

## Globalization and Challenges to the National Language in Pakistan on Visual Communication Design

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### Abstract

The research is based on analyzing globalization in visual communication design in Pakistan. The approach of global corporations toward local cultures in relation to communication design is focused. The western influences are studied and examined into categories. The challenges to the national language Urdu and the dominance of the English language in advertisements are analyzed in the context of Pakistan. The role of visual communication design has become a fundamental ingredient in incorporating cultural values in Pakistani society. Digital technological advancements have promoted western culture and language in visual communication design.

Western colonies were inspired and influenced by the visuals of the colonizers. The development of visual communication design by the colonial is analyzed. In this article, visual communication design specimens from multinational brands of fashion and food are analyzed. The elements are examined in the context of foreign trends and language. The colonial education establishment in the subcontinent is compared with the native approach. The design education system is addressed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Design, Post-colonial, Urdu, Roman Script, Mimicry.

### **British Art and Design Education in Subcontinent**

Since the beginning of human existence on planet Earth, humans are surrounded by designs of things suiting their needs. Beginning from the Maurya reign around 320 BCE until the Mughal rules in 1700 CE, a cast-based system prevailed for artists. Until the 20<sup>th</sup> CE art education was transmitted from generation and existed in countryside areas. From the post-Industrial Revolution to the contemporary graphic design practice can be outlined in general. Industrial developments raised the need for the application of design to fulfill aesthetical requirements for the mass-produced items. The traditional craft objects were transferred to machine-made processes. Thus, the term industrial art developed to be called 'Design' to label the profession.<sup>1</sup>

Following the model of South Kensington teaching design through drawing, British education in colonial Punjab evolved in the publication of visual

literacy. The visual understanding through drawing was a way to read the logic of forms into symbols and statements. To improve the technical skills for manufacturing, visual literacy was essential. The Mayo School of Arts followed the curriculum of South Kensington now Royal College of Art. The Elementary and Advanced studies followed the instructions grouped in a broad subject area. The young students were taught by blackboard presentations of drawings copying outlines from two-dimensional copies of geometry (see figure 1). The students were also taught general writing and reading to get upgrades. The advanced studies included Indian ornamental designs in museums and books. The Arabic or Sanskrit terms were replaced with English terms. The drawing of still life, living model and advanced perspective was studied in art schools. The principal of Mayo School of Art Kipling believed that ignorance of the English language was a drawback for the Indian students. This deficiency made them suffer in their occupations. The English language was promoted through Art and Design education.<sup>2</sup> The idea of Kipling provides an insight into how colonial language was promoted in the period.



Figure I. Mayo School of Arts (now NCA) the 1900s, <https://www.facebook.com/lahore.gardens/posts/reshared-mayo-school-of-arts-now-nca-lahore-c-1900s/10151596700538214/>

The speech by professor U.R. Rao during the convocation at the Indian university, he stated that we can lead world progress towards the future by considering technology as a necessary part of the modern world and sharing it as life ingredients with the rest of humans is just a statement. His words are mentioned below.

“In fact, the monopoly over science and technology have been have been rigorously shielded by a marginal community of progressive countries. Colonial domination is parallel to the way it was over underdeveloped countries. The hegemony is operating like imperialism by means of technological competence employed by the developed nations for applying their impact and control over the evolving world. The ideas of developing international economic order are just statements and practically not happening. Technological transfer and sharing can make all the countries progress as part of science and developments to serve humanity. Science and technology have become the most powerful currency of power for continued exploitation and domination of the developing world. We have to implicitly recognize that science and technology is the principal means of producing new wealth and any country which ignores the development of science and technology on a self-reliant basis will inevitably perish in the modern world.”<sup>3</sup>

Design is also a powerful currency in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If it is not realized that design is part of a powerful currency, then the process of colonization will be promoted. Professional education as design should be specific as compared to

philosophy or general education. The design education has to address the cultural aspects of the location. The colonial design education is producing graduates alien to the native problems and solutions. Eventually, most of them immigrate to the country fit for them. Thus, a poor country produces educated graduates to serve the rich country.<sup>3</sup> The discussion here highlights the technological imperialism in design education which lead to globalization and domination of the English language. There is no national policy to check on the colonial influences and effects.

### **Graphic Design and Globalization**

In the Manifesto of communist ideas written by Carl Marx in 1848, the industrialists are aiming the entire world as a market to sell products. Marshall McLuhan in 1968 called it 'the global village' to designate electronic media of television, film, and the internet connecting people from all over the world to communicate. This made the flow of culture, images, ideas and technology. The distribution of magazines, newspapers and television programmers communicated information by creating medias capes. The visuals and language in the text created icescapes. Globalization is presented by theorists as the whole world becomes a single place, although it was unable to familiarize the social differences. The local aspects remained specific characteristics of the culture. Thus, global brands used local cultures in visual communication design to reach the people.<sup>4</sup>

The chief creative officer *Adeeba Khan* at Manhattan Communication explained McDonald's decision to launch local products. The experiment by McDonald was encouraging to expand into the local food menu. It was

advertised digitally-led through visual communication campaigns and print media. This is an example of an international brand focusing on cultural foods (see figure 2).<sup>5</sup>



Figure 2. McDonald's Pakistan introduced its native product Bun Kabab on 1 April 2019, <https://aurora.dawn.com/news/1143497>

One can see today that visual communication design campaigns in Pakistan have incorporated the global preferred use of cultural values. Ideas and connectivity of cultural aspects were transported through technology. One can see whether globalization or westernization has taken over visual communication design. Due to the global reach of western visuals and language through brands, westernization has dominated. The examples like Google Doodle and Coke studio present Pakistan's approach toward multiculturalism. The technological developments are an add-on to the Western influences in designs. The resemblance to Western-style in the works is lead to serving a global approach (see figures 3-4).<sup>6</sup>



Figure 3. Google Doodle showcases Pakistani culture ‘Truck Art’ 14 August 2012, Artists Revealed, <http://www.meanwhileinpakistan.com/2015/10/google-doodles-for-pakistan/>



Figure 4. Coke Studio Season 5 Billboard advertisement, the image of Umair Jaswal, <https://www.jamhoor.org/read/2020/2/24/mystics-mullahs-and-markets-in-post-911-pakistan>

### Effect of Colonial Cultural Influences

The Eastern traditions are passive as colonial culture is mimicked to present modernity. An Iranian Thinker *Jalal Ale-e Ahmad* describes this by using the term Westoxication. This term explains the person educated in Europe and America becomes an ineffective member of the local society. It is due to their confusion about their culture. The lack of balance emerges between cultures

and modern values, which takes over advertisers to create visuals for communication with consumers. According to Homi K. Bhabha, the people are divided by this colonial perception of two cultures with no affiliation of belonging. The designers use this technique to mimic the colonials. Mimicry by people is to copy the ones who are in power assuming that they might have the same power.<sup>7</sup>

The mimicry is evident in postcolonial cultures around the world advertisements. The mimicry in Pakistani brands is analyzed into three types. The Western dominance is explained through these examples.

### **I. Iconic Mimicry**

The brand *Simply Sufi* was established in 2012. The primary role in a visual impression of a brand is color. To the visual of a brand and experience colors play a vital role in advertisements. The brand *Simply Sufi* used yellow white and red colors. These colors are the main palette for the brand McDonald's. The visible contrast between yellow and red colors is the distinct feature of visibility. The logo of *Simply Sufi* used English and Urdu text to communicate with the Pakistani audience. The influence of global brands is utilised to present the local brand carrying foreign visual appeal. The advertisement is an example of a hybrid cultural communication in design (see figures 5-6).





Figure 5. Simply Sufi XPRS - Serve Pakistan, <https://servepak.com/2213-simply-sufi-xprs/>



Figure 6. McDonald's Dinner Box promotion offers, <https://www.businessinsider.com/mcdonalds-dinner-box-strategy-2014-6>

## 2. Linguistic Mimicry

The ideology of *Gul Ahmad* a fashion retail brand is based upon global beauty standards. The brand is known for a variety of trends and fashion lines. In Pakistan, it is a leading brand for contemporary clothing. The brand

name is written in the Urdu language using English Roman typography in the figure 7 below. Another famous fashion brand is *Khaadi* sells shoes, accessories and fragrances besides clothes. The brand is believed to be the founder of a blend of traditional and global fashion. The brand used combination marks in which icons of hands are used to symbolise the process of manufacturing through craftsman's hard work. The brand name used the English alphabet to avoid local appeal (see figure 8).



Figure 7. Fashion retail brand logo *Gul Ahmed*, <https://www.gulahmedshop.com/about-us>

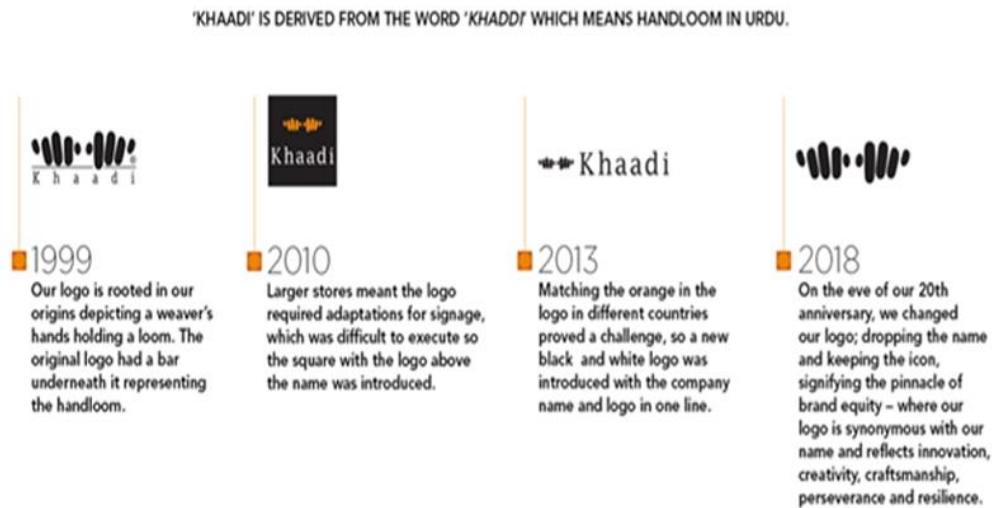


Figure 8. Leading fashion retail brand logo *Khaadi*,  
<https://aurora.dawn.com/news/II434II>

The use of the English language for brands is a linguistic mimicry. It is to communicate with customers about modernity. The Western affiliation is used to inspire customers to pay attention to buying the product. Western-inspired imagery and language are considered to promote modernity and international communication. The English language is now part of brand advertisements to achieve superiority. The brand names and tag lines are followed to attract the target audience.<sup>8</sup> English language in brands reflects Europeanization and dependability. The Brands of Gul Ahmad and Khaadi exhibit linguistic mimicry.

### **3. Visual mimicry**

The Pepe Jeans Brand promotes casual wear jeans and jackets. The brand is famous for the latest trends in wear for men and women. The main target audience of the brand is youth all over the world. It was launched in Islamabad and later in Lahore in Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> *Maira Khan* is a local model is presented in a western outfit for the brand Pepe jeans in the figure 9. Another fashion brand Levi's for Pakistanis devoted to social networking, technology and music. The western wear demands are fulfilled by a variety in the range of styles. The company is known worldwide for its Denim jeans products. The advertisements of the brand used Western-looking local models. To attract customers, the celebs, act as a role model in the culture. The modern youth is a target for profits. The example of the brand depicts visual mimicry of local model images as Westernized. The attires like jeans, pants and jackets are

particularly western styles. The example here presents a female model sitting between unrelated male models (see figure 10). The visual is not a considerable presentation according to Muslim values. The customers are communicated through visuals promoting femininity as appreciated in the West. The traditional approach in this situation is considered to oppose women's rights. The Muslim societies are concerned over these revolutionary images where patriarchy is dominating. The Western mimicry through such visuals represents the postcolonial approaches in communication design. The postcolonial Pakistani advertisements of brands are negotiating with Western styles. The advertisements of brands are mimicking West. The advertisers and consumers are living in a loss of identity.



Figure 9. Pepe Jeans casual wear brand, <https://www.brandedgirls.com/international-brands-in-pakistan-list/>



Figure 10. Levi's an American clothing retail brand, <https://www.brandedgirls.com/international-brands-in-pakistan-list/>

### **National Language Crisis**

There are many languages spoken and written in Pakistan. Urdu and English languages are used for communication and information. The private sector school boosts English medium education in Pakistan. The English language is a class not just a language in the country. The learning English language is considered to secure success in a career. The parents prefer to choose English medium schools for education.<sup>10</sup> English language was officially used by the British rulers before the partition of India. The development of social areas and economy was reinforced by the education system devising English language. The English language symbolises the rich

class in the early period and Urdu was used by the masses as a medium of instruction. The private school sector flourished during the *Zia ul Haq* rule. The education policy in 1998 did not make a policy for the English language in the syllabus. In 2009 the National Education Policy ordered to follow English medium for the subjects of mathematics and science from fourth class. The Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered in 2015 to replace the English language with the Urdu language in official office correspondence.

Urdu language is facing challenges in the digital age to survive. Urdu language exists in Pakistan and India as one of the South Asian languages. Urdu is national language besides the English language in Pakistan. The Perso-Arabic script style is used to write the Urdu language and known as *Nastaliq* an ornate and droopy style visually. *Naskh* style is used in smartphone apps and digital devices (see figure II). The angular script style *Naskh* came from Arabic.

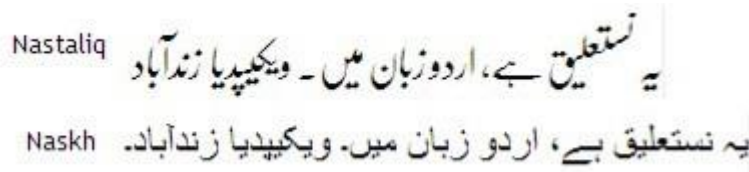


Figure II. *Nastaliq* script vs *Naskh* script, <https://medium.com/@eteraz/the-death-of-the-urdu-script-9ce935435d90>

The users compose Urdu in the Roman alphabet nowadays. The Western culture and language dominance has evolved into the replacement of Urdu script with Roman script. This situation was sensed in Turkey and Indonesia and they have replaced their language with Roman letters. Urdu is transforming into Roman transliteration. Urdu is considered the national

language across the country. The visual communication designs use Roman script for Urdu tag lines. The reason for the Roman alphabet adaptation is due to the lack of skills in Urdu typing software. The brands in Pakistan prefer Roman script as Urdu fonts are less readable for communication designs. Urdu script is also avoided to keep away the local appeal to the brand. The film industry of Bollywood and Lollywood use Urdu written in Roman script. The communication for both the *Devanagari* and Perso-Arabic names of the films is achieved. The Roman script for Urdu evolved through technology as the software of Urdu was not sufficient. The daily communication on smartphones and social media uses Roman script for Urdu composing. The spelling of the words differs according to the tagline communication requirements for the brand (see figures I2-I6).



Figure I2. Lipton Tea Billboard, <http://arrows.com.pk/>



Figure I3. Ufone advertisement, <https://insider.pk/entertainment/tv/pakistani-advertisements-best/>



Figure 14. Zong 4G Billboard, *Chauburji Chowk* Lahore, photograph, 27, December 2020.





Figure 15. Logo Royale men's footwear manufacturer, Emporium Mall Lahore, photograph, 12, June 2023.



Figure 16. Naqoosh lady's boutique, Emporium Mall Lahore, photograph, 12, June 2023.

### Conclusion

The influences of globalisation on the visual communication design of Pakistan are analysed in this research. The effects of colonial culture on communication design are examined. The British model of education transformed native art-making into machine-made processes for mass production. To promote the colonial language, the Art and design terms in the native language were replaced with the English language. Through

technological imperialism, hegemonic control of colonials influenced the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The colonial design education imposed Western cultural aspects to train the native designers. There is no national policy to check on these issues. The visual communication design campaigns in Pakistan serve global Western styles. A confusion of culture in advertising visuals appeared due to a mixture of two cultures having no harmony. The designs mimic the Western culture and types are identified. The Urdu language is declining due to a lack of preference by private school sectors. Urdu is now written in the Roman alphabet by the brands in Pakistan to communicate with the masses. The digital technological advancements have made the Urdu script fade away. Due to Western Style following, Urdu is less preferred by the brands to avoid the local appeal. The Urdu declined due to a lack of up-gradation of software technology for language usage. The replacement of the Urdu script with the Roman script is everywhere in Pakistan.

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