

Brrr!: COKE as Instrument of Cultural Globalization

Angela Mhae R. Herrera and Albert A. San Diego

Translated by Jose Claudio B. Guerrero

A review of
Selected Coke Advertisements from Various Countries

From 2006 to 2010 Coke released the following advertisements: *Live Positively*, *Brrr!*, and *Coke for Everyone*. These give a new image to the soft drink in the context of the wide reach of globalization. These advertisements were released in (and likely originated from) various countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Turkey, South Africa, and Canada.

This review will focus on the versions of these Coca-Cola campaigns in the above mentioned countries. Our review proffers four main ideas. First, a number of these advertisements noticeably have the same concept but differ depending on the country of origin or subject. Second, there are images from other countries that are appropriated into the image of another country, and these are inserted surreptitiously so that they are not readily noticeable. Third, Coca-Cola used the expression “*Brrr...*” as what can be considered a global language. Fourth, it is noticeable that there are things shown in the scenes of the advertisements that symbolize what can be called globalization indicators. In short, this review proffers that Coca-Cola is promoting its product as an icon of globalized culture that unites the seemingly separate local cultures. We will go through the four primary ideas proffered in our review one by one.

First Argument

A number of the advertisements noticeably have the same concept but differ depending on the country of origin or subject.

In the advertisement titled *Live Positively*, which was shown in the Philippines, there is a young boy speaking in front of his class. He is telling them about his father while holding up a drawing (Illustration 1). The advertisement showed his father works for Coke, which has many projects that benefit communities.



Illustration 1. Filipino boy explains his father's job through his drawing (cocacola, 2010).

As we continued our search for videos, we discovered that there are other countries that have the same advertisement. Not only were their themes identical; their concept and production were also similar. The advertisements we saw were from Canada, Thailand, and Indonesia (Illustration 2). At the end of every version, we see the Coke truck, which is used to deliver products of their company, offerings of assistance to places and institutions,

such as communities and schools. In the last frame of every version we see that the red Coke truck is ready to go anywhere to provide assistance and service (Illustration 3).



Illustration 2. Boys from different countries explaining in front of the class (cocacola, 2010; GetPopByUrSelf, 2009).



Illustration 3. Shots of Coca-Cola's Red Truck from Coca-Cola commercials in different countries (cocacola, 2010; maverickindonesia, 2010).

Even the narrative structures are the same. This is noticeable in advertisements from or about Turkey, South Africa, and Pakistan (Illustrations 4 and 5). A leader is seen walking down a street with an assistant holding up an umbrella and a throng of people following him. He enters a store and buys a drink. The vendor hands him a Coke, and after finishing his drink, he says “Brrr!” These details are visible in the versions from the three countries mentioned.



Illustrations 4 and 5. Leaders from different countries buy Coca-Cola from a store (naklovser, 2007; PhaZZed, 2007).

The versions differ only in a few aspects like location and wardrobe, likely to be in the interest of showing a unique trait of each culture or country.

Another advertisement is *Coke for Everyone* (Illustration 6) where Coke is used as a representation of a person or a group of people. It is noticeable that the versions have only one concept, but each version varies in the language used.



Illustration 6. Coke for everyone (mdle09, 2009).

It is clear that in these advertisements and in every version of them, there is a single concept and theme that seems to serve as a ‘unifying agent’ of the countries referred. This ensures that the viewer feels a connection among seemingly disparate countries whatever language is used in and whatever new cultural icon is mixed into the advertisement. The cultures of the world are being made similar - and this is the Coke culture - which, toward the end, is shown as the culture that links localized cultures. In short, Coke is the culture of a globalized world.

Second Argument

There are images from other countries that are appropriated into the image of another country, and these are inserted surreptitiously that they are not readily noticeable.

In the Philippine version of *Brrr!*, which features the popular YouTube duo Moymoy Palaboy, some scenes included noticeably did not originate from the Philippines. In fact these images are from versions from other countries



Illustration 7. Brrr Coke commercial shown in the Philippines (cocacola, 2011).

(Illustration 7) and were inserted in a way that the viewer will not readily recognize that they come from versions of the advertisement from other countries.

The same technique is seen in *Shake It Up* (Illustration 8), the original version of which is from Bulgaria, according to the Coca-Cola website of the



Illustration 8. Coca-Cola 2010 Christmas Commercials from Philippines and Bulgaria (cocacola, 2010; kgyidz, 2010).

said country (Coca Cola Hellenic, 2011). The Philippine and Bulgarian versions are exactly the same except for a few things. Kim Chiu and Enchong Dee replace the Bulgarian actors to make the advertisement contextualized to the Filipino viewer. The scene with snow in Bulgaria was replaced with fireflies and Christmas lanterns to better show Christmas in the Philippines (because it doesn't snow in the Philippines). Despite the attempt to make the advertisement Filipino, scenes from the Bulgarian original were still maintained.

Therefore, the inserting scenes of images from other countries or replacing certain images with a more apt version in another culture is one way of expanding cultural globalization. Again, unlike images are spliced to make them seem alike under the globalized Coke culture.

Third Argument

Coca-Cola used the expression “Brrr...” as what can be considered a global language.



Illustration 9. Brrr commercial screenshots from different countries (saadhassankhan, 2008; hrmh2a, 2009; 24frameslk, 2011; pertsovsky, 2009; cocacola, 2011; const76, 2009; naklovser, 2007; ktkthegr8, 2008).

In the Philippine version of *Brrr!*, it is noticeable that the characters Moymoy Palaboy do not mention any other word but the expression “Brrr!” each time they drink Coke. In our search for other advertisements, we saw other versions from other countries (Illustration 9). Like in the Philippines, these do not have any lines except for “Brrr!”. In one of the advertisements, three men were shown wanting to buy Coke from a store. When they approached the vendor they only said “Brrr!” and the vendor immediately understood what they wanted to say. Another advertisement shows a foreigner surrounded by the natives of the place he is in. It is obvious that the foreigner and the natives. It is obvious that the foreigner and the natives cannot understand each other, but after the foreigner drinks Coke and says “Brrr!”, the natives understand him immediately.

In this context, “Brrr!” serves as a language tool of universal understanding in the midst of differences of race, kind, belief, language, and status in life.

Fourth Argument

There are things shown in the scenes of the advertisements that symbolize what can be called “globalization indicators.”

In the advertisement *Live Positively*, it is noticeable that their logo is a globe, half of which is composed of different shapes such as humans, hearts, and bottles (Illustration 10a), and the other containing the *Live Positively* logo (Illustration 10b). In the same advertisement, it is can be seen that the horizon looks curved even though the visible expanse of space is not that large. Through this representation and symbolism, it seems the concept of globalization is being declared.

In the advertisement *Shake It Up*, a city is shown inside a crystal ball (Illustration 11). The said crystal ball is shaken by a Santa Claus to fulfill his wishes for the people in the city. The crystal ball seems to symbolize a globe; the world where people live.

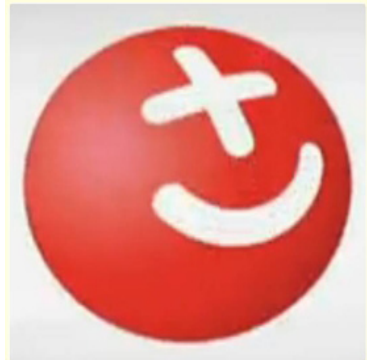


Illustration 10. Coca-Cola commercial segments symbolizing globalization (cocacola,2010).



Illustration 11. Crystal ball in Coca-Cola Christmas commercial (kgvidz, 2010).



Illustration 12. Coca-Cola commercial transitions symbolizing globalization (MajorNuttela14, 2009).

In the advertisement *Brrrr!*, it is noticeable that Coke used the globe and map (Illustration 12a) for transitions or scene changes. Each time a globe passes, it seemingly symbolizes that Coke occupies all the parts of the world. In one scene, it shows that from one continent on the map (Africa) there are spears or arrows that sprout and point to other continents (Illustration 12b). Through this, the wide sphere of Coke's influence is declared. Again, these images proffer that Coke culture has dominion over almost the whole world.

Conclusion

Based on the stated arguments, it can be said that the advertisements mean to do more than just sell Coke soft drinks. The Coca-Cola company integrated the concept of Coke as an icon of a globalized world, that un-like cultures are united by the images and language of Coke. In this reasoning, Coke links the separated local cultures toward the formation of one globalized culture. The question now is, what effect, if any, has Coke's posturing as the link between

different cultures that are repeatedly interfered in by the tentacles of image, capital, and consumerism.

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ANGELA MHAER. HERRERA (corresponding author: angelamae_herrera@yahoo.com) and **ALBERT A. SAN DIEGO** are graduates of B.A. Broadcast Communication at the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication in UP Diliman.