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A Sociohistorical Analysis of Packaging Design: A Case study of the Turkish Pasta

Brand Piyale

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper is concerned with understanding how social, cultural, political economic dynamics inform packaging design. Specifically, it focuses on one of the oldest Turkish pasta brands, Piyale, and seeks to understand the impact of the changes in the macro-institutional structures on its packaging practices over the course of almost a century.

Design/methodology/approach – The analysis is mainly based on data collected through archival and documentary research. The archival data is gathered from various sources including the personal archives of the former managers; advertisements published in the popular magazines of the time; and, industry reports and documents. Data is analysed using a combination of compositional and social semiotic analysis.

Findings – The analysis indicates four distinct periods in the brand's history. The design elements and visual identity reflect the social, cultural, political, economic, and technological changes shaping the Turkish society in these different time periods. The findings show that a socio-historically situated analysis of a brand's packaging design transformation reveals the complex relationship between design and culture and provides clues to the market-society interface.

Originality/value – This study provides a comprehensive historical analysis of the visual identity evolution of the oldest Turkish pasta brand Piyale and contributes to research on packaging histories in the non-Western markets.

Keywords Packaging design; Brand identity; Design history; Piyale; Turkey

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Despite the calls for more research, the symbolism of packaging remains an understudied area (e.g., Underwood, 2003; Kniazeva and Belk, 2007; Kravets, 2012; Roberts, 2014). These pioneering studies show that, similar to other forms of marketing rhetoric, packaging plays an important role in constructing and communicating both brand and consumer identities. As Kniazeva and Belk (2007) argue, packaging is a form of cultural production similar to that of art, literature and advertising. As a cultural production, packaging makes use of culturally familiar symbols and functions as “a vehicle for mythologizing the brand” (Kniazeva and Belk, 2007, p.51). Similarly, Roberts (2014) shows that the packaging of Russian chocolate and vodka brands in the post-Soviet era utilize visual and verbal symbols that reproduce and promote the myth of the Great Russian past. As he argues, these packages do not only mythologize the brand but also the country. Kravets’ (2012) study provides further evidence that changes in politics, the market and social values impact branding practices and shape packaging design. Her analysis of the changes in the Russian vodka labels and names over the past three decades shows that the branding strategies of these products reflect shifts in the socioeconomic realities and collective imaginations. Overall, these studies highlight the significance of packaging not only as a powerful tool for meaning and identity creation and delivery but also as a potent cultural and ideological product.

We seek to advance this emerging literature in two ways. First, building on the notion of packaging as a cultural production, we explore how social, cultural, political economic dynamics inform packaging design. While existing studies are concerned with understanding how brands use packaging as a symbolic vehicle to reflect the myths, aspirations and values prevalent at a particular period in time, we are interested in tracing how changes in the macro-institutional structures shape packaging practices. Design, in a broader sense, provides information about the society and time period in which they are produced (Bell and Hollows,

2006; Bengisu and Bengisu, 2013; Heller and Chwast, 1988; Isenstadt, 1998; Schroeder, 2005). As Sparke (2013) argues, design does not only perform an “illustrative” function; it plays a formative role in society and culture. Packaging and other brand-related designs draw upon the visual and textual codes of the past and present and situate a product within a particular socio-temporal context. Linking the social, political, economic and cultural dynamics to the changes in packaging can provide further insights into the interplay between marketing and society.

Second, we are interested in understanding what we can learn about brands through a sociohistorical analysis of the packaging design and changes therein. Packaging, as Roberts (2014) notes, is a hybrid phenomenon, entailing both immaterial and material. As much as packaging operates in and through the symbolic (immaterial) realm, it is part of material culture. We use the notion of material culture to refer to “any material object ... or network of material objects ... that people perceive, touch, use, handle, carry out social activities within, use or contemplate” (Woodward 2007, p.14). Central to the studies of material culture is the view that objects materialize (or objectify) social relationships (Miller 1987; 2005). Packaging as a material object provides ‘mute evidence’ (Hodder 1994) that is rich with information about the historical trajectories of objects and the relationships they are embedded in. By mapping out and analyzing the changes in the packaging design of a brand over its life, we aim to develop an understanding of the changes in its identity and position within the changing marketplace relationships. Such sociomaterial perspectives can be especially useful in contexts where archival records or access to managerial information is limited or not available at all.

We pursue these goals through a study of the packaging design of one of the oldest Turkish pasta brands, Piyale. By focusing on key design elements – logotype and package – we trace the changes in the brand symbolism vis-a-vie the structural transformations that

have shaped the Turkish pasta market, economy, and society in the last hundred years. Our study offers three contributions to the marketing literature. First, we provide further insights into understanding how social, cultural, political economic dynamics inform packaging design. Second, we add to research on marketing histories of non-Western contexts by offering a socio-historical analysis of packaging design of a Turkish brand. Third, we contribute to historical studies of packaging by offering a methodological approach that combines different analytical tools. In the following pages, we first briefly review research on the relationship between packaging design, brand identity and culture. We then explain our methodological procedure. Next, we present our findings. We conclude by discussing the implications of our study.

Packaging Design and Brand Identity

A key aspect of the branding process is creating and managing an identity that symbolizes relevant and appealing meanings to the prospective buyer (Levy, 2012). A brand's identity refers to the unique set of associations that a company aspires to create in the minds of consumers (Alsem and Kosteljik, 2008). Branding reflects the reality of the core product, its features, functions and benefits, as well as the surrounding aura of its aesthetic, its music, its texture, its visualization, and its fantasy-like existence in the culture as it relates to societal and customer mythology. In the contemporary competitive environment, marketers know that managing identity at all consumer touch points—from packaging to merchandising, advertising, and interactive media—is imperative for a brand's long-term survival (Kathman, 2002). When consumers watch commercials, browse goods in a store or on a website, and use a product, they are exposed to numerous brand-related stimuli such as logos, colours, shapes, typefaces, characters, and symbols. These design elements come to be associated with the brand and contribute to its identity.

Package design plays a key role in the construction and communication of the identity of a brand (Bruce and Daly, 2007; Underwood, 2003). While the original function of packaging was to protect the product and enable its storage, shipment, and transfer to the consumer, today, package design is a creative asset in its own right (Bruce and Daly, 2007; Perks and Cooper, 2005; Simms and Trott, 2010). In broad terms package design is a combination of two distinct parts, structural and graphic (Hine, 1995). Structural elements include form, size, and materials; graphic elements include colour, typography, shapes, and images. Working in tandem, these components constitute the face of the product and contribute to the development of a distinct brand identity and help differentiate the product from the competition (Ambrose and Harris, 2011; Underwood, 2003).

Studies show that packaging has a strong impact on product meanings and brand impressions (Orth and Malkewitz, 2008; Schmitt and Simonson, 1995). For example, in the food category, package design not only shapes product quality perceptions, but it may also change consumers' taste and flavor expectations (Becker, van Rompay, Shifferstein, and Galetzka, 2011; Velasco, Salgado-Montejo, Marmolejo-Ramos and Spence, 2014; Westerman et al., 2013). The visual characteristics of a package can elicit desired emotions, speed up recognition, and influence the decision-making process. The judgments consumers make based on packaging design can affect purchase intention and lead to formation and/or enhancement of favorable attitudes toward a brand (Pantin-Sohier, 2009; Westerman et al., 2013).

Overall, in a world in which "vision has become a primary mode through which individuals connect to their environment" (de Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2010, p. 174; Schroeder 2002) packaging helps convey brand symbolism and contribute to consumers' understanding of the brand's meaning. In the cluttered marketplace, consumers tend to look for 'cultural signifiers' that are designed to make them feel they have made the right choice

(Berger, 2009). Packaging, both as a marketing tool and a form of symbolic production, works through various cultural referents to develop a visual narrative that effectively communicates brand identity. At times when brand identity is at risk or in need of renewal, managers often resort to changes in packaging and utilize design elements to convey the new, updated brand meanings.

Packaging Design and Culture

As a cultural phenomenon, packaging design remains an understudied area (Hine 1995; Simonson and Schmitt 1997; Escalas 1998; Kniazeva and Belk, 2007; Kravets, 2012; Roberts, 2014). That is, while it is recognized that packaging is instrumental for brand meaning and identity creation and delivery (Underwood, 2003), the potential of packaging as a cultural product is less understood. Packaging design, similar to painting, sculpture, furniture and clothing, operates as a symbolic and material artefact indicative of the society in which it is produced (Heller and Chwast, 1988, p. 9). Thus, analyzing packaging through history can provide clues about the sociocultural, economic and political dynamics that influence a brand and its design approaches at a particular period of time.

In his discussion of brand culture, Schroeder argues that “[i]f brands exist as cultural, ideological, and sociological objects, then understanding brands requires tools developed to understand culture, ideology, and society, in conjunction with more typical branding concepts, such as brand equity, strategy, and value” (2009, p. 124). Brand meaning creation and negotiation are influenced by the cultural and aesthetic conventions of the period. Hence, “[g]reater awareness of the associations between the traditions and conventions of culture and the production and consumption of brands helps to position and understand branding as a global representational system” (Schroeder 2009, p. 125). Following Schroeder, we argue that heightened attention to the relationship between packaging design and culture can

generate more insights into how packaging, as a cultural product itself, is embedded within the aesthetic, economic, political histories of the contexts it comes into existence.

Recently, there has been some research interest in understanding the cultural aspects of packaging. For example, treating labels as ‘narrative literary texts’ Kniazeva and Belk (2007) show that food packaging labels carry a mythic content that help convey brand related stories to consumers. Drawing from research on marketplace mythology, the authors argue that packaging, similar to advertising, operates as a vehicle of meanings transfer (McCracken 1988) and contributes to mythologizing a brand. As cultural constructions, packaging stories “make use of culturally familiar symbols and carry along mythic meanings reflective of cultural values” (Kniazeva and Belk, 2007, p.62). These myth-infused packaging narratives help construct brand stories that reflect societal dreams, hopes and wishes.

Roberts (2014) study of vodka and chocolate packaging in postsocialist Russia reveals that many brands incorporate images associated with Russian national identity into their packaging design. The cultural symbols used in packaging aim to reproduce and promote the myth of the Great Russian past and appeal to consumers’ feelings of nostalgia and collective sense of self. Finally, in her comprehensive analysis of the changes in vodka labels and names in Russia over the past three decades, Kravets shows that branding and packaging practices are embedded in the sociopolitical history and foster “the circulation and specific renditions of select sociocultural and political ideas and views” (2012, p.361). When analyzed from a sociohistorical perspective, the changes in marketing output (i.e., brand name, packaging, advertising) reflect political and ideological changes in a society. As such, “the political economy and historical dynamics of a market system, and the societal standing of the commodity being branded, define and frame the potentialities of marketing meanings and their ideological inflections” (ibid.).

Overall, this emerging stream of research highlights that in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of how packaging operates both as a marketing tool and an object of material culture one needs to situate the analysis within the socio-historical context in which particular packaging and branding practices become possible, desirable and meaningful. Such an analysis necessitates methodological approaches that allow for mapping out changes in packaging vis-a-vie the changes in the broader societal context. Next, we discuss the methodological procedures we adopted to achieve this goal and explain our data collection and analysis processes.

Methodology

In order to understand the relationship between culture, packaging design and brand identity, we focus on the oldest Turkish pasta brand Piyale and trace the changes in its design over its almost a century long history. Established in 1922, Piyale is the first company to industrially produce pasta in Turkey (Ogut, 2013). The company introduced many pasta varieties to the Turkish consumers and ruled the market for a long period. However, since the 1990s, Piyale faced increasing difficulties in keeping up with the competition and, gradually, lost its prominence. After a series of changes in its ownership, the brand today is reduced to a minor player in the field, sold mainly through discount supermarkets. The history of the brand entails several instances of minor and major packaging design transformations, making it a suitable empirical context for the purposes of this study.

Given our interest in packaging, we started data collection by consulting the current owner of the brand, Yildiz Holding. Unfortunately, our inquiry indicated that no brand archive exists. Packaging, advertising and other marketing material that have accumulated over years have been lost and dislocated as a result of the changes in the ownership structure and the subsequent physical relocation of the company. We then contacted previous owners

of the brand and tried to get copies of packaging and logotypes of different periods. These attempts resulted in accessing to some material but not a full set of packaging designs since 1922. The lack of examples of packages of earlier time periods was a major problem.

Accordingly, we resorted to the print media. The first author conducted archival research in the National Library in Ankara and examined the prominent newspapers and magazines of the period between 1920s and 1970s to locate Piyale advertisements. Packaging visuals available in advertisements helped trace different packaging designs and changes. In addition, we communicated with five current/ex-brand and marketing managers of Piyale and sought to gather some company insights on packaging decisions. However, given the lack of continuity in the ownership, archival brand data and high managerial turnover rates, our inquiries provided limited insights. Finally, we have also examined various industry reports and news stories as well as popular and scholarly texts on socioeconomic transformation of Turkey in the 20th and 21st centuries.

We analyze data using compositional and social semiotic analyses methods. We first analyze the visual data by utilizing the classic art historical and graphic design techniques of formal compositional analysis (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004; Leeuwen, 2005). We then continue with the semiotic analysis. As Van Leeuwen and Jewitt state (2004), social semiotic visual analysis provides a detailed and explicit method for analyzing the meanings established by the syntactic relations between people, places and things depicted in images in their social context. These meanings are described as not only representational, but also interactional (images do things to or for the viewer), concerned with the modality or perceived truth value of images, and compositional (for example, placement of images and written text in certain ways). Use of social semiotics fits well to our study: the logotypes and packaging designs of Piyale pasta – the artifacts the brand has been using to communicate – are the semiotic resources for making (multi-layered) meanings. Brand communication takes place in

particular socio-historical contexts and these contexts inform how specific semiotic resources can be used. We evaluate the data which embodies the articulation of various social, political, economic and cultural meanings of its time.

Our analysis begins with the formal compositional analysis to understand the visual language of the logotypes and packaging designs. This is the evaluation of the elements of design - form/shape, layout structure, color, image (illustration, photography), and typography – as well as a discussion of the visual's overall style. We demonstrate that each of these constitutes aesthetic as well as ideological and/or strategic choices. To map out meaning potentials, we continue with social semiotic reading of the packaging designs. We present our findings in a chronological timeline. We discuss four-time periods which coincide with major social/political/economical transformations in Turkey's history as well as changes in Piyale's packaging approaches.

Findings

1920s-1940s: Brand Building during the Early Republican Era

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 marked a fundamental shift in Turkish history. Turkish modernization project, which began in the 19th century, intensified during the early period of the Republic (Dagtas, 2014).

Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, an extensive reform program was initiated.

In a short period of time, everything from the clothing style to the alphabet, from the civil code to the units of measurement had changed (Balfour, 1964). These changes aimed to create a modern, industrial, secular, and democratic nation-state out of the debris of a fallen empire. During the 1920s to 1930s, Turkey followed state capitalism (Hale, 1981). The semi-controlled mixed economy consisted of a publicly and privately owned industrial sector and

mostly privately owned small agricultural businesses. Local companies were protected from foreign competition through high import tariffs and investment restrictions.

Pasta manufacturing is one of the very first food industry sectors that developed in Turkey (Tosun, 2001). Before the Republican period, pasta consumption was in the form of homemade *erişte* (vermicelli) (Development of Pasta Sector in Turkey, n.d.). The first company to industrially produce pasta was *Türk Makarna Fabrikası* (Turkish Pasta Factory) which was established in 1922 in the city of Izmir by a young entrepreneur named Hasan Tahsin (Ogut, 2013). Initially, pasta was manufactured with hand presses. A few years later, molds were imported from Italy and production lines were extended to include new varieties such as spaghetti, bow tie, and snail pasta (Altun, 2010). After the acceptance of the Surname Law in 1934 in Turkey, the founder and producer Hasan Tahsin adopted his grandfather's name, PiYALE, as his family name. Eventually, in 1936, PiYALE became the brand name of Turkey's first industrially-produced pasta (Ogut, 2013). As in the case of European and American brands (e.g., Kraft, Vlasic), naming pasta after its producer reflected pride and trust in the value and identity of the product (Levy, 2012).

1930s were years of economy and thrift in the young Republic of Turkey. A new form of everyday life amid technological, financial and material scarcities were to be established. The logotype of the 1930s and 1940s (see Figure 1) with its limited colour palette and simple design resonates with the spirit of the time. It features an illustration of a Western-style male cook holding a steaming bowl of pasta and the full name of the brand's founder Tahsin Piyale. In a country where the alphabet had recently changed from Arabic to Latin (1928) and a high portion of the population was still illiterate, the use of a male cook figure appears to be a strategic choice. It helps visually explain the product and its uses to consumers and symbolizes expertise and authority. The logotype includes the establishment date, reminding

consumers of Piyale's privileged status as the first industrially produced pasta brand in Turkey.

--- insert Figure 1 about here ---

A key resource for compositional meaning is 'information value' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996); that is, value realized by the placement of the elements in a composition. The centrally-placed cook figure in the logotype holds all other elements together and, through its eye-catching position, asserts its salience. The typographic style - the geometrical and solid, all capital letter format of the typeface 'TAHSIN PIYALE' - further reinforces the importance of the brand. The connotation of authority is further reinforced by the strong vertical symmetry of the composition and the use of a classic, oval-shaped armour and a traditional ribbon banner figure. The armour and banner also act as frames - resources that connect or disconnect the elements of a composition (Jewitt and Oyama, 2004). Framing helps separate two textual information (brand name and establishment date) from each other and provides the reader with a visual clarity and hierarchy. The frames also overlap; this helps unite the composition and contribute to the wholeness of the logotype. In the illustration, the cook does not look at the viewer but to the plate of steaming pasta in his hands. By looking at the plate of pasta, the cook figure directs the viewer's gaze downward, to the product itself. The logotype has a narrative representation where the 'doer' of the action is the male cook. The use of frontal angle further reinforces hegemonic norms of masculinity and accentuates the salience of the cook figure, and in extension, the brand, as a source of power and authority.

Overall, Piyale's logotype in the 1930s and 1940s draws from cultural stereotypes as well as categorical conventions. The design choices apparent in the logotype (i.e., vertical symmetry, red-blue colour palette, armour and ribbon banner shapes) suggest that Western art and design conventions have been dominant. These conventions exert their power as both a

mode of representation and a way of seeing the world (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2002). With its static, symmetrically balanced design, the logotype style of Piyale connotes calmness and tranquillity and emphasizes tradition and authenticity in a period characterized by rupture with the past.

1950s-1970s: Americanization and the Changing Competitive Landscape

The state capitalism model of development of 1930s and 1940s managed to create an industrial base for basic consumption goods; yet, it soon proved to be limited both economically and politically (Onis, 2010). The grievances intensified in the aftermath of the WWII, leading to pressure for greater political representation and change in economic policies. The first multi-party elections held in 1950 put an end to the militarized single-party regime (Dagtas, 2014). The Democratic Party, comprising of wealthy agriculturists and businessmen who were more committed to the demands of private businesses and sympathetic to the American model of economic and social progress, took control of the government (Onis, 2010; Tachau and Heper, 1983).

In the context of the ‘Cold war’ between the Soviet Union and the US, and as part of the American policy of controlling the spread of communism, USA had been systematically promoting the “superiority and attractiveness of American life style” and cultivating positive relations with the countries geographically closer to the ‘Eastern Bloc,’ including Turkey (Dagtas, 2014). Compared to the war-stricken Europe, the USA constituted a more attractive model for Turkey’s ongoing project of modernization and Westernization (Karademir, 2012). The American soft power strategy met with some success with the Democratic Party, which promised its electorate to create a ‘small America in every neighborhood of Turkey’ (Dagtas, 2014).

With the changes in domestic politics and international relations, the development policy in the 1950s aimed at reversing the statist and protectionist approach of the earlier period (Onis, 2010). Beginning in the 1960s, the import-substitution model of development, which favored the domestic market, became the route for economic progress (Gulalp, 1985). Businesses were transformed from agrarian and commercial enterprises (early 1950s) to domestic market oriented industrial organizations (the 1960s and 1970s). With the lessening of emphasis on state economic enterprises, Turkey witnessed the rapid rise of the capitalist class power (Jacoby, 2003).

The evolution of the Turkish pasta industry resonated with the macro-economic transformation of the country. Until the 1950s, despite a few new local entrants, such as *Kartal* and *Nuhun Ankara Makarnası*, competition remained limited and much of the output was in the form of small-batch production. In the 1960s, the number of companies manufacturing and selling pasta began to increase. By the 1970s, high-capacity plants using the latest technology equipment became commonplace (Sektorun Gelistimi, n.d.). Furthermore, several new firms, including *Oba Makarna* (1966), *Filiz Gıda* (1974), and *Beslen Makarna* (1978) entered the market. Existing players were also active; they adopted new technologies, increased their production capacities, and engaged more with branding and marketing.

During this period, Piyale was at the forefront of competition. In 1955, production moved to a new and technologically advanced plant in Bayraklı, İzmir, and the parent company name was changed to *Maktaş Makarnacılık ve Ticaret Anonim Şirketi* (Maktaş Pasta and Commerce Limited). The company continued to expand its product range and introduced new varieties of pasta. In 1958, the famous slogan of the brand: “Piyale Adı, Ağız Tadı” (Piyale Name, a Taste in Your Mouth) was born. The slogan became an instant hit and turned out to be one of the most memorable slogans in Turkish advertising history (Turkoglu,

1995). Working with Faal Ajans, a leading agency of the time and renowned graphic artists such as İhap Hulisi, the company heavily utilized advertising (Ogut, 2013). Piyale advertisements appeared frequently in popular newspapers and weeklies of the time, reinforcing the strong position of the brand and reminding consumers of the well-known and unsurpassed quality of Piyale pasta. As historical studies indicate, the evolution of branding had been largely related to the development of advertising and media at the twentieth century (Moore and Reid, 2008). Similarly, in Turkey, the growth of national newspapers, magazines and radio, as well as the establishment of advertising agencies in the mid-twentieth century contributed to the reinforcement and propagation of Piyale's brand identity.

In the 1950s - 1960s, the representational structure of the logotypes (Figure 2) shows the change in the brand name, from 'TAHSİN PİYALE' to 'PİYALE'. The cook illustration continues narratively, but now, is transformed into a humorous and cartoon-like drawing style, in sharp contrast to the authoritarian realism of the earlier period. Right beneath the brand name the word '*Makarnası*' (Pasta) appears as a qualifier to describe the contents of the packaging. The background becomes an organic seal-like figure and the visual emphasis lies on the name Piyale. The new typeface style also follows cartoonish playfulness of the image and simplicity in comparison to the strong geometry and rigidity of the 1930s and 1940s typeface. The name Piyale is written in black, which appears as a rather unusual colour choice for the product category.

--- insert Figure 2 about here ---

In the 1950s-1960s logotype in Figure 2, the cook now directly looks at the consumer (viewer) and his hand points to the brand name (PiYALE MAKARNASI); the viewer is guided by the vectors formed by both the cook's direct gaze and his hand gesture. The red-coloured organic seal-like figure at the background connotes history and authenticity. The central figure continues to be the cook, whose salience is strengthened through the use of the

seal. Overall, compositional layout is asymmetric with the diagonal placement of the brand name and qualifier, Piyale Makarnasi. In line with category conventions, the dominant colour continues to be red, an appetite-appealing and attractive colour for food products. On the other hand, stylistically there is a move from rigidity towards playfulness. There is an air of relaxation and humour in the illustration and typeface style reminiscent of the prevalent discourses of the times: Americanization and liberalization currents and the beginnings of a more hedonistic and exploratory consumption culture in Turkey.

In the 1970s, the logotype gets a makeover and becomes dominantly typographic (Figures 2 and 3). Thus, the visual syntactic pattern in the logo becomes conceptual and abstract, it has no direct connotations with pasta. The typeface of 'Piyale' remains the same, and keeps its cartoonish style and feel; yet, its colour changes to blue with a white outline. The brand name is framed by a red rectangle which has a white outline. The central placement of the brand name signifies importance, and this is further enriched by rectangular framing.

--- insert Figure 3 about here ---

Compositionally, the packaging design in 1950s and 1960s (Figure 3) is plain and functional, uses symmetrical layout with either cylindrical (1950s) or rectangular prism (1960s) form. The logotype continues to be the most salient part of the composition of package-front; the manufacturer name, Maktas, and the date of establishment, and the type of pasta are also emphasized. The dominant colour in packages is blue, and the contrasting white and red background of the logotype is highly visible on package-front. The multimodal cohesion via composition is well-established with simplicity and functionality in overall packaging design. The surface of packaging uses empty space; linear lines and rectilinear structure connote both the form of the product (i.e., spaghetti) and the industrialization currents of the era. In the packaging design of 1950s and '60s, logotype is placed centrally on

the front face; it establishes the salience of logotype via colour contrast against the plain background of the packages.

In packaging design of 1970s (see Figure 3), the qualifier word '*Makarnası*' becomes much smaller, suggesting that consumer knowledge of the product category had increased and the name Piyale alone is enough to connote pasta. While the establishment date is now of secondary salience, it still indicates the brand's continuing celebration of its heritage. The earlier emphasis on the manufacturer name ('Maktaş Makarnacılık ve Ticaret T.A.Ş. '), along with the male cook figure, disappears. Thus, the visual syntactic pattern in packaging also becomes conceptual. All these design elements, the brand name, the qualifier word and the establishment date, are presented as a group within a double-line drawn, white and red, hexagon framing signifying the continuing importance given to brand-history and roots.

In line with the logotype's style, the packaging design utilizes a functional, simple and symmetrical layout structure without illustrative images. The dominant packaging colour is red with accompanying simple geometric shapes: rectilinear white hexagons juxtaposed next to each other complete the top and bottom red rectangular borders of the packages. This aesthetic taste and style is highly reflective of the sharp, linear designs of 1970s and 1980s. 1970s packaging design introduces a large window through which the consumer can see the product, pasta; and by means of the yellow colour of pasta, the package naturally gains an additional colour: yellow – which provides a good contrast with the blue-and-red dominant logotype. All these serve for readability. Overall, in line with the industrial spirit of the era, the design style reflects and connotes a modernist attitude with avoidance of decoration, emphasis on functionality and geometry, and economical use of design elements.

1980s-1990s: Liberalization and the Encounter with Global Brands

The nature of the Turkish economy changed drastically in the 1980s and 1990s. The social, political and economic turmoil of the late 1970s led to the military coup of 1980. In 1983, elections were held again and the military yielded power back to the parliament. The late Turgut Ozal, whose Motherland Party gained a sweeping victory at the elections, became the prime minister. Ozal was an avid believer in liberalization and globalization, and sought to develop the export potential of the country and open Turkey up to global competition (Onis, 2003). The Ozal era was characterized by dismantling of the import-substitution model in favour of an export-oriented liberal system (Karadag, 2010). Liberalization policies fostered a positive approach to foreign capital and led to the expansion of the service and consumer goods industries. By the mid-1990s, Turkish consumers found themselves bombarded with foreign brand name products that they had not heard of before or could only have purchased previously from the black market. Shopping malls, hypermarkets, five-star hotels, foreign cuisine and fast food restaurants became the new landmarks of Istanbul and other big, cosmopolitan cities in Turkey. By the 1990s, several global food retailers (e.g., German Metro, French Carrefour, Promodes and Prisunic, Belgian GIB; and Dutch Spar) were operating in the market (Tokatli and Boyaci, 1997).

Economic liberalization of the post-1980s had two effects on the pasta industry. First, export-oriented production became the norm. As the new economic order promoted industrial exports, the government provided many incentives to companies that would sell domestically manufactured products in foreign countries (Balkan, Balkan and Oncu, 2015). Pasta producers also participated in this drive and increased their production capacities to serve export markets. Second, competition became international. In particular, Italian pasta companies became interested in the Turkish market. Given the strong country of origin association between Italy and pasta, some Turkish companies sought partnerships with Italian brands. For example, in 1994, Filiz Makarna formed a joint venture with Barilla, the world's

leading pasta maker (Barillagida.com, n.d.). Later, in 2004, Barilla purchased all the shares of Filiz. As an alternative strategy, some Turkish pasta companies adopted Italian sounding brand names, such as *Pastavilla* or *Arbella*, and tried to create an aura of Italianness for their brands.

With major changes shaping the industry in the 1980s and 1990s, we observe that Piyale's approach to packaging also changed to a certain extent. The syntactic relations of the design elements in the form of representation suggests that in the 1990s, the logotype (Figure 4) becomes purely typographic. The cartoon-like typeface is also changed into a more geometrical form, in favour of more economy. A more mechanical, compact, and structured feel dominates the overall look. In terms of colour, the Piyale typeface now is dominantly red, with a white and red double outline. This exemplifies pure abstract modality and conceptual syntactic pattern for a pasta brand.

--- insert Figure 4 about here ---

A simple and symmetrical layout structure continues to characterize the packaging of 1990s (Figure 5). The multimodal cohesion is established by the geometric feel and dominant use of blue in the symmetry-based compositional structure of packaging design. In terms of representational structure, the packages in the 1990s (re)incorporate the use of a figurative, golden-colour wheat illustration with a high naturalistic modality. This decision suggests an intention to convey the aura of natural and high-quality ingredients and symbolize the long tradition of wheat growing in Turkey. The type of pasta is written in handwriting style and given an unusually high visual emphasis/salience via its central placement along the vertical axis on the package-front. The more abstract visual style of the logotype reflects the mood and lifestyle of a liberalizing, economically and industrially progressing Turkey. It also signifies a more visually literate consumer profile. The overall look, feel and structure of the logo and packaging design are relatively consistent via the continual use of same dominant

colours, red and blue, and a symmetrical, functional and rectilinear layout design in packaging.

--- insert Figure 5 about here ---

Overall, during the 1980s and 1990s, despite some modifications in its visual identity, Piyale seems to have adopted a rather defensive strategy and continued with its conventional packaging design approach. As Turkish economy went through a major restructuring process, the marketplace performance of the brand deteriorated. By the early 1990s Piyale lost its market leadership position to Nuhun Ankara Makarnası (Makarna Sektor Profil Arastirmasi, 2013). In the mid-1990s, Filiz toppled Piyale and took over the second place. Piyale's position continued to erode in the coming years.

2000s – Present: Neoliberal Restructuring and the Metamorphosis of a National Icon

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, despite the increase in exports and gross domestic production, Turkey suffered macroeconomic instability. In particular, the crisis of 2001 had a severe impact on the economy. According to many, the 2001 financial meltdown represents a rupture in Turkish history and carries significant socio-political ramifications (Onis, 2003). Following an overnight 40% devaluation of the Turkish Lira, a massive increase in unemployment, a drastic shrinkage of the banking sector, and widespread bankruptcies of particularly small firms, sent shock waves through the system. The incumbent coalition government became the target of blame. In the 2002 election, it was replaced by a new political party—the Justice and Development Party (the AKP). The AKP, with Islamic roots, claimed the center place in Turkish politics, keeping its majority in the parliament. The AKP governance is characterized by a combination of neoliberal policies and Islamic ethics. Under the new government, a new conservative bourgeoisie, globally-oriented yet religiously driven, emerged (Balkan et al., 2015).

The 2001 economic crisis severely hit the already stressed Piyale. By then, its market share had eroded to 13% and the brand was struggling to maintain its third place against Pastavilla (Makarna Sektor Profil Arastirmasi, 2013). The company was in debt and had difficulty in securing credit from the banks. According to the analysts, years of marketing mismanagement and failure to assess the changing marketplace dynamics had finally taken its toll on the brand (Karasu, 2002). At the dawn of the new millennium, Piyale, which once prided itself for introducing Turkish consumers to pasta, faced a bleak future. In 2002, unable to cope with severe financial and marketing problems, Maktaş sold Piyale to GıdaSA, a company of Sabancı Group, one of the biggest and oldest holdings in Turkey. Aiming to become a key player in the food industry, GıdaSA undertook an ambitious marketing program, including a massive redesign of the packaging to revitalize the worn-out brand (Makarnada Anadolunun Gucu, 2003).

After the acquisition, GıdaSA set out to create an innovative and up-to-date visual imagery for Piyale that would convey the brand's new identity as a member of the superior Sabancı Group and reclaim its leading position in the competitive marketplace; and the science-and-progress oriented general manager of GıdaSA in 2003, Baydu Veznedaroglu, commissioned Landor Associates, a prominent brand consultancy agency (Veznedaroglu, 2011). Landor Associates devised a renewal program that was based on the idea of a major change in the character of the brand. The new design approach put a sharp end to the prevailing traditional feel, and sought to convey a young, dynamic, contemporary and surprising personality for Piyale. In line with the new positioning of the brand, the long-accustomed slogan changed. The new slogan, "Hayatın şaşırtan tatları" (Surprising tastes of life), highlighted the 'surprise' element and invited consumers to try the new Piyale pasta.

Overall, a Modernist design attitude and the use of contemporary branding and marketing techniques characterize the 2003 transformation of the brand (Figures 6 and 7).

The multimodal cohesion in terms of compositional structure and strategy of the brand shows a progress from the formal, rigid, economical and symmetrical to the informal, flexible, asymmetrical, extravagant, colourful and dynamic feel. The change aligns well with the light, attractive and dynamic consumption and popular culture of the times. An immediately visible element in the new packaging is the bold and unconventional logotype style. The new logotype design follows current design trends with its bespoke and plain typeface design with a friendly appearance. Accompanied by an asymmetrical and organic background shape, the brand returns to the use of illustration with abstraction; therefore, representational meaning continues somewhat in the figurative line with lowered naturalistic modality. The logotype now includes a stylized-asymmetric-dynamic flower illustration, which has no direct connection with pasta, but symbolizes the notion of ‘surprise’ claimed by the new brand identity. Thus, the new symbol of the brand becomes a flower instead of the former male cook figure. The informal style of the flower illustration is reminiscent of the former cartoon-like feel of the 1950s-1980s logotypes.

--- insert Figure 6 about here ---

The most salient element of the composition continues to be the brand’s name, and it is now framed with an abstract, organic and asymmetrical shape. This dynamic framing shape realizes a sensory or aesthetic modality focusing on the emotion of the consumer rather than the scientific realism of the mechanistically produced rectangular framing of the former 1970s-1980s and 1990s logotypes. What is reminiscent of the past history of the brand is the main colours of the logotype. In the 2003 renewal, although the style and feel are completely different, we still observe the continual use of the brand’s corporate colours, red and blue.

The brand’s 2003 renewal is perhaps best reflected in its package design (Figure 7). The bold and unconventionally dark-colour (almost black looking dark blue) packages with the irregularly large-size and central logotype placement (i.e., occupying center place, almost

one third of the package-front) aim for strong shelf-impact. The male cook figure is reinstated but now in a stylized manner – with very low naturalistic modality – and, with no visual emphasis: the dark blue colour of the packaging continues in the cook’s silhouette and blends with the background shape. The overall design is professional, inviting and connotes a high-quality product.

--- insert Figure 7 about here ---

The solid visual emphasis on the parent company logo, SA of Sabancı Group, on the package-front is also remarkable. Such a design decision signifies and reinforces the promise of quality and offers a seal of approval to the prospective buyer by referencing Sabancı Group as the reliable and familiar (new) owner of the brand. The new packaging design seeks to create a strong point of purchase impact and gain competitive advantage on the shelf. The new look clearly differentiates Piyale from its past and asserts that the brand is no longer outdated, traditional and dull.

Lastly, the 2003-brand identity renewal of Piyale deserves special attention in terms of its adoption of holistic design attitude and Gestalt. Piyale is one of the first food brands in Turkey which established both conceptual and compositional structural unity among all of its product lines via packaging design. The unified design strategy, in other words, the multimodal cohesion of the compositional structure of Piyale encompassed all mediums of its visual identity and aimed at increasing brand recognition through the packages of its different product ranges. The dark blue background of the 2003-packaging design has a strong wavy shape, which easily unites and rhymes with the organic shape of the logo. The strikingly dark background of the package and huge logo placement together form a strong focal point, unifying the product line at first sight. This indeed serves as a powerful advantage for the brand’s immediate recognition by the consumer. Overall, the unified packaging design seeks to immediately capture consumers’ attention and differentiate the brand from its competitors.

From a broader socio-cultural perspective, Piyale's adoption of a scientific/strategic approach to design resonates with the dominant discourses of the era: growing transnationalization of Turkish big business in the post-2001 period (Onis, 2010), and the desire to build world-class Turkish brands using modern branding and marketing techniques.

However, despite the high expectations, the renewed brand identity failed to increase consumer awareness and interest for Piyale. As stated by the former product manager of Piyale, Mr. Tolga Kaya, market research results indicated that consumers perceived the new logo, packaging, and the overall visual style unfavorably, as 'cold' and 'distant' (Kaya, 2016). Eager to rekindle the interest in Piyale especially among the younger consumers, GıdaSa decided to change the visual identity of the brand one more time. The company continued to work with Landor Associates and commissioned the agency to revise the logo and the packaging. In 2007, the renewed packages of Piyale hit the shelves, once again (Figures 6 and 7).

Importantly, the 2007 transformation represented a shift from the innovative and modernist attitude of 2003-renewal to an imitative and conventional one. In 2007, logotype became more conventional with a preference for symmetry and lighter colour in composition. The irregular, asymmetric and organic background shape of the 2003-logo was converted into a regular and symmetrical ellipse shape. Moreover, the unconventionally dark background colour of the logotype was changed into a lighter blue. The flower illustration and the typeface remained the same.

Within the overall logotype evolution of Piyale Pasta, we realize that the brand has a continual use of framing to emphasize either its cook illustration and/or name (except 1990s). The shape of framing starts with the oval armour shape (1930s-40s), then it becomes a seal-like figure (1950s-60s) to emphasize its iconic cook figure. As such, the first 50 years of the brand's history is more traditional with strong references to Western historical symbols of

power and dignity. Armour and seal-like shaped frames in the logo reminds us that “[l]ogos are twentieth century heraldry, serving as battle standards in the fight for profit”

(Neuenschwander, 1993, p.80).

The logotypes in the 1970s and 1980s use a rectangular frame around the brand name which is highly abstract and geometric in comparison to the previous ones. In 2003, the framing comes back with a very different style; it is very informal, asymmetric, and dynamic. In the 2007 re-design, the frame becomes a symmetrical oval shape lying in the horizontal axis. From a broader perspective, the change from traditional to modern corresponds to the new societal demands. The visually-oriented nature of computer-mediated communication, exposure to international cultural flows, globalization of trade, increasingly hectic life-styles characterizing the urban cities necessitate expression of new relationships through the visual language of a brand’s identity.

In Piyale’s 2007 packaging re-design, a major change is in the colour and size of logotype (Figure 7). The colour orange replaces the unconventionally dark blue colour of the 2003-package. The choice of a warmer and more appetite-appealing colour suggests orientation toward categorical conventions; yet, the selection also indicates an end to the brand’s innovative and bold design approach. The flower illustration in the logotype now gains salience and occupies a substantial portion of the top background of the package-front. The illustration, with its informal and dynamic style, also contributes to the playful feel of the package. The considerable reduction in the size of the logotype is also noteworthy. The renewed logotype aligns itself more closely with the category conventions – its size becomes much smaller and is now located at the top section of the package-front. Both of these decisions also reflect a preference for a more conventional design strategy and lead to a look that is less assertive in capturing immediate attention and recognition at the shelf space.

The 2007 renewal includes another design surprise; the bottom/lower part of the package-front, next to the display window, now features a photographic image of pasta on a fork. This is the first time Piyale uses a photographic image rather than an illustration on its package-front. The inclusion of photography introduces highly naturalistic modality to the package design. From a marketing perspective, the new image aims to conjure up the moment of eating a perfect bite of delicious pasta and appeal to the prospective buyer. However, as the former brand manager and current senior trade marketing manager of Barilla Group in Turkey, Mr. Sefik Inan notes, the same photographic style had been a characteristic of Barilla Pasta packaging (Inan, 2018). The idea of showing pasta on a fork was developed by the advertising agency, TBWA, and had been used in Barilla packaging and advertising for almost three decades (www.barilla.com, n.d.). The male cook illustration had been a key symbol of Piyale since its inception in 1922. The replacement of a brand-specific visual element with a competitor-associated image suggests a retreat from an authentic to an imitative design approach.

The increase in the size of the display window is also noteworthy. On the display window, there is the new catch phrase, 'Yenilenen Lezzetiyle' (with its renewed taste), suggesting that the product had been modified. The vertical symmetry of the former packaging gives way to diagonally symmetric composition, resulting in a more difficult reading experience. Moreover, pasta seen through the larger display window makes the background very complicated. As the picture of the pasta on a fork and the catch phrase are lost in this cluttered background, the package-front loses the essentials: clarity and focus. Overall, the 2007 packaging employs some elements of the 2003 style but includes many references and visual resources to a more conventional and imitative design approach. The new design attitude represents a deviation from the innovative, modernist, and surprising

spirit of the 2003 visual identity renewal and resonates more with the conservative and traditional forces shaping the Turkish society.

The visual identity of Piyale changed drastically twice within a short period of four years (2003 and 2007); yet, its share in the pasta market continued to erode. Disappointed with the results and interested in operating in more strategic sectors such as energy, Sabancı Group decided to withdraw from the food industry. In 2008, Sabancı sold GıdaSA to Marmara Gıda (Hatisaru, 2007). Marmara Gıda belonged to Mustafa Latif Topbaş, a conservative businessman who made his fortune in the textile, food, and retail sectors. Mr. Topbaş was connected with the ruling political party AKP, and had partnerships with Ülker family, the owner of Yıldız Holding, another big conservative business group in Turkey (Ozturk, 2015). Three years later, in 2010, Mr. Topbaş sold Marsan to Yıldız Holding (Munyar, 2010). As Topbaş and Ülker families are related, the sale was regarded as a transfer among the family members (NetHaberci, 2010). Under its third (Marsan) and current owner (Yıldız Holding), Piyale's visual identity remained almost the same, except for a few changes. The most important change was in the logotype. In 2008, a line indicating the long history of the brand, '1922'den beri' (since 1922) was added to the logotype. Such an addition can be read as a reflection of the brand's continuing identity struggle and its desire to re-connect with its roots and history. The package no longer includes information about the parent company on the front side, blurring the fact that the ownership of the brand has changed multiple times since its inception in 1922.

However, while the packaging design remained almost the same in this last phase, the brand slogan changed radically. "Her Aile, Piyale" (every family, Piyale) became the new motto of the brand, signifying a return to traditional values under the veil of a modernized package. The focus on family reflected well both the ideals of the company's owner and the discourses of the presiding government. From a larger perspective, under the more-than-a-

decade rule of the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkey has become a country where religious ideals and conservative values have gained more prominence over the secular and liberal ideals of the Republic. Within such an environment, Piyale seemed to reposition itself as a family-oriented and trusted local brand. Unfortunately, the brand that ruled the Turkish pasta industry for decades (more than half a century), today commands less than 2% market share, while Barilla Gıda, with its two brands, Filiz and Barilla, dominates the Turkish pasta industry (EuroMonitor, 2017).

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, we have explored the changes in the packaging design of Piyale vis-a-vie the changes in the social, economic, political and cultural landscape of Turkey. Our analysis indicates that packaging decisions of Piyale reflect shifting emphasis on tradition, innovation and imitation. At times, the brand utilized innovative and unconventional design approaches; at others, it followed and even copied the visual conventions of the category or competitors. Formal compositional analysis helped to describe what we see in the images (logotypes and packaging designs) while social semiotics helped decipher the meaning potentials of these representations.

A socio-historically situated analysis of packaging reveals the complex and layered relationship between design and culture. In this regard, as this study demonstrates, packaging design, similar to other forms of artistic production, provides remarkable clues to the social, cultural, political and economic dynamics shaping societies in a given time period. Piyale's logotype, color, and package design decisions reflect the characteristics of the milieu they were created in: while 1930s logotype design displays a more traditional aura following the zeitgeist; beginning with 1950s where modernization via Americanization currents was the trend of the time, a more humorous and modern design taste emerges. 1970s and '80s designs

reflect a more industrial, mechanized look which was the characteristic of that period both in Turkey and the Western world. The post-2003 years reflect indecisiveness in Piyale's identity along with a transition from being an icon of a Westernizing nation to a struggling local brand that seeks to survive by appealing to more price-conscious and conservative audience.

Overall, our study makes three contributions to marketing literature. First, in line with the calls for more research on the cultural significance of packaging, we offer an analysis that goes beyond how brands use packaging design to construct and convey brand meaning and identity, but how packaging is itself a cultural product reflecting the broader dynamics of the time period that it comes to existence. Hence, we advance the emerging stream of research (e.g., Kniazeva and Belk, 2007; Kravets, 2012; Roberts, 2014) by showing how social, cultural, political economic dynamics inform packaging design. As our analysis indicates, changes in Piyale's packaging design echoes the changes in political, social, cultural and economic domains in Turkish history. These broader shifts render certain design approaches and practices as more or less relevant and necessary and shape the brand's visual identity.

Second, we contribute to research on marketing histories of non-Western contexts by providing a socio-historical analysis of packaging design of a Turkish brand. While the increasing dominance of global brands characterizes today's economy, the histories of the non-Western markets are also shaped by local brands. However, little is known about the stories and histories of these brands (e.g., Kravets and Sandıkçı, 2013; Zhiyan, Borgerson, Schroeder, 2013; Zhao and Belk, 2008). Piyale's packaging trajectory demonstrates the Western dominance in Turkish design history. Traditionally, Turkish advertising professionals have been the followers and adopters of the Western (European and/or American) visual strategies and techniques. Similarly, Piyale's packaging practices, in collaboration with local or foreign advertising agencies, appear to valorize Western styles and technologies in design at the expense of utilizing elements from local design cultures. Unlike

the case of Russian vodka and chocolate brands, packaging design of Piyale pasta conveys little information about its national heritage. Yet, given Turkish Republic's foundational premise of building a westernized nation might be the impetus behind the continuing dominance of Western design principles in marketing practices of Turkish brands.

Third, we contribute to historical studies of packaging by offering a methodological approach that combines different analytical tools. Specifically, we show that using compositional analysis and social semiotic approaches together enable an analysis that is attentive to both the formal visual components and characteristics of a design and the broader meaning potential of these representations. As our study demonstrates, packaging designs are valuable resources through which the deeply rooted cultural codes, traditions, conventions, socio-cultural values and attitudes, economic and political climate of changing times can be traced and mapped out. Such a methodological approach is particularly relevant and important for carrying out research in nonwestern contexts. While access to historical and archival resources are relatively easier in Western contexts where marketing output of brands are institutionally stored and maintained (i.e., company archives or museums), a lack of institutional memory is more commonplace in nonwestern contexts. Such material difficulties present real problems for advancing knowledge of marketing histories in countries outside the domain of the industrialized and developed world. Methodologies that allow for a sociohistorically grounded reading of marketing output offer a potential remedy to this problem.

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Figure 1. Logotype of Piyale Pasta, 1936 – 1940s



Figure 2. Logotypes of Piyale Pasta, 1950s – 1970s



Figure 3. Piyale Pasta Packages, 1950s – 1970s



1950s



1960s



1970s

Figure 4. Logotypes of Piyale Pasta, 1980s – 1990s



1980s



1990s - 2002

Figure 5. Piyale Pasta Packages, 1980s – 1990s



1980s



1990s

Figure 6. Logotypes of Piyale Pasta: 2003, 2007, 2008 – 2018



2003



2007



2008 -

Figure 7. Piyale Pasta Packages, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2018



2003



2007



2008



2018