Glocalization as a strategy of international marketing: An intertextual approach

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ABSTRACT

Scholars and practitioners from a variety of disciplinary background have investigated and promoted glocalization as a dominant strategy in international marketing since 1990s. They have addressed the complexity of the global-local relationship, proposed various patterns of the global-local fusion, applied these patterns for international marketing in different contexts, etc. This study proposes an intertextual approach to augment the study of glocalization as an international marketing strategy. An intertextual approach to glocalization arguably foregrounds a sense of belonging and identity desired by focus group members in host markets, which exerts an impact on the development and reification of glocalization strategies as well as their flexible adaptation and implementation. As illustrated, this approach is helpful in describing and interpreting how glocalization is intertextually reified for brand-building and marketing in outward-oriented discourses of corporate communication. By taking an intertextual approach, I hope to advance theory and practice in this important topic area.

Keywords: Glocalization, international marketing, intertextuality, interpretive, identity affinity.

INTRODUCTION

Glocalization has become an enduring theme in the field of intercultural/international communication since 1990s. Scholars and practitioners from a multiplicity of disciplinary backgrounds, including consumer culture (e.g., Matusitz, 2010, 2011; Smith and Hu, 2013), cultural studies on hybridity and creolization (e.g., Bauman, 2013; Cohen, 2007; Kraidy, 1999, 2005), international marketing (e.g., Hoogenboom et al., 2010; Hopearuoho and Ventola, 2009;
Svensson, 2001), education (e.g., Caena, 2014; East, 2008), language and translation (e.g., Colbey, 2004; Tong and Cheung, 2011), mass communication (e.g., Lehmberg and Hicks, 2018; Waisbord, 2004; Wu, 2008), have investigated and promoted glocalization as a feature of intercultural/international communication for decades.

In his book *Glocalization: A Critical Introduction*, Roudometof (2016) examined and clarified the rich literature circulating the term “glocalization”, which has many different and contrasting, and sometimes even contradictory meanings. The present study shall neither try to seek an unambiguously sound definition of the terminology from theoretical and methodological perspectives, nor intend to theorize it in international/intercultural communication studies. Rather, the study aim to address the relatively underexplored question as a major concern of how to explain and interpret glocalization practices when performed differently across the national borders and works in international marketing as “a generic entrepreneurial strategy” (Johannisson, 2009). Often composed of various glocal tactics or methods, glocalization is usually described as a tremendously productive strategy and frequently mobilized by multinational corporations for marketing of their products/services across geographical regions. Under the assumption of heuristic values of intertextuality as an analytic tool deployed for a viable account of issues at the nuanced juncture of the global-local nexus, the objective of this paper is to propose an explanatory and interpretive approach to glocalization as a marketing strategy within the intercultural/international communication framework. Emphatically, neither does the label strategy here refer to the various patterns of the global-local fusion nor the “asymmetrical interdependence” (Straubhaar, 1991: 39) of varying degrees between the bipolar forces (i.e., globalization and localization, standardization and adaptation, universalism and particularism) as habitually discussed in communication and marketing studies (e.g., Lozada, 2005; Maynard and Tian, 2004; Sutikno and Cheng, 2012; Tixier, 2005; Wu, 2007, 2008); rather, it focuses on the specific practice of intertextuality that generates a unique formation and reification of glocalization strategies embedded in corporate discourse such as advertisements, brochures, and websites for brand-building and product/service promotion. Given the mobilization of often a variety of intertextual practices in the interpenetration and negotiation of the bipolar forces, the proposed intertextual approach to glocalization, however, is not intended to be an analytical model or a methodological approachable to systematically explain and interpret all glocalization practices materialized in the mediated discourse of corporate communication.

In what follows, I start with an overview of the current research on glocalization in this increasingly globalizing world and, then, outline and critique exclusively the existing approaches to glocalization as an international marketing strategy. Specifically, I note how the practical wisdom of glocalization---an amalgamation of global strategy and local adaptation---as the dominant strategy in international marketing has been in adequately explored and interpreted in the literature. I proceed to propose an intertextual perspective that offers an explanatory and interpretive approach to examining discursive practices of glocalization, foregrounding social identities, particularly local subjectivities, desired by an affinity group that impact the development and reification of a particular glocalization strategy, as well as its adaptation and implementation, in externally oriented discourses of corporate communication. Finally, the intertextual approach is accounted in detail and illustrated with an empirical analysis and three appropriate studies of brand-building and marketing.

**CURRENT RESEARCH ON GLOCALIZATION AS A STRATEGY OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING**

Coined first by sociologist Roland Robertson (1992, 1994, 1995), the term *glocalization* nicely seizes the core of the complicated process in which “the global is brought in conjunction with the local, and the local is modified
to accommodate the global” (Kumaravadivelu, 2008: 45). The essential idea here is the importance to keep a subtle balance between global homogenization and local customization to cope with market-by-market variations between the extreme poles of globalization and localization, standardization and adaptation, universalism and particularism. In international marketing studies, glocalization as “one of the main marketing buzzwords” (Robertson 1995: 28) of the 1990s is not infrequently described as the process, whereby multinational corporations adjust their marketing strategies and products/services for local variations, while attention, too, is given to global or standardization features. Robertson (1995: 29; see also Robertson 2013) simultaneously concedes that “glocalization is the way that globalization really operates, which means that it enters into our lives through harmonization of local with global process”. A homogenized conception of globalization is also implied in the manner in which Ritzer (1993, 2003, 2010, 2011) defines glocalization. This tendency of defining glocalization in terms of homogenization is particularly ostensible in the empirical inquiries into glocalization conducted for international marketing. Whenever examining glocalization as a marketing strategy across national borders, scholars ab initio take an interest in global brands, such as McDonald’s (Kelly-Homles, 2010; Ram, 2004; Vignali, 2001), Coca-Cola (Tian, 2006), Disneyland (Matusitz, 2010, 2011), Gillette (Maynard, 2003), Starbucks (Thompson and Arsel, 2004), and Wal-Mart (Matusitz and Leanza, 2009), for an inquiry into various patterns of global-local interactions as well as varying degrees of their fusion. Apparently, all the studies of international marketing by global brands, alongside Ritzer (1993, 2003, 2010, 2011) and Robertson (1995, 2013) implicitly show a strong ideological component underpinning glocalization as “a soft and subtle colonialism, a top-down adaption to the local, while still maintaining an unbalanced relation with the local which remains subordinate to the global” (Gobo, 2016: 382; see also Vizureanu, 2013).

The articulation of globalization as hegemony, however, can be indisputably critiqued for its serving “capitalist globalization by naturalizing it” (Thornton, 2000: 82). In a different lens, Alexander (2003) proposes construing “glocalization as globalization refracted through the local”, where by “the local is not annihilated, absorbed, or destroyed by globalization, but rather operates symbiotically with globalization and shapes the end point” (Gobo 2016: 382). Making essentially the same argument yet in a different fashion, Khondker (2004: 186) asserts that local on its own is globally constituted by “expanding the boundaries of locality as well as making some local ideas, practices, institutions global”. For Khondker (2004: 191; see also Khondker, 2013: 6), “glocalization to be meaningful must include at least one component that addresses the local culture, system of values and practices and so on”. Roudometof (2019: 805) agrees, arguing for the need “[t]o give the local its due” by binding the local in terms of place. In intercultural/international communication studies, the local has increasingly secured its recognition as an important place of meaning construction and power struggles (e.g., Bareiss, 1998; King and Mele, 1999; Morris, 1995; Stenglin, 2012). At times glocalization is even deployed for “are enforcement of cultural identity at the local community level” (Maynard, 2003: 60). This development in understanding the status of local in the modern process certainly undermines the common place idea of glocalization as a transnational practice, suggesting instead, as exemplified by Cobley (2004) and Ogan et al. (2007), the possibility of the glocalization practice taking place within the local community or at home. Naming this process “cultural reconversion”, Canclini (1997) shows us the adjustment of local cultures to global influences without being deteriorated or damaged when the former is rearticulated and reinforced in the modern process of globalization. Viewed in this sense, the competing forces of globalization and localization, standardization and adaptation, universalism and particularism do not exist in parallel to one another; the local being accorded importance as “a resistance … the source of particularities
and variety, as the ground of meaning for individuals and communities” (Braman, 1996: 27) interweaves the global in ongoing dialectical interplay. The complexity of global-local dialectical interactions is entirely recognized and perhaps best summarized by Kraidy in describing the local not as “the context of opposition or adaptation to globalization and its large-scale standardization of social life” (Kraidy, 2003: 36); rather, “[t]he local and the global … are engaged in a relational and reciprocal process whose dynamics are mutually formative” (Kraidy, 2003: 38).

The above critical review of glocalization as the consequence of the interpenetration of the bipolar opposition of the global and the local palpably advocates a non-linear, bidirectional, dialogical process of glocalization. Actually, a dialectical insight has already been incorporated into research on dimensions of intercultural communication for describing “the relational, processual, and contradictory nature” of human interactions and relationships (Martin and Nakayama, 1999: 13; see also Baxter, 2004; Martin and Nakayama, 2010, 2015). A dialectical approach presupposing “a complex knot of contradictory interplays” (Martin and Nakayama, 2015: 18) would be extremely promising to explain and interpret the global-local interactions and fusion. Yet the generically collaborative and competitive strategy of glocalization, as noted above, was often exclusively discussed in terms of the global-local interactions of various patterns and/or the global-local fusion of varying degrees. These studies, in addition, used to resort to the approach of content analysis or ethnography. Accordingly, despite efforts being taken in this direction, there is still concern about an absence of empirical evidence underpinning the creditability of these studies (Wang and Servaes, 2000).

Next to the account of glocalization as hybridity underlining the global-local dialectical interactions, there is a considerable discussion regarding motivations behind the embrace of glocalization and their direct impact on its adaptation and application. Bauman (2001: 304) contends that the relational and reciprocal process of glocalization widens the options of individuals and groups to build, organize, and perform post-modern identities. In post-modern societies where social and culture change often engenders identity crisis, and struggles over the construction of identities have become a salient feature of post-modern social life (Giddens, 1991), identities have already become one of the liveliest topics of inquiry into glocalization. In communications and marketing studies, the target group or audience community, imagined or not, is not rarely defined as one of important factors to be assessed prior to a definitive glocalization strategy to be developed and applied for brand-building and international marketing (e.g., Koller, 2007; Palacios, 2010; Schafmeister, 2015). Onsager and his colleagues (2007) assert the need to amplify a definitive glocalization strategy to be taken, when multiple proximities to the host market in general, and more particularly, to the target group members are considered for engendering a sense of belonging and identity. Technically, the audience community is carefully considered to generate a discursive space where the target group members are encouraged to interact with each other, thus affording a sense of being part of this community as mediated by the externally oriented corporate discourse, which in turn becomes an additional incentive to return to the discourse site concerned (Palacios, 2010: 283). In the way elucidated by Straubhaar (1991), the creation of a space of this kind offers audiences an opportunity of experiencing corporate discourse “that are closest, most proximate, or most directly relevant to them in cultural and linguistic terms” (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005: 273). Developed from the highlighted status of identity in the study of glocalization is an implication of defining glocalization, too, as reflexive engagement. The categorization of glocalization as reflexive engagement is of theoretical significance in that not only does it transcend the prevailing accounts discussed earlier of glocalization as hegemony and as hybridity, but also “reflects consciousness and engagement in dealing with the complex world” (Gulmez, 2020: 759).

Our review of literature on glocalization so far, it is worth highlighting, is also making an exciting rhetorical
and performative turn. The performative element in discourses about glocalization needs to be highlighted (Urry, 2003), because attention in this way is directed to viewing glocalization “as a cultural praxis, or as processes of meaning-making that have real material consequences” (Nienass, 2013: 536) of building identity affinity. With a focus of analysis on the lexico-grammatical patterns in the English websites of six European companies, Poppi (2011: 146)d is covered that the unique tension and hybridization of global and local elements in these websites actually contribute to “the specific identity a company is willing to convey to its multiple audiences”. But glocalization, according to Gotti (2011), can be examined at many levels of discourse; a study of “the interaction between linguistic and cultural factors in the construction of discourse, both within specialized domains and in wider contexts” allows for the possibility of producing more illuminating findings regarding the interactions and fusion of global and local elements in corporate discourse (Gotti, 2011: 29). A discursive perspective is demonstrated productive in explaining not only cultural influences on a particular glocalization strategy multinational corporations adopt, adapt and use, but also what a brand or identity multinational corporations want to construct and present (Gotti, 2011; Koller, 2007; Lee ,2005; Liu and Wu, 2015; Poppi, 2011).

While the discursive perspective might be taken as an important move in the examination of glocalization in the performative realm, something is still missing. We have not yet reached another turn in the study of glocalization as an international marketing strategy, the interpretive turn. The interpretive turn is attentive to textual or discursive strategies deployed in the actual implementation of glocalization, centered in their practice and performance. As rightly noted by Nienass (2013: 536), without this turn, “it is not necessarily sufficient in also pointing to the more performative elements” in exploring glocalization. Nevertheless, the extant research on glocalization at the corporate level has not yet intended to systematically describe and interpret how definitive glocalization strategies are developed and implemented in externally oriented corporate communication for brand-building and marketing, just as sufficient attention not being given to discursive or textual strategies deployed in the conduct of glocalization within the scholarship on corporate discourse.

The objective of this paper, as noted earlier, is to fill this gap by proposing incorporating the theoretical and analytical insights of intertextuality into the intercultural/international communication framework of glocalization to explore it as a dominant strategy in international marketing.

**AN INTERTEXTUAL APPROACH TO GLOCALIZATION: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

The premise on which I propose the incorporation of an intertextual perspective for studying glocalization is contingent largely upon the observation from intercultural communication and international marketing that the dynamic process of interaction, dialogue, and negotiation between the bipolar forces of the global and the local usually involves the blend of a diversity of local, historical, and transnational elements including cultural values, beliefs, myths, and tastes (e.g., Matusitz, 2011; Schaffmeister, 2015; Yan, 1997). The link between intertextuality and glocalization, as we shall see below, can be principally set up through an association of glocalization with brand-building/marketing promised by intertextuality, whereby we can discuss the former in terms of the latter without a massive change of gear when examining the practice of the former in international marketing. This advancement is significant in that it makes us claim justifiably to take intertextual phenomena in outward-oriented corporate discourse of communication both as a focus of analysis and as a form of mediation, whereby the development and reification of definitive glocalization strategies in the domain of international marketing are taken up in the domain of corporate discourse.
Before proceeding to give an account of reasons for taking an intertextual approach to glocalization, it is worth a pause to brief intertextual phenomena incorporate discourse. Intertextual phenomena in corporate discourse can be sorted with reference to Fairclough’s (1992) distinction between “manifest intertextuality” and “constitutive intertextuality or interdiscursivity”. While the former sees texts as related to specific prior texts, in the latter they are linked to an abstract set of conventions such as genres, registers, or communities of practices. In multimodal texts like websites and advertisements, the manifestation of intertextuality sometimes is found in various communicative modes including language, image, color, and typography. Effects of multimodal texts, thus, usually rest on the interactions amongst modes. Another possibility in multimodal texts is for one mode to be “resemiotized” (Iedema, 2001) into another.

As I did elsewhere (Author, 2019), there is a considerable commonality in the ideas or tenets addressed by both the notions of glocalization and intertextuality, under pinning the treatment of intertextuality as a heuristic lens for studying glocalization as the dominant strategy of international marketing. The first connection of intertextuality to glocalization is the shared trait of being goal-driven. Bazerman (2004: 94) makes the point that “intertextuality is not just a matter of which other texts you refer to, but how you use them, what you use them for, and ultimately how you position yourself as a writer to them to make your own statement”. In a range of discourse, the practice of intertextuality is more often than not driven by, and related to, the intention of text producers to consciously orient and manipulate intended audiences’ identities and experience, as well as their attitude and behavior (O’Donnell, 1994; Kelly-Holmes, 2000; Feng and Wignell, 2011; Meán, 2012). Under this interpretation of intertextual practice placing the primary agency on text producers, intertextuality can no longer be taken as a feature or uniqueness of text or discourse; rather, it is more appropriate to perceive it as a stylistic device, or in Peterson’s (2005: 135) term, “persuasive metatextuality”, in a manner that brings about some impact over the experience of target group members.

The term intertextuality, additionally, captures well the dialectics of global-local interaction accentuated by an account of glocalization as hybridity, despite the agency of text producers under scored in the whole course of intertextual practices. As widely recognized, intertextuality is indeed a matter of decontextualization and recontextualization of semiotic resources and conventions (e.g., Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Briggs and Bauman, 1992; Linell, 1998). Semiotic resources and conventions are lifted out of different sources or contexts through selection for recontextualization in a new context through adaptation. The concept recontextualization, as remarked by Machin (2013: 352), is particularly helpful to explain and interpret the choice of specific semiotic resources and the ways they are mobilized in the process of contextualization and legitimation of things such as ideas, values and identities. Emphatically, “the ways in which the kinds of semiotic element and convention are recontextualized not only provide a discursive frame for intertextual practice in its own right: our very understanding of what intertextuality means depends to a greater or lesser extent upon the constitutive role of that meta-dimension” (Author, 2019: 499). This interpretation of intertextuality in its own right amenable to a process of discursive construction resonates well with the notion of glocalization giving prominence to the complex interaction between the global and the local.

Another advantage of conceptualizing intertextuality as the analytical platform for discussing the marketing strategy of glocalization lies in its emphasis on the substantial impact host markets usually exert on the development and conduct of a particular glocalization strategy. Intertextuality might be better perceived as a dynamic context of practice by virtue of an attempt it indicates at generalizing over a range of specific contexts where the act of recontextualizing semiotic resource and conventions from different sources and contexts takes place. This perception of intertextuality is not incongruent with the earlier position emphasizing the impact of target group
members in host markets on the complexity of global-local interactions; but more important, it gives prominence to constraints on intertextual practices likely enacted by the structure and ideology of the host market. Furthermore, it deflects our attention away from what semiotic resources and conventions are adopted for intertextual practice to questioning why, and how, these, rather than those, are used and adapted. As remarked by Porter (1986), intertextual phenomena in the mediated discourse of corporate communication can be construed as social action, as more or less stable conventions of a particular discourse community. Peterson (2005: 130-131) also makes it explicit by remarking that intertextuality as social action is of indexical significance. Put differently, the game of intertextuality, if taken as a marker of cultural identity, becomes an opportunity for audiences of external corporate communication to participate in the discourse community for identity affinity and belonging (e.g., Bednarek and Caple, 2010; Caple and Bednarek, 2010; Oostendorp, 2015; Ott and Walter, 2000).

Suggested by the above discussed reflexive dimension of intertextuality, we may take a further step to argue for another perfect congruity of intertextuality with the customarily accommodative practice of glocalization (cf. Lam, 2010), and for the reason backing up an account of glocalization as reflexive engagement. Bakhtin (1986) is entirely right in promoting the perception of intertextuality as discursive practice by attaching the importance to context. To cite his words, “The text lives only by coming into contact with another context (with discourse). Only at this point of contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue” (Bakhtin 1986: 162). What is implied by this assertion is that each act of textual production not only presupposes antecedent texts but anticipates prospective ones. Similarly, Ravotas and Berkenkotter (1998) argue for both the retrospective and prospective sides of recontextualization. The former refers to the transformation of prior texts and structures that are selective, and the latter is concerned with the anticipation, partially or not, of text producers about the interpretation of a particular group of audience addressed. That being said, recontextualization as an essential part of intertextual practices must be seen as a process resulted from the dialogue or negotiation between home/old contexts and host/new contexts that generally involves meta-discursive (re)articulation. This understanding of intertextuality is undoubtedly significant in the sense that it brings to foreground the inevitability to align intertextual practice with audience needs and expectations for a predicted overcome in the discourse community, for which intertextuality is practiced and within which it is interpreted (Bauman, 2004; Porter, 1986). Besides, it is pertinent particularly to describing the global-local dialectic that is in practice mediated too by the regional as well as the national in global marketing communications (Sinclair and Wilken, 2009; Wilken and Sinclair, 2011). At this juncture, it is crucial to be reminded that recontextualization does not simply mean the repetition of something in a new context; instead, it often involves “reframing” (Goffman, 1974). Van Leeuwen (1993; see also Fairclough 2003: 139-141) sorted transformation of recontextualization into four categories—”deletion”, “rearrangement”, “substitution” and “addition”. Interestingly, this accords the definition of glocalization as an ideology that subtly transforms the local in line with global culture and interests, or vice versa. The success of intertextual practices in externally oriented corporate communication, as suggested, depends largely upon text producers’ awareness, and judgement, of what can be presupposed in a discourse community and their ability to effectively apply that community’s values for its maintenance or, probably, (re)definition. Emerged from this point of view is the close connection of intertextual practice, like glocalization, to issues of identity, agency, difference and power, making intertextuality repeatedly a useful tool for analyzing external corporate discourse to investigate identity constructions in international marketing communication. Coincident or not, an analysis of intertextuality has long been demonstrated particularly suited to research
questions concerning affinity groups and identity (e.g., Meân et al., 2010; Meân, 2012; Ivanič, 2015; Krijnen and van Bauwel, 2015). This paper, as suggested earlier, proposes an intertextual approach to glocalization as a marketing strategy in the context of international/intercultural communication. The premise behind this proposal is the fact of intertextuality to varying degrees signaled by semiotic sources and conventions, entailing the provision by intertextuality points of entry or focus for exploring solidarity building and affiliation. In other words, semiotic resources and conventions selected and adopted from other sources or contexts, as well as the ways they are reused and adapted in a new context for sustaining or creating group identity and affiliation, are helpful in identifying and assessing the concrete practice of glocalization as a strategy of international marketing.

**APPLICATION: ONE ILLUSTRATIVE ANALYSIS, THREE EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

In this section, I will first illustrate the intertextual approach to glocalization by analyzing an advertisement for Adidas in its 2008 advertising campaign in China. Following this, different types of intertextual practices will be offered for exemplifying the reification of particular glocalization strategies in practice. As shown in Figure 1, the Adidas advertisement chosen for a qualitative analysis is representative in many aspects, including page layout, visual design, headline, slogan, logo, and the choice of a Chinese athlete in Adidas’ 2008 advertising campaign in China. For the illustrative purpose, it is analyzed with the question of how Adidas reaches Chinese people by means of intertextual strategies.

**Figure 1:** The ad for Adidas.
To start with, this advertisement chooses a Chinese athlete, specifically, Sui Feifei, one of the basketball players in China’s team, as the model instead of a foreign athlete, which is for sure adapted to local influences and references for constituting local orientation. What is evenly apparent is, alongside the logo—the Three Stripes, the translation of the globally standard English slogan “Nothing is Impossible” into Chinese“没有不可能meiyou bu keneng (lit. nothing impossible)”. The Chinese translation, on the one hand, is presented almost the same as of the source text in semantic line, and on the other, remains extremely faithful to the propositional content of the source text. According to Venuti (2009), translation, being an act of textual appropriation, is a unique case of intertextuality. In this case, the intertextual practice performed by means of translation is supposed to result in rearticulation of the source text’s properties embedded in the representation of Adidas to Chinese people, as well as a “refraction” of the “priorities of the recipient culture” (Burke 2007: 20). This can be accounted largely for by paying attention to the strategic, deliberate placement of the target text in front of its source text, but below or after the referential addition of “与隋菲菲一起2008 yu Sui Feifei yiqi 2008 (lit. together with Sui Feifei 2008)”. As indicated earlier, the choice of a basketball player as the model is linkable to the intention of the copywriter’s orientation to Chinese people as the target viewers. Other than this, the model alludes to the discursive space of team competition. Thus, associated both in meaning and direction with the Chinese translation, “与隋菲菲一起2008” implicitly presupposes a cultural mindset dominant in China, namely, the stereotyped group characteristics of collectivism and its cultural importance for group goal achievement. This interdiscursive reference to collectivism is compellingly illustrated, and thereof reinforced, by the model’s act of shooting that openly announces the sports game of basketball play demanding collective efforts and close cooperation between team members. Additionally, occupying the largest portion of the advertisement, the salient image of supporting the player by the masses effortlessly conjures up the most lucid and forthright stereotype of collectivism.

Like the choice of a Chinese athlete, the determination to take advantage of this cultural allusion by adding “与隋菲菲一起2008” as part of the Chinese translation of the English slogan is probably taken with Chinese people as the target viewers in mind. But the inherent traits of the globally standard slogan in this way are erased or removed to the greatest extent by this adaptive, recontextualized translation presupposing the collectivistic values and beliefs. Besides, since information placed on the right means “problematic, contestable” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996: 187), the English slogan seems to be reused here only for the intertextual representation of Chinese cultural version of group goal achievement. The semiotic construction of a collectivistic cultural identity is visually enriched, and thereof enhanced, by the placement of the Beijing Olympics’ emblem alongside the Olympics’ symbol as observed in the top right-hand corner. It is through this way of interpreting Olympism in the light of intertextually alluded collectivism that the link of traditional Chinese culture to a global concern emerges.

The three empirical studies discussed below, then, provide a further, yet different, opportunity to show various intertextual practices implemented for the reification of particular glocalization strategies consciously deployed in outward-oriented corporate discourse for brand-building and marketing.

In her study of HSBC brand, Koller (2007: 115) examines how the mobilization of glocalization in its externally oriented discourse of history brochures, advertisements and websites positions this multinational corporation “as a provider of both global amenities and local ‘authenticity’” in promoting its products or services across geographical regions. Iconographic traditions, keywords, key concepts,
reference and attribution representing both the global/modern and the local/historical are employed for the generation of a spatio-temporal hybrid space from which the binary division of global/local is merged. Thus, an intertextual incongruity opens up in the discursive construction of HSBC brand. HSBC’s branding discourse shows “stereotypical indications of the global [as an allure for local audiences] while the local is largely constructed and subsequently exploited to endow the brand with a ‘human touch’” (Koller, 2007:127) for brand affinity with the target audiences. This kind of intertextual practice actually shows the attachment of equal importance to both the forces of the global and the local, indicating that the tension and hybridization of global and local elements in effect contribute to the construction and presentation of a specific identity that HSBC wants to convey to its multiple audiences across the world. An intertextual perspective is helpful in that it explains and interprets how HSBC’s banking group market themselves as a unique brand conflating the two forces.

In another example comparing and contrasting the glocalization strategies adopted and implemented to manipulate the tension between homogenization and heterogenization as observed in the television commercials for McDonald’s and KFC in China, Lu (2010) presents an account of KFC’s victory over McDonald’s in the Chinese fast-food market. Both America-rooted brands manage to make their food products different than traditional Chinese food by representing a stereotypical American image of modernity, advance and globalism. Of equal evidence are the differences between them. Specifically, McDonald’s makes their products distinct by appealing exclusively to modern value themes related to the American image, which, by virtue of “genre proximity”, facilitates the acceptance of their products across diverse cultures (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005). KFC does more than McDonald’s by fusing traditional Chinese values, say, of family, patriotism, and filial piety with American values in their products for local tastes. In other words, combined with genre proximity, “cultural proximity” (Straubhaar, 1991), a diversifying process in which the production, reception and consumption of products is shaped by the cultural identities of Chinese people, is, too, mobilized by KFC. In contrast to McDonald’s glocalization strategy laying emphasis on the disintegration of cultural proximity from genre proximity, there is no intertextual tension between cultural proximity and genre proximity in KFC’s. For Lu (2010: 629), “The integration [of cultural proximity into genre proximity] not only makes KFC more competitive in the Chinese market but also helps avoid Chinese nationalist resistance to American products and companies”. In intertextual terms, we can attribute the more successful story of KFC than McDonald’s in Chinese fast-food market to the former’s highly responsive and meticulously tailored approach of intertextual appeals to China’s traditional values for cultural proximity to Chinese people.

In a third, yet fairly different example, Ogan et al. (2007) describe the2003 advertising campaign of Cola Turka, a local beverage by a Turkish company, to compete with Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola for the local market share. They mainly examine how this local brand manages to send the Turkish consumers the message that Americans are eager to drink the Turkish cola advertised. The Hollywood movie format is adopted in the campaign, in which a Hollywood actor wearing moustache, while having a dinner with a Turkish family, is singing the popular American baseball song “Take me out to the ball game”. Alongside the movie and the song, the actor is claimed to be able to add some special values to the local drink because of his association with the people and the cultural features of America. But we find the configuration of non-congruent, contradictory semiotic elements in mixed intertextuality: not only does the moustache make the actor look like a Turk; it also alludes to the country’s Turkic roots in Central Asia in the glorification of the Cemko-type moustache. Other semiotic elements including stuffed peppers, a popular Turkish main dish the actor is served with, and a Turkish patriotic song the family break into after sipping the Turkish cola, equally, rearticulate and reinforce Turkish tradition. All of them, however, are adapted to the global influences of America
here. The intertextual account of the discursive practice in this campaign explains and interprets why the Hollywood actor is adopted as an important semiotic material and how this resource helps the local company stake a claim to the local product’s prestige and legitimacy: “the westerners are adopting behaviors and using local products produced in Turkey in order to become more Turkish, an identity that most people in the commercial aspire to” (Ogan et al., 2007: 50).

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to make a methodological contribution to the examination of glocalization as an international marketing strategy in the intertextual perspective. As a conclusion, it is necessary to highlight the advantages of the intertextual approach to glocalization. The intertextual approach is different from other analytical models like content analysis and ethnography that are usually employed by scholars from a variety of different and pertinent disciplines to study the international marketing strategy of glocalization. The intertextual perspective is distinctive in that it underscores the substantial impact of host markets the term glocalization highlights on the global-local interaction and on the development and implementation of particular glocalization strategies. The intertextual approach avoids “the pitfalls of generalization”, exercises “a sensitivity for the complexities” of the global-local relationship, and recognizes “the performative element” of glocalization strategies (Nienas, 2013: 537), which allows for a consideration of the performativity and creativity of glocalization in building a sense of belonging and identity desired by target group members, as well as of the constraint of audience communities on the adoption and adaption of semiotic resources to develop and implement a particular glocalization strategy. Thus, it is powerful and productive in capturing and describing the processual and contingently emergent nature of glocalization in the externally oriented discourse of corporate communication.

As illustrated above, the intertextual approach is particularly useful in explaining and interpreting choices of a particular glocalization strategy, as well as in facilitating the discovery of motivations and underpinning strategies of intertextuality in building identity affinity with the target group members. Yet more research needs undertaking not only to demonstrate the analytical power of this methodological approach in describing and interpreting particular glocalization strategies developed and implemented for international marketing, but also to enhance its wider applicability to glocalization as a marketing strategy adopted and adapted in many other contexts.

Note

1. More than this, the ways in which glocalization is adapted and conducted in corporate discourses of brand-building and marketing may shape and impinge on audiences’ attitudes and engagement.

REFERENCES


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