

Turkish Airlines' 85th Anniversary Commercial: An Analysis of the Institutional Identity of a Brand in Terms of Glocalization

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Abstract : Airlines companies target different customer segments in consideration of pricing, service quality, flight network, etc. and their brand positioning accords with the marketization strategies developed in the same direction. The object of this study, Turkish Airlines, has many peculiarities regarding its brand positioning as compared to its rivals in the sector. In the first place, it appeals to a global customer group because of its Star Alliance membership and its broad flight network with 315 destination points. The second group in its customer segmentation includes domestic customers. For this group, the company follows a marketing strategy that plays to local culture and accentuates the image of Turkishness as an emotional allurements. The advertisements and publicity projects designed in this regard put little emphasis on the service quality the company offers to its clients; it addresses the emotions of the consumers rather than individual benefits and relies on the historical memory of the nation and shared cultural values. This study examines the publicity work which aims at the second segment customer group focusing on Turkish Airlines' 85th Anniversary Commercial through a symbolic meaning analysis approach. The commercial presents six stories with undertones of nationalism in its theme. Nationalism is not just the product of collective interests based on reason but a result of patriotism in the sense of loyalty to state and nation and love of ethnic belonging. While nationalism refers to concrete notions such as blood tie, common ancestor, shared history, it is not the actuality of these notions that it draws its real strength but the emotions invested in them. The myths of origin, the idea of common homeland, boundary definitions, and symbolic acculturation have instrumental importance in the development of these commonalities. The commercial offers concrete examples for an analysis of Connor's definition of nationalism based on emotions. Turning points in the history of the Turkish Republic and the historical mission Turkish Airlines undertook in these moments are narrated in six stories in the commercial with a highly emotional theme. These emotions, in general, depend on collective memory generated by national consciousness. Collective memory is not simply remembering the past. It is constructed through the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the past in the present moment. This study inquires the motivations behind the nationalist emotions generated within the collective memory by engaging with the commercial released for the 85th anniversary of Turkish Airlines as the object of analysis. Symbols and myths can be read as key concepts that reveal the relation between 'identity and memory'. Because myths and symbols do not merely reflect on collective memory, they reconstruct it as well. In this sense, the theme of the commercial defines the image of Turkishness with virtues such as self-sacrifice, helpfulness, humanity, and courage through a process of meaning creation based on symbolic mythologizations like flag and homeland. These virtues go beyond describing the image of Turkishness and become an instrument that defines and gives meaning to Turkish identity.

Keywords : collective memory, emotions, identity, nationalism

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