibilities (Donnelly 1999). For example, in the advertisement for Scilma Beauty Aids (Picture F) it is considered appropriate for the man to wear his uniform for a romantic evening, while the servicewoman is required to change into an evening gown, implying that for women military service is only part-time.



**VERY BUSY
BUT VERY
LOVELY**

It is your duty these days to be beautiful, because beauty inspires happiness and cheerfulness in yourself and others. For those who are busier than usual Icilma brings a specially designed range of beauty aids, which give exciting loveliness for a minimum expenditure of time and money. Try these Icilma products to-day, and you will be surprised how quickly they bring you new glamour and radiance.

BEAUTY IN A FEW MINUTES **CLEANSING.** Icilma **CLEANSING COLD CREAM** clears every speck of dirt, leaving your skin perfectly clean and marvellously soft—so use it each night. It's just wonderful for hands that tend to become rough or chapped. Tubes 6d. Jars 6d, 1/3.

FOUNDATION. To protect your skin in all weathers use Icilma **FOUNDATION VANISHING CREAM**, and you can always be sure of a clear skin. This is the ideal foundation for your powder—and it has a most entrancing fragrance. Tubes 6d. Jars 6d, 9d, 1/3.

POWDER. Icilma **BEAUTIFYING FACE POWDER** gives that touch of perfection to your complexion. Lovely and velvety, it clings for hours, and has the same alluring fragrance as the Vanishing Cream. Boxes 6d and 1/3.

ROUGE. Icilma's **FLESH-TINTED ROUGE CREAM** will give your cheeks a natural bloom that cannot be detected; it cannot go streaky or patchy. Tubes 6d. Jars 1/-, 1/3.

5-MINUTE DRY SHAMPOO. For those occasions when it is not convenient to wash your hair use Icilma **HAIR POWDER**. Just sprinkle the powder in the hair and brush out. No washing, no drying, only brushing—and your hair is looking as pretty and well-groomed as ever. 9d a packet.



Icilma BEAUTY AIDS

**CLEANSING COLD CREAM . FOUNDATION VANISHING CREAM . SHAMPOO.
BEAUTIFYING FACE POWDER . FLESH-TINTED ROUGE CREAM . HAIR POWDER**

10 224-50 ICIILMA CO. LTD., ISLEWORTH, MIDD.

Picture 7: Newspaper advertisement from the Phoney War

Advertising in the final period was marked by increasing (and increasingly impatient) references to eventual victory along with thoughts of the post-war world (Hayes 2015). Some looked for indicators of victory, such as the Sharps Toffee ad, Picture 8, which recognised that the return of guards at Buckingham Palace wearing ceremonial uniforms rather than battle dress was as important sign of another aspect of British culture reasserting itself. Others began to explore the reconstruction of the damaged country or focused on the development

of a new society, worthy of the victory (Clampin 2014; Hayes 2015). Others, however, focused on the more domestic realities of the return of men and women in the forces. In most cases this was positive, referring to happy reunions, but others, such as the Odo-Ro-No deodorant ad below, Picture 9 served as reminders that following the war many working women would be expected to return to their domestic duties.



Picture 8: Newspaper advertisement from the final phase of the war.

THE GREAT CHANGE-OVER

One routine she'll never change!

She's keeping up one routine job from war factory days—the regular use of Odo-ro-no, the deodorant that gives absolute protection from perspiration odour, and underarm stain.

LIQUID

ODO-RO-NO

MAKES PERSONAL FRAGRANCE A HABIT



You can obtain Odo-ro-no Liquid in two strengths. REGULAR (lasts for seven days). INSTANT (three days). In medium and small sizes.



Picture 9: Newspaper advertisement from the final phase of the war.

In each of these different phases, elements of culture such as humour and traditional gender roles were consistently represented in advertising.

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