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Discourse and Identity in Turkish Media

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Alparslan Nas

Chapter 2 "Save Us from Valentine's Day!" Advertising Imaged Carnivals, Imagined Resistances

Abstract: This article applies the concept of the imaged-carnivalesque to advertising to critically negotiate how advertising discourse can establish communicative spaces where the ideology of consumerism and resistances against it can merge. Derived from Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, the imaged-carnivalesque points at the mediatized forms of the carnivalesque that tend to challenge the established social order. While the carnivalesque temporarily suspends official hierarchies and allows individuals to actively participate in the process, the imaged-carnivalesque provides a departure from reality only imaginatively by the passive audiencing of televisual discourse. Based on the Valentine's Day advertisements by GNÇ brand in Turkey, the sub-brand of telecommunications firm Turkcell that targets youth, this article analyses the ways in which advertisements employ the imaged-carnivalesque as a strategy to oppose a hegemonic consumer culture within capitalism. By parodying Valentine's Day rituals with a polyphonic narrative involving the elements of laughter, advertisements portray youth as deconstructing and disenchanting the rituals, activities, and meanings attributed to Valentine's Day and imposed on youth to perform by mainstream consumerism. However, this article argues that the imaged-carnivalesque in GNÇ advertisements is neither a real threat against capitalism nor its temporary suspension; contrarily, it is a way to form an imagined resistance against capitalism and its hegemonic/corporate culture. In this way, the imaged-carnivalesque reasserts the brand's image as a marketing strategy by the commodification of the carnival spirit and its imagination for a branded youth identity.

Keywords: Advertising, Carnivalesque, Capitalism, Consumer Culture, Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentine's Day.

Introduction

"Who is going to save us from Valentine's Day?" asks the lyrics of a song in GNÇ's Valentine's Day advertisement in 2017. GNÇ (abbr. of "Youth" in Turkish) is the sub-brand of Turkcell, Turkey's one of the leading GSM operators targeting young consumers. As young people appear in consecutive scenes and complain about the expectations that they are pressured in the wake of Valentine's