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Media Communication

Globalisation, Arab and Lebanese Media

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to shed light on how globalisation has transformed Arab media in general and Lebanese media in specific and on the issues of identity facing the Arab world. The concept of globalization has not had its impact on enhancing perspectives towards women regarding employment opportunities and social role, yet it has, also, commodified women's images in some ads as a means to grab consumers and surge the purchasing power with respect to this or that product. Thus, globalisation has some constructive and some other deconstructive consequences how society conceives gender roles in general and women's in particular, mainly in the Arab region, where discussions of gender representations in ads have become an important topic among ad producers and scholars. The article also discusses how media and culture are interrelated, the development of media in Lebanon, spotting light on the Lebanese factor in Arab television and advertising along with the need for a better understanding of media since research in this regard has been neglected in a world ingested with television outlets, showing the formed symbiosis that is progressively evolving between television content and advertising. Accordingly, cultural enrichment and free political expression have had their impact on the non-creation of a national identity, overtly determined with re/identifying the social identity and role of genders and their future. The article presents a critical review of the results of analyses of announced results after research.

Keywords: globalisation, Lebanese media, Arab world, television, advertising, identity.

Globalisation

Globalisation is a broadly challenged word that offers a plethora of opportunities for examining gender and media. Intrinsically, the idea has been a controversial subject for its critical value. The term has not only been criticised for being empty of accuracy, but also has been accused of being abundantly practical to develop several political projects and agendas. The term “globalisation” has different meanings and effects, which are utilised across various domains. Along with gender, for instance, the concept has often conventionally been devoted to

improvement concerns, with attention to the constructive or destructive consequences of globalisation specially for women, who have limited access to some resources. Interests in this area include women's poverty and partial employment opportunities as well as the effect of globalisation on gender roles, especially in the Arab region. Over the past decades, however, the development of new media technologies has promptly accelerated globalization processes. Hence, examining the role of media in globalization has become highly important in producing approaches that shift the attention from examining globalization or adjoining discourses as an entryway to various phenomena, including gender, to approaching globalization and related phenomena from the perspective of their mediation (Rantanen, 2005). [1] In Rantanen's work, media tools are the principal connectors between the several facets that raise in response to the acceleration of globalisation. In the works of many feminists as well as gender and media scholars, negotiation of the representations of gender and discourses in ads have become part of the common academic manner.

Nevertheless, globalisation has been considered as a moderately direct concept with less theoretical appeal to gender and media scholars; it is repeatedly situated accordingly at the borders of various analytical efforts. Generally, globalisation functions as a predominant contextual term for gendered phenomena in media production. Its relevance can be understood in reference to certain economic requirements of global entrepreneurship and commercial ideologies rooted in globalisation. The significance of globalisation to the re/production of gender identity has been effectively deliberated, for instance, in the context of the analysis of postfeminist media cultures as closely linked with new liberal values. This approach enables taking out the global processes that influence contemporary postfeminist gender discourses (Gill, 2007 [2]; McRobbie, 2009 [3]). These works spot light on the integration of conservative and liberal discourses in shaping and determining the postfeminist understanding of gender in media production in the global context, embracing mediation of the image of gender that celebrates girls' power and confident culture, while at the same time, challenging such narratives through various forms of sexism and setbacks. These propensities have, as McRobbie (2009) [4] reveals, worked toward undermining feminist politics while increasing the role of media and popular culture as vital forces in outlining and shaping feminist concerns. Endeavors to examine these conflicting paths of empowerment and disempowerment have also been conducted from the perspective of linguistic approaches to media globalisation. For example, Fairclough (2006) [5] distinguished between material realities of globalisation in terms of various flows of goods, money, people, and language used to describe

it, that is, discourses on globalisation. In his studies, Fairclough discerned how Western understanding of feminine identity can be introduced to local women in an attempt to generate or develop particular gender identities in celebration of consumerism, which allies well with economic and political amendments of the country in support of globalisation. Materialistic forces of globalisation have developed a need to apprehend globalisation not only as a context for specific interceded gender imagery, but in reference to the socially constructed role of globalization as something that is more fundamentally entwined in media gender discourses. Discerning the role of gender in advancing and reproducing a variety of ideologies pertaining to globalisation has become relevant, mainly with the emergence of new feminine media images that could be conceived either as a threats or as promises to globalization. For example, Egyptian Aliia Elmahdy's well-known pictures of her nudity, which she posted on social media in the name of freedom of expression in 2011 (Parikka, 2015) [6], can be conceived as a reflection of the appeal and resonance of Western freedom discourse in the Arab world. The artist hopes her photograph would appeal to that Western discourse and consequently contribute to reshaping the image of female genderism in the region. Hitherto, the nude image of her did not eventually deliver her voice as predominantly 'free', but rather as inherently connected to the Western protocol for sexuality and genderism that, through her bodily gestures and positioning, situates her in between pornographic and girly authenticity: her theory of freedom of expression enabled her neither to undermine nor to free herself from the ethnically and socially predetermined sexual codes, but rather involuntarily produced bodily vulnerability.

Approaches to reproducing gender identity in alignment with globalisation discourses necessitates an analytical consideration of the socially defining factors such as ethnicity, race, region, and religion, with the aim of contributing to challenging the reconstituted concepts implied by globalisation and its influence on either the retention or reproduction of gender identity in the Arab region. In the work of Hegde (2011) [7] work, this is recognised by investigating the views of gender as reconfigured through, for example, discourses of commodification of female figure, modernity, Western ideologies, and neoliberal doctrines in the lives of the Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern women, among others. Here media technologies and cultures, as a feature of globalisation and transfer of nationality, noticeably contribute to associating capitalism and consumerism with the daily life in varied regional places and spaces. Therefore, it is unquestionably that digital media is the main driving force of globalisation that has possibly had the utmost reflective implication in regard to how the mediation of gender

discourses in contemporary contexts are analyzed. As people primarily function through the speed of world digital media, globalisation is definitely conceived as something internal to us as well as a concrete and discursive reality in which we are wholly involved. Such universal realities and procedures include many quite topical examples, comprising immigration flows and their transnational digital connectivity of which gender is essential. A developing new area here (Leurs & Smets, 2018) [8] connects digital media with immigration as a globalisation process, which is dealt with from multidisciplinary perspectives, including gender and women's studies scholarship among others. Likewise, the fact that digital media technologies provide a view on globalisation, gender, and media relationships concretises the procedures by which the globe impacts the most intimate scope of people's lives and new corporeality.

Gill and Scharff's (2013) [9] talked about both the fluctuations and continuities in gender images and relations beyond national borders, with a wide focus on the scopes of localization and socio-culturalism and remarkably pointed out "the convergence in the use of terms to address the crossroads of post-feminism, neoliberalism, and subjectivity" (Gill and Scharff's, 2013) [10]. As globalisation, gender, and media provide an empirically rich and varied plethora of work that often align with the predominantly Western theoretisation of gender, advertising remains on the verge of anticipating original theoretical openings provoked by the interconnectedness between digital media, gender, and globalisation, which transformed from contextual phenomenon to a more primary combination of gender and media, explicitly through digital technologies enabling trans-nationality and suggesting either the reordering or the reproduction of many terms or at least their denoted meanings, including limits, figures, subjectivities, and identities; hence, possibly paving the way for new gender theoretical debates ahead.

Due to globalization, some academics have been closely examining traditions, religious groups, predominant attitudes, as well as developing trends, while others have studied many aspects of the Arab world, including the work on its media industries and their impact on reshaping people's perceptions about females' social identity and commodification in advertisement in general, and TV ads in particular. This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the research done on media in the Middle East. This part begins with a synopsis of the academic work studying media and culture in the Arab world. Following this overview is a close look at media development in Lebanon. and media development. Finally, this chapter will explore the literature on advertising and its impact on the re/production of gender identity.

Media and Culture in the Arab World

This study takes into consideration the rhetoric that has evolved over media and its impact on Arab societies. Debates have mainly centered on media in the Middle East on account of the prompt transformation taking place with media technologies and as a result of the flows of regional televisions. A relevant report in 2006 states that television consumption in the Middle East is considerably higher than it is in other regions of the world. Besides, the report refers to television being a “centerpiece” for entertaining family households in Arab countries. Looking closer, a majority of those who watch more than three hours a day of television are young people, whose mindsets, values, and life perceptions would be definitely affected by all what they see on TV, including TV ads (Harmon, 2008). [11]

Arab leaders have been incessantly apprehensive about how the dogmatic and ideological perceptions have been flooding the airwaves, finding it challenging to maintain the television hygienic from any from political and/or cultural influences. A substantial body of the literature on the topic (Boyd, 2009 [12]; Dajani, 1992 [13]; Dajani, 2001 [14]; Dajani, 2006 [15]; Guaaybess, 2001 [16]; Hafez, 2001 [17]; Kamalipour & Mowlana, 1994 [18]; Kazan, 2002 [19]; Kraidy, 1998 [20]; Sakr, 2001 [21]) spots lights on Arab states’ practices of control over media. Arab states have always been endeavoring to gain authority media and information flow (Kazan, 2002) [22] by developing rigorous systems of censorship. Arab audience have resorted to imported foreign news and entertainment programs that had been have hold a cultural dimension that’s fundamentally different from what was generally allowed by their countries (Boyd, 1999 [23]; Dajani, 1992 [24]; Kraidy, 1998 [25]).

In this regard, local TV stations are incessantly competing with satellite broadcasts, with the slight differentiation that private channels have engaged their public in a multi-level discourse on political, cultural, and social issues, whereas the official channels were more concerned with representing the national identity and uniform dogmas (Rinnawi, 2006). [26] Evidently, this presents a big challenge to countries besieged to retain unity and national allegiance, mainly with the current global trends. Accordingly, information authorities have found it indispensable to reduce their restraints and attempts to co-opt these channels to their benefits. This competition has allowed for a wave of organisational changes both on the local and private media levels (Rinnawi, 2006). [27]

Andrew Hammond (2007) [28] observes that the flow of satellite signals received in Arab households contributed to a number of changes in Arab societies. He claims that pop-culture and relevant attitudes have infiltrated values

and norms in Arab societies. The Arabic music scene, for instance, nowadays incorporates new sounds and images typically found in Western pop (Hammond, 2007). [29] However, it is significant to contemplate the role of global media in the Middle East as a means in the way Arab citizens comprehend their culture. Kraidy (2008) [30] studies Arab media and cultural trends through the scope of “critical trans-culturalism,” which unlike theories of cultural imperialism, reflects culture as a malleable entity in incessant renovation and interface with other cultures. The argument prospects “fusions” in cultural practices. Thus, “cultural hybridity” results from the creation and adaptation of cultures to both outside forces and their own habitats and vicinities (Kraidy, 2008). [31] Since these media are commercial institutions, it’s been paramount for these stations to retain a wide audience through presenting content that appealed to the extensive possible audience (Sakr, 2006). [32]

Content selection for commercial television has to meet the taste of all-caliber audience since this has a direct impact on the production and consumption of products advertised as well as on quality requirements that Arab media follows as standards. (Hammond, 2007). [33] Producing content for television ads abides by specific patterns and structures to the extent that the creative process is comparable to an assembly-line of production (Kraidy, 2008) [34], and in this regard, it is quite obvious that TV stations in the Arab world are reproducing the Western television formats that they are trying to infuse with some elements of the local culture, a specific example of cultural hybridity.

Naomi Sakr (2006) [35] clarifies that since TV outlets could not give competitive prices to advertisers due to budgetary restraints, programs were their only way to compete with each other, where a creative output required exceptional production skills, state-of-the-art technical execution, as well as excellent scripting and vital acting talent (Chahine *et. al.*, 2008). [36] Rinnawi (2006) [37] designates that in order for these satellite channels to be more appealing to their audience, they were flexible in producing and presenting content of programs and ads, so that they could stay competitive in the market (Chahine *et. al.*, 2008). [38] This state of standardized production patterns and stereotyped images, including gender, has made it difficult for a viewer to differentiate between domestic and foreign products (Kraidy, 2008). [39]

The case was evident in programs such as MBC’s *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* and *Kalam el Nawaem* as well as LBC’s *Star Academy*. Khatib (2005) [40] relays the success of reality shows to the adoption of foreign programs, and incontrovertibly identity, to make content more pertinent to local societies

(Khatib, 2005). [41] Such programs went insofar as to incorporate forms of new media technologies (Kraidy, 2008 [42]; Rinnawi, 2006). [43]

Along these lines, modern interactive technologies were a vital element to a cultural change that has had a tendency to incorporate foreign elements into local lives (Kraidy, 2003). [44] Perhaps this is the reason why a study by Kraidy and Khalil (2008) [45] finds cultural change in the Arab world more pertinent with younger generations and adolescents who are more influenced by media and advertising (Kraidy & Khalil, 2008). [46] This is especially genuine because a growing culture of Arab youth has been developing around interactive media technologies. Though, such cultural changes necessitate particular aptitudes on the receivers' behalf. Kraidy and Khalil (2008) [47] found that employing these technologies has certain requisites such as the provision of particular tools along with the possession of a linguistic ability and technical know-how. These features lead to the realization that these media patrons not only belong to an exclusive group in the Arab world, but also that they belong to a community beyond the borders of the Arab world, where Arab youth, nowadays, are being a part of the global culture with compatriots beyond their state borders. Bringing forward the image of women in media and advertising through using the appeal of young attractive fashionable women announcers in programs or in TV ads as well as corporate underwriting and advertising, TV outlets were able to capture varied audience (Kraidy, 2003 [48]; Rinnawi, 2006) [49], and, thus, win a big number of viewers seeing TV ads and being influenced by the attitude of their elements (Semiotics and discourse; gender exhibition) and the execution of these elements to transfer the intended message.

In one of his works that describes the concept of “Arabism,” Rinnawi (2006) [50] ascertains that media has led to much transformation in self-perception in the Arab region. He corroborates that as long as satellite systems are continuing to challenge national outlets, they are also redefining the context in which both media and society interact allowing for a reconsideration of how the public views political elites on the one hand and the religious/ethnic power on the other. Mark Harmon (2008) [51] pinpoints a trend in some Arab societies in which media impacts human attitudes. He denotes this phenomenon as “affluenza” of media (Harmon, 2008). [52] Hammond (2007) [53] finds that much of the change of behavior can be accredited to television images brought to Arab families. Regarding the image of women, it is worth spotting light on the enormous pressures put on the Arab woman to look attractive due to the images of female celebrities who appear in videos, series, programs, and ads. Hammond (2007) [54] argues that such a phenomenon has resulted in an abrupt growth in divorce rates in the Arab

region and has had a dramatic impact on women's view of herself as well as the other gender's view of her. Consequently, some women were compelled to undertake plastic surgeries to live up to the beauty standards delivered by media.

Media Development in Lebanon

Academics who discovered media in the Arab world; thus, draw connections between cultural developments and disclosure to media products. In Lebanon, the sectarian conflict was the ancestor for the plethora of media outlets available, televisual or other.

In a multi-religious community, the official television was keen on keeping its programs non-sectarian. Hence, the methodical approach of Tele-Liban was to stay detached from any religious or political perspectives, steering away from any contentious themes or characters that could be concomitant with any ethnic or religious group. As the Lebanese television outlet stayed away from the partisan and sectarian conflict, war factions and political parties needed channels to support their ideologies and rally their followers. Media took the daily warfare to another level by having political parties taking their battles to the airwaves (Dajani, 1992). [55] Kraidy (1998) [56] points out that the sectarian conflict is the key motive behind the privatization of media outlets in post-war Lebanon.

Post-war, due to the need of foreign investments to rebuild the country, a reconsideration of the direction in which media was performing was required. This was a privilege that led to a shift from the national to "corporatized" media (Kraidy, 2001). [57] Thus, business TVs were originally established as a form of a business model (Dajani, 1992) [58], in a way that private channels that proliferated during the war soon grew into business accountable to boards of shareholders concerned predominantly with the bottom-line (Kraidy, 2001 [59]; Kraidy, 2003 [60]). Consequently, all television programs became increasingly commercialized and saturated with advertisements that are directed to a certain group of audience. Moreover, these private television stations held on to the political ideologies of their owners. The collection of private TV stations found in Lebanon today included:

1. LBC (the Maronite Christian mouthpiece medium);
2. MTV Television (owned by Murr, the Greek Orthodox tycoon with major shares held by Druze leader Walid Jumblatt);
3. Future TV (owned by the Hariri family and representing the Muslim Sunni population);
4. The National Broadcasting Network (NBN, owned by Muslim Shiite

Amal Movement leader, Nabih Berri) (Kraidy, 2003 [61]; Chochrane, 2007 [62]);
5. and Al-Manar Television, which is another TV station, representing part of the Muslim Shiite population's Hezbollah resistance movement against Israel (Notzold, 2008). [63]

Articulating the Lebanese Identity

Private television channels in Lebanon did slight effort to create a national discourse on citizenship or a unified Lebanese identity. In the Arab world generally and in Lebanon specifically, consumers and ad viewers are considered and addressed in terms of their demographics, ethnicity, and respective preferences. Naomi Sakr (2006) [64] states that spectators receive content that addresses them as consumers rather than citizens of a unified identity since media prioritise business interests over citizens' needs.

The Lebanese Factor in Arab Television and Advertising

Research in the aim of discovering media and culture in the Arab world suggests that advertising serves as cultural referents for the society in which it appears (Gully, 1997). [65] Gully suggests that advertising messages in the Arab world have used intertextuality by which they have endeavored to appeal to customers through the use of a mix of local and global languages as well as domestic and foreign beliefs. This indicates how Arab societies that favor the locality of their identity have also developed an affiliation with the outside world; this is mainly true for Arab youths, who prefer programs and ads presenting liberal content and signifying liberal identity.

The quality of television advertising has by far exceeded that of the local television series production. The surge of quality in advertisements owes much to high production budgets, technical expertise, and short intervals for these commercials that place value on every second of the delivered message.

The advertising industry has developed all over the region. Much like any creative work, advertising is influenced by the local culture in which it is produced. In Lebanon, advertisers have recently become creative in the advertising industry that caters to other part of the Arab world (Shooting the Arab World, 2007). [66]

Regardless of its being one of the smaller Arab countries, Lebanon retains its position as a “window for the Arab world onto the rest of the world” (Hammond, 2007). [67]

Kraidy (2008) continues that though most of the Arab television networks are owned by Saudis, the Lebanese impact in their creative output is notable. Kraidy points out the need to being attentive to the “complex interplay between structure and culture” in producing cultural products in these media institutions [68] (p. 198).

Knowing that the advertising industry in Lebanon is in charge of more than 50 percent of the television commercial (TVC) production in the Arab world (Shooting the Arab World, 2007) [69], Lebanon remains the hub for advertising production despite the threat of instability (Hammond, 2007, p. 35). [70] The majority of advertising, marketing, and media agencies in the Arab world, which totals 500, are Lebanese, with over \$240 million spent (Harmon, 2008). [71] The English language newspaper, *The Daily Star* describes the Lebanese advertising force as youthful, overflowing with energy, enthusiasm and creativity (*The Daily Star*, Nov. 2008). [72]

As Lebanon enjoys such a high position in the advertising industry, ad agencies have embarked on major audience research projects to communicate more effectively with consumers, based on the identity they demonstrate. Hammond (2007) [73] notes that the quality of advertising productions that come out of Lebanon is comparable to those of global corporations (Hammond, 2007). [74] One factor that contributes to this phenomenon is a general laissez-faire policy in Lebanon that allows sexually-nuanced content (Hammond, 2007). [75] Production quality has taken enormous attention within advertising production companies. It has become obvious that television advertising in Lebanon is expected to be artistic in response to new ideologies and gender identities for the purpose of finding stimulation in new productions. This implores the notion that advertising not only delivers a message about the product it advertises but also advertises for or offers a narcissistic craft.

Conclusion

This article has spotted the light on the transformation of media in the Arab world. At a time, media sternly served as representatives for the challenging political regimes in the Arab world and how the affected media reproduction, which in turn contributes in the re/production of diverse identities and the lack of a unified national identity, mainly with the drastic changes brought with new technologies. As digital television channels for instance, became more predominant in Arab households in the region, governments reduced their control over media outlets. Sequentially, this increased media commercialization. In contrast, when national broadcast stations were dedicated to content promoting nation-building,

with a more recent neo-liberal approach, such media developed as commercial enterprises with bottom-line goals.

Similarly, Lebanese media – television in particular – followed suit. Soon after the end of the Lebanese war, channels embraced an indulgent political attitude with more reliance on entertainment programs, which in turn has had its impact on the Lebanese identity in general and on gender identity in particular. Correspondingly, these media outlets sought advertising income in a rapidly developing post-war economy. Accordingly, content changed, comprising a western spirit brought with the foreign products entering the Lebanese market. This western behaviour of ads using and bringing forward female figures much more than male has had its impact on how the Lebanese mindset used to perceive and accept the role of women in society as well as the re/production of a new gender identity. In other words, with more programs and ideologies imported from the West, the way the Lebanese conceives women’s identity and socio-cultural role has been reproduced. In the process, Lebanese media soon had their footprints all over the Arab world. Along with the spread of Lebanese cultural products, the Lebanese advertising industry seized a recorded success in the region. Reflecting the innovative output that their fellow producers in television engendered, Lebanese advertisers developed state-of-the-art approaches and adopted techniques applied from the transnational advertising agencies they represented. Various academics, as this chapter indicated, have seen a transformation of behaviour among Lebanese citizens.

Many of those who examine media and societies in the Arab world have observed a change in individual behaviors in Lebanon; this change in attitudes mirrored changes in the Lebanese mindset that had definitely preceded. In essence, this further deepened the gap between various Lebanese communities’ perspective regarding gender, contributing to what some groups perceived as threats to their own culture – which, in turn, they associated with the West, while other communities were still in bond and associated with their own ethnicities. Conversely, while there could have been a correspondence between the significant rise in media commercialisation on social change, such assumptions were too deterministic for they dismissed individual input and personal agencies in action.

Kalliny, Dagher, Minor and de los Santos (2008) [76] confirm that there is much needed scholarly work and analyses on Arab advertising. Given the state of scholarship that covers media in the Middle East, Kraidy (2003) argues that in order to understand culture and media in the Arab world, there needs to be a focus on the identity of media and its practices within the local context. Kraidy, then,

proclaims that articulating “the local” should be viewed not as a “counterpoint to globalisation,” but rather on the basis of the “local-to-global continuum” (. Kraidy 2003). [77]

Besides the need for a better understanding of media in the Arab world, advertising research has also been neglected in scholarly research (Kalliny & Gentry, 2007). [78] In a world filled with television outlets, there are concerns about the role of media and how it is influencing and re/producing gender identity in the Arab world in general, where Lebanon is a case. The afore mentioned literature enlightens us of a symbiosis that is progressively evolving between television content and advertising. Television and media industry developments continually aim for greater spectators who certainly transform to greater revenues. Contrariwise, advertisers and marketers seek outlets with the largest outreach to consumers. As a result, cultural enrichment and free political expression are not the type of programs that one would hope to see in a region implicitly struggling with defining its national identity and explicitly striving with re/identifying the social identity and role of its genders and their future.

To further complicate the situation, not only are television shows entertainment schemata, but also commercial messages themselves aspire to compete with these forms. Advertisement productions have exceeded television shows with the production qualities they offer, the humor they provide social circles, the lifestyles they promote, and the identity they reshape. The advertising phenomena on Arab stations, generally, and Lebanese television, more specifically, present values, behaviors, and alternatives.

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