

Aspects of Homogeneity and Heterogeneity in Beer Commercials: A Comparative Approach between Global and Local Advertising

Lecturer Mădălina Moraru, Ph.D.
University of Bucharest, Romania
morarumadalina@hotmail.com

Abstract. This study aims to put forward two concepts often contradictorily perceived: globalization and specificity. Therefore, the article analyzes a very successful product, namely beer. The reason for choosing beer as part of our empirical data lies on its worldwide target, its history and its frequency in TV commercials due to the new theory of sensorial brands. We are interested in the TV formats used in beer commercials and in the factors that determine global and local features. The empirical data will be made of five Romanian brands and on five international brands. Even if we tend to consider that there is a gap between global and local aspects, it is interesting to find out whether the TV commercials make this distance smaller or bigger. The basis of this study starts from several stereotypes: beer, mostly addressing men, could be associated with many issues starting with entertainment, responsibility, involvement in the community, and commitment. Local elements refer to the country of distribution, especially in the case of international brands, taking into account that beer is a product with worldwide circulation. Starting from theoretical perspectives on positioning types, commercial formats and consumer profiles, we will focus our analysis on the main TV formats and the positioning types used in the local and international beer commercials, on the one hand, and on the balance between the global and local features and on the profiles of the heroes represented in beer commercials, on the other hand.

Keywords: beer campaigns, globalization, specificity, TV commercials.

1. The theoretical framework

1.1. Insights into the TV format

A short classification of TV commercials involves those criteria which set up the differences, thus framing each advertising product in a specific category. Over the ages, specialists (Book, Carry 1970; Nelson 1973; Hilliard 1976; Conrad 1983) have organized the format according to some aspects: story (as narration), characters (heroes of the spot), relationship between product and consumer, tonality (the way a story is told), special effects. These are only the main starting points, permanently enriched by new and creative combinations between types. Going back in time, we can provide a

short overview on the TV format which, generally speaking, has not so much changed. Book and Carry (1970: 8-27) identified a very detailed list of the most used TV formats, that could be easily recognized today in other formats presented many times as new:

- *the story-line* means telling a story that reaches a pressure moment and it comes to a logical conclusion, that justifying the entire narrative development.
- *the problem-solution* is the appearance of an important problem, which is a real conflict, and this should be quickly solved in order to keep a balance in the consumers' life.
- *the slice of life* means to place the product in a private space and to catch an individual scene that focuses on some details suggesting the relationship with the consumer. The power of these commercials consists in the familiarity and home feeling.
- *the fantasy* is nothing else than watching a commercial created by weaving fiction with non-fiction and helping the consumer see everything through the imagination lenses.
- *the chronology* regards the style of creating a commercial by making a strong connection between sequences, because each scene/ frame dissolves softly in the next. There are no chronological gaps between frames, everything being well controlled by precise time indices.
- *the suspense* format explosively reveals the spot message, and the watcher does not get the meaning from the beginning, especially because the first sequence involves him emotionally. Such a commercial structure follows an original organization of the story line, defined very well metaphorically as a reversed pyramid.
- *special effects* has nothing to do with the story line, because the script focuses on finding unusual visual effects to impress the watcher. The most well-known effects are surprise and metamorphosis, resulting from breaking reality borders, like reversing the gravitation law.
- *the testimonial format* relies on proving the value of a product as a result of someone's confession regarding its qualities. The success of the spots depends, in this case, on the hero's authority which should essentially support the brand credibility.
- *personality* is a specific category of testimonial. The difference comes only from the authority of the hero, who is usually a star within a specific field.
- *the spokesman* reminds us of radio commercials, because spots are less dynamic, as long as all information comes from a single actor. This format could well be associated with a verbal presentation instead of a visual demonstration.

- *the demonstration* format highlights the way the product qualities are very well individualized by using it directly. This type clarifies all product properties and is meant for a new product on the market.
- *satire* aims at calling the consumers' attention to the product and brand in a very sophisticated style, implying a special tonality and language. This format is appropriate for social campaigns or for very well positioned brands on the market affording them to reach their target through an ironical approach.
- *analogy* could be explained as a way of getting the message across more easily, by using the consumer's insight. The commercial is visually created on the product layer and its representation in the consumer's mind by doing a comparison between realities.

The first observation provided by this classification is the generosity of the format already presented, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the authors' concern for details and the direct or indirect way of making the message intelligible.

Nelson (1973) debated about the decrease of the number of TV commercials and he paid attention to the following TV commercial models: story, slice of life, testimonial, announcer, demonstration and song and dance. A spot called *song and dance* should be characterized by musical dynamism and kinetic communication, facts that catch the watcher's attention, due to the atmosphere specific to a show.

According to Hilliard (1976), formats of TV commercials developed around some types such as: straight sell, testimonial, humor, music, dramatization and other formats. The first one could be translated into direct commercial, because it consists in a simple product presentation, based on objective properties and coming close to the journalistic style. Humor definitely reminds us of satire, but the tonality is much friendlier and creates short advertising comedies. Dramatization suggests suspense, because the conflict becomes stronger and the tension reaches a high level of emotions.

On this rich background of such a variety of TV formats, Paul Maloney and Ibrahim Hefzallah (1979) use an inspired question (*Are there only six kinds of TV commercials?*) in the title of their article. In 1980, Maloney was a training manager for development at PepsiCo International, Purchase, New York, fact that explains his pragmatic approach. They firmly concluded in this article that six formats became real landmarks for other TV models and their list (Hefzallah, Maloney 1979: 59) consists of: association, demonstration, informative, plot, staged, testimonial. Actually, they made a synthesis of all previous theoretical approaches, and introduced two new concepts: *plot*, meaning a problem solved by using the advertised product, and *staged*, meaning a commercial where the product is directly used.

In his book *The TV Commercial. How It Is Made*, Jon J. Conrad (1983) reopened this discussion including a hierarchy of TV formats. He made some important improvements to the classification of TV formats, but in his case, in comparison to the previous authors, he insisted a lot on the visual techniques: “A study of commercial production must consider the area of production techniques. The variations on these formats make up the bulk of television commercials” (1983: 26). Beside the spokesman, testimonial, slice of life and demonstrations, or product demonstration format, he added some new variables for the typology of TV formats, such as: “real people” interviewers, hidden camera, mini-documentary, animation, hand puppets, stop motion, unique viewpoints, table top. For many of them, their names are suggestive, but the last three reflect visual techniques. For example, stop motion is a specialized type of animation, because objects are slightly moved during the exposure and it can be matched with live action during post-production.

To sum up these insights into the TV commercial formats, it is useful to choose some general patterns, whose forms have permanently been adapted to the creative strategy. The categories we will focus on are the following: narration or stories, testimonial, demonstration, special effects and music and dance. As the beer campaigns are concerned, the format of TV commercials can help us in drawing a comparison between local and global brands and in finding some visual patterns specific to this product regardless of the origin or distribution country.

Choosing the appropriate TV format has always been a difficult problem, not only because the budget limits the media placement, but also because a lot of other factors are involved in: creative strategy, product category, brand stability, competition and positioning. The bigger the competition and the market are, the more difficult it is to choose the best format, especially regarding categories such as beer, wine, mobile phones, banks, insurance companies. What it is really interesting, from our point of view, is that some product categories fit in properly with some formats due to the highlighted benefits. Food products are often presented using slice of life, demonstration or testimonial. Electronics, cars and cleaning tools go well with demonstration, spokesman or special effects. Fragrances and cosmetics revealed their mystery on behalf of a spokesman, music, analogy and, more often, fantasy, because they appeal to the consumers' sensitivity. As far as other product categories are concerned, their TV formats range between general patterns, according to product, brand or consumer's emphasis. In addition, the brand authority goes beyond the product features, and hierarchy of advertizing agents is completely changed in comparison with the first examples (product categories such as food, electronics, cosmetics). Within the first TV

models, the hierarchy placed the product at the top, over the consumer, and thus the brand became less important. When the product is more subjective, commercials focus on the consumer's self-image and put forward their properties using the brand values.

1.2. Beyond the concept of positioning

Regardless the beer formats and the brand origin, positioning represents an essential concept which may reveal some different or common patterns within the creative strategy and, at the same time, it may highlight the relationship between global and local features. Advertising is looking for new sources to win the battle for a steady place inside the consumer's mind, and it uses a lot of tricks which could stimulate people's perceptions. Trout and Ries argue (2001: 10) that " (...) the essence is to make the thinking mind accept the perceptions as reality and then restructure those perceptions to create the position you desire. We later called this process «outside-in» thinking". At that moment, advertising specialists were fully aware of what the connection of the brand with the consumer's habit of mind really meant: selling a product not for its quality, but for its fidelity towards the consumer's perception.

Later on, George Belch and Michael Belch (1990) point out that good positioning strategies should focus on two directions: consumer and competition. Considering the product (beer) we choose for this study, competition is very strong and consumers should be carefully helped to become faithful to a brand.

In 1996, Jack Trout and Steve Rivkin reviewed Trout's theoretical approach on the concept, in a book whose title is very suggestive, *The New Positioning the Latest on the World's #1 Business Strategy*. Trout and Rivkin (1996:8) mention five important elements in the positioning process: "1. Minds are limited; 2. Minds hate confusion; 3. Minds are insecure; 4. Minds don't change; 5. Minds can lose focus". For each element, the authors identified different types of positioning, extending the first list, presented by Trout and Ries. They spotlighted positioning according to some important strategies and factors, such as: TV format and consumer motivation. For example, positioning based on analogies corresponds to commercials created as "slice of life". Another type is the positioning developed following the "Bandwagon" effect, and this effect is the struggle to always be the first in your domain.

In the same direction and about the same time, Luc Dupont studied this problem in his book *1001 Advertising Tips*, discovering 50 ways to position a product or service. Unlike the previous approaches, his approach focuses on print advertising that can display many original commercials, through both the visual and the verbal dimension.

From his point of view, the most important reason for paying attention to positioning is that people often confuse brands and they are satisfied to use only the product, without paying attention to its identity in their minds. What has an effective impact upon this situation is the brand invasion in the same category of the product. Every brand is going to develop its category, product lines and its main purpose is to extend the name of the brand and to create sub-brands. From the very beginning, Luc Dupont (1999: 13) underlines what matters in the act of buying:

Let's be honest. The difference is not in the tooth paste tube, the soft drink bottle or in strength of the detergent. The difference is, in fact, in the personality of the consumer. We do not buy products, we buy positioning.

A deeper approach to the idea of differentiation in advertising belongs again to Jack Trout and Steve Rivkin who believed that the battle in the consumer mind means life or death. In one of the book chapter, Trout and Rivkin (2008:145-155) give an interesting example of what preference means in terms of making a difference. We consider this example of the Heineken company is relevant for the motivation of this research, especially because the brand involved is included in our research corpus. Briefly, we are talking about a Heineken company that built a modern factory in Chile and launched a new brand, called *Becker*, to win the competition against *Cristal*, a local brand. The first target reaction was unsuccessful, but after a while, *Becker* was perceived as a beer for higher income and the message was quite short: *Becker is a beer for the people who feel the difference*. Summing up, both brand categories, international and local survived by appealing to the consumer's preferences.

As a result of this brief insight into the concept of positioning, we can assume that positioning is a very dynamic concept depending on its time, social changes and consumers' behavior. Moreover, the different market segmentation requests different strategies of keeping the consumers' attention and interest vivid.

1.3. Global and local features in beer campaigns

Considering that each brand belongs to a specific country which has its own culture, history, language, mythology, legends, and folklore, we are interested to see whether beer commercials preserve these features or deconstruct them in favor of global aspects available everywhere. Therefore, the research sample includes international commercials broadcast all over the world, either standardized campaigns (the same messages regardless the distribution country) or local campaigns. Lots of changes may happen during a brand history and this is the reason for which we think that the following definition of a country

(Johansson et al. 1985: 389) may help us in dealing with this problem of brand paternity.

Country of origin is defined as the country where the corporate headquarter of the company marketing the product or brand is located. Though we recognize that the product may not necessarily be manufactured in that country because of multinational sourcing, we assume the product or brand is identified with that country.

An example which may support this definition is the history of *Budweiser*, initially an old Czech beer called *Budweiser Budvar*, then known as one of the most successful American brand, even though the business belonged to a German family that immigrated to U.S. in 1857. Now, there are not so many who know that *Budweiser* was first manufactured in Europe and then became a success in USA. The ads point out only the American lifestyle, the old European slogan, “the beer of kings”, being transformed into the American slogan, “the king of the beers”, and the name is sometimes shortened as *Bud*. So, in this case, we decided that the country of origin is USA, the product being manufactured there, and the campaigns relying on American values. Hence there is no doubt that each advertising campaign should carefully bring to light different types of possible relationships between the global and local aspects that can be analyzed according to a reading grid having the following variables: national brands focusing only on national identity; national brands focusing on the combination between local and global; international commercials focusing on the general strategy of the brand; international brands adapted to local consumer.

Tightly connected with this reading grid, the beer campaigns can be analyzed according to the model mentioned by Moriarty, Mitchell and Wells (2005: 548-568). This model includes the following variables:

- *standardization*. It focuses on consumers similarities from everywhere in the world, without any specific issue.
- *localization*. Sometimes named adaptation, it consists of considering many other important coordinates of each market such as: lifestyles, cultural, economical and political particularities.
- *combination*. It means amalgamating both previous directions in order to produce a more effective advertising by preserving the general brand strategy and translating it for local customers. There is a new concept that describes this advertising *hybridization*, namely *glocalization*.

Usually, this classification is more available for international and regional brands and less for local ones, but we think it can be adapted to any kind of ads or commercials, considering the origin country as the main core of the following schema:

Brands /Ads		Standardization	Localization	Hybridization
Global brands	the country of origin	relevant (global features)	not relevant	more or less relevant
	the country of distribution and consumers	not relevant	always relevant (local features)	relevant (local and global features)
Local brands	the country of origin = the country of distribution and consumers	no specificity of local features, ignoring the country of origin	always relevant - completely adapted to local consumers	weaving global and local features

The balance between the global and local features revealed by beer campaigns will be established relying on three important coordinates of any ad/ commercial: the country of brand origin, the country of product distribution and the advertising agency which may be local or multinational. In terms of criteria selection, we tried to find commercials for a beer broadcast mostly in various countries, less in the origin country of brand, except, of course, the Romanian beer brands. The main advantage of this condition consists not only in better emphasizing the glocalization process, but also in positioning since the consumer's mind is always different, despite drinking the same product. As De Mooij (2010: 5) claims global market does not change a specific target: "There may be global products, but there are no global people. They may be global brands, but there are no global motivation for buying those brands".

2. Methodology and sampling

2.1. Research method

Content analysis is the method used for checking out and supporting our hypothesis (TV formats help to better analyze the distance between local and global features in beer campaigns). The most important advantage of this method is that it approaches the research problem from many perspectives, usually interdisciplinary ones. The second advantage lies in the possibility of applying it in many research fields including

communication studies. This method works in two directions that highlight its efficiency: the quantitative analysis and the qualitative one. We used the first one as a basis for the second one, as we are interested in how beer format underlines the connection between the country of product distribution and the genuine brands features. The quantitative approach relies on the frequency criteria which gives the opportunity to quickly reach a conclusion based on the number of registrations. The evaluative criteria are useful in the present research due to the opportunity of establishing connections between the topics of the commercials, in this case, and the values they involve.

In this study, we will use Ph. Mayring's mechanism of analysis (in Agrabian 2006: 111) which has a twofold part: (1) summarizing the content analysis reflects how the essential information can be differentiated from non-essential one, how similar paragraphs can be organized according to the same criteria; (2) structuring the content analysis helps a lot in providing an appropriate structure to the symbolic and subjective representations.

2.1. Research sample

Our research corpus consists of 100 TV commercials for beer. They are equally divided between five international brands (*Heineken*, *Stella Artois*, *Guinness*, *Budweiser*, *Bud Light*) and other five Romanian brands (*Timișoreana*, *Bucegi*, *Bergenbier*, *Ciuc*, *Ursus*). The first part of this corpus includes worldwide brand names famous for their European tradition and history (*Heineken* – the Netherlands, *Stella Artois* – Belgium, *Guinness* – UK, *Budweiser* and *Bud Light* – USA), while the second part focuses on Romanian brands.

The term “local” stirs many discussions. In a note of an article on beer campaigns in Germany and in United States, Williams J. Adams (2006: 193) provides four possible meanings to the term “local”:

Does local mean 1) brewed from local raw materials? 2) brewed in a local brewery? 3) packaged in a local plant? 4) brewed and packaged by a locally owned company? 5) associated by name or advertising with a particular locale?

We will use the last meaning of the term “local” in our study because *Bucegi* and *Ciuc* belong to *Heineken* and the name directly sends the consumers to Romania, while *Bergenbier* belongs to *Interbrew* with no connection with the local language. *Timișoreana* and *Ursus* are two brands brewed and packaged by a locally owned company, very well appreciated and locally distributed. The essential thing is that the international selected commercials were broadcast worldwide, not only in their production country. This is the reason for which the local and global features are embedded in the commercials.

The next assumptions regard the way in which we come to terms with all the theoretical aspects mentioned above:

- The formats for beer commercials is very generous regardless of the local or global brands.
- Positioning types reveal global and local features within every commercial.
- Most commercials (for local and global brands) do not remind the consumers of the origin country of brand, but of the consumer country, thus adapting to the cultural background.
- Individualism is as much represented in commercials dedicated to beer, as team spirit is.
- The heroes depicted in commercials display various social and cultural profiles of men as beer consumers.

Our study is based on some research questions (RQ) which have a twofold role: (1) to organize the quantitative data by using the frequency criteria, and (2) to help us check the above-mentioned assumptions.

RQ1: Which are the main TV formats for local and international beer commercials?

RQ2: Which are the positioning types emphasized by beer commercials?

RQ3: Which is the balance between the global and local features in the beer commercials under analysis?

RQ4: What profiles do the main heroes of the beer commercials represent?

3. Findings

3.1. The TV formats for local and international beer commercials (RQ1)

We want to show that the TV commercials for beer are generally created by using a common strategy that is individualized and enriched by local specificity. In this case, what we try to prove is that Romanian beer commercials can be compared with international ones as the format is concerned, but without losing their local features. Applying the same criteria of classifying the commercials, we chose several important TV formats, consisting of story line, problem solution or suspense, slice of life, dramatization (which represent the narrative structure of commercials), testimonial and spokesman (which are based on a single character), fantasy and association (which describe metaphorical and fictional scripts), animation and special effects (referring at

creative means of emphasizing a brand), demonstration and song and dance (mainly assimilated to a musical show), satire and humor (related to the commercial atmosphere and tonality). The following table will provide a comparative perspective on both markets and consumers:

Variables	Romanian Advertising	International Advertising
Story line and slice of life	36%	36%
Problem solution and dramatization	14%	16%
Testimonial	4%	8%
Fantasy and association	26%	4%
Animation and special effects	6%	4%
Demonstration	4%	14%
Song and dance	6%	4%
Satire and humor	4%	14%

Table 1. A quantitative analysis of 100 TV format for beer

The narrative format is on the top of the formats used, thus proving that beer positioning does not point out the product quality, but the consumer's involvement in a story. Moreover, this observation emphasizes the unitary perspective upon commercial creativity on both the international and Romanian advertising markets. Problem-solution, animation and special effects, testimonial or song and dance seem to be almost equally used for creating commercials dedicated to beer brands. These percentages explain a common strategy of putting the commercial idea across, no matter the geographic and cultural space the consumer belongs to.

On the other hand, a comparison between these variables reveals several important differences. Fantasy and association are very well exploited in 26% of international cases, while, on the local market, the percentage reaches only 4%, referring to the level of commercial connotations. Brands like *Budweiser*, *Guinness*, *Bud Light* use this pattern, visual metaphors being the main creative strategy. This means that brands are very well perceived on the market and they have got over the simple informative level for a long time.

The informative level within commercials can be linked to the demonstration format

which is mainly used for a young market that needs to be informed about brands. Covering 14% of the whole Romanian sample, demonstration helps brand to appeal to consumers by sensorial means. As for the satire and humor, Romanian commercials gained their supremacy with the same percentage, 14%, in comparison with only 4% for international brands. In our opinion, this aspect is strongly connected to the advertising specificity, regarding the way people enjoy making jokes, having an ironic perspective upon life and a detached perception of events. The Romanians' use of jokes within beer commercials comes as a strategy of resistance against the Romanian communist regime when people were not allowed to express their feelings or ideas without being afraid. Actually, satire is the most often used TV format whose role is to individualize Romanian mentality regarding some issues, such as: Romanian integration into UE, economic downturns, traffic jams or inappropriate changes that democracy brought up in 1989. In international spots, there are only two examples (*Budweiser – Night* and *Stella Artois – Paper Boat*) that use another type of humor understood as a confusion or as a comic situation. In this case, we are talking about different ways of approaching life problems by finding unexpected solutions or disturbing a peaceful situation. In comparison, the Romanian humor focuses more on language means and not on visual devices/ techniques, this format being combined with the slice of life, because family and friends form the appropriate social environment where people like telling jokes and having fun at someone.

In conclusion, choosing a suitable TV format for beer commercials implies analyzing two different aspects: (1) the brand image and its stability in the consumer's mind, and (2) the consumers' insight that personalizes each advertising market. According to the first dimension, the more famous the brand is, the more abstract and creative the commercials are, because the product becomes only a pretext for a creative show. Generally speaking, people watching TV enjoy stories, created on a specific background. Specificity may be illustrated in this case by creating TV commercials heroes and making a connection between the product and their portrayals. Beside, each product develops a kind of an aura around it, resulted from preserving some stereotypes and archetypes on purpose. Either we pay attention to the international beer commercials or to the local commercials, there is no doubt that a dominance of male authority can be observed despite the geographical market of advertising. Obviously, there are common features of a male beer drinker, but at the same time, they highlight a specific behavior due to the local life-styles.

3.2. Positioning types in beer commercials (RQ2)

Table 2 provides a comparison between the types of positioning used in international and Romanian commercials. Our interest focuses on: (1) the variety of positioning types, and (2) a possible relationship between global and local commercials.

No.	International beer brands		Romanian beer brands	
	Positioning types	Number of commercials	Positioning types	Number of commercials
1.	Based on consumer	16	Niche positioning	26
2.	Based on symbols	9	Based on consumer	9
3.	Niche positioning	5	Product qualities	8
4.	Product qualities	5	Leader	4
	Opposition	5		
	Competition	5		
5.	Leader	1	Based on symbols	3
	Based on use	1		
	Price vs. quality	1		

Table 2. Positioning types

Whereas the analysis of international beer brands provides a variety of positioning, the Romanian beer brands focus only on five positioning types. Table 1 organized the data according to the frequency criteria in order to reach a hierarchy of the most used positioning types. The comparison between the international and Romanian brands shows great differences within the positioning of the same product, namely beer. Taking into account that international brands belong to many cultural spaces, there is no wonder that beer has been so differently perceived in the consumer's mind. The top positioning deserves our entire attention in both cases. At the same time, there is the problem of how much a brand can vary the positioning types within its creative products.

Positioning based on consumer is very well represented by all international brands and *Budweiser* and *Bud Lighti* are on top. For local beer brands, the niche positioning dominates, *Bucegi* being the leader with 8 commercials where the niche positioning is used. The great use of these positioning types reveals the fact that Romanian brands build their image not by using specific attributes or benefits, but by associating them with internal values, such as history, politics, integration into Europe, tradition. For example, *Bucegi* (a local brands created by *Heineken* in Romania) developed two layers

of this niche strategy: firstly, it is the nostalgia for the old communist age where beer was a compensation for poverty (no TV, no electricity in the evening), and secondly, it is the sapid irony every time people speak about the rules demanded for the integration into the European Union (cultivating melons of specific dimension and weight, building bigger chicken coop). A similar situation happened in Russia with *Baltika*, a new and democratic beer, founded in 1990, but working so much on protecting its identity. According to Morris (2007), this beer is the best TV advertised brand, appealing to the middle and low-income groups by using a niche or a symbolic positioning. Its creative value lies on the way in which identity is created (Morris 2007: 1395):

(...) the most consistent culturally differentiated identity: an amalgam of one “nationalism” stressing the greatness of Russia “reborn”, symbolized by her territory and people, clearly containing echoes of propagandistic modes from the Sovietic era.

The symbolic representations of international brands offer global aspects, such as cowboy image (not for American beer, but for *Guinness*), Dove pigeon (for *Stella Artois*), the creation tree, Cupidon, while Romanian beer appeals to geographical or cultural references such as the Carpathian Sphinx (*Bucegi*), or the famous violinist Ciprian Porumbescu (*Timișoreana*).

In conclusion, positioning types of Romanian beer brands (national or created for the inside market) do not cross the borders of mentality and respect the way consumers like to locally think. Another explanation might be the use of these brands only inside the country and there is no effort or intention to regionalize them, like *Baltika* did, despite its communist nostalgia.

3.3. The balance between global and local features in beer commercials (RQ3)

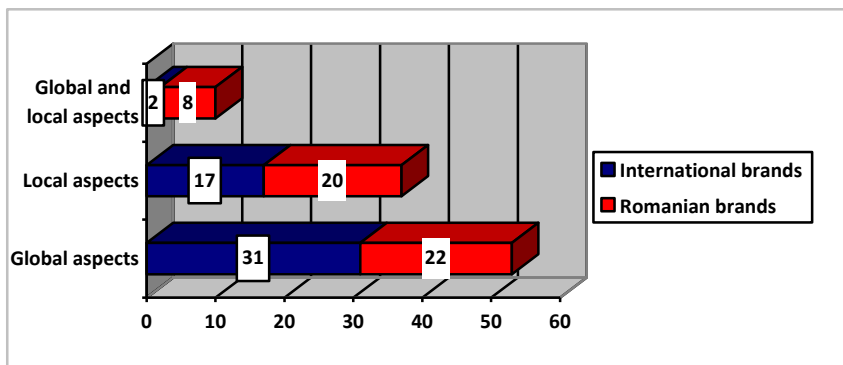


Table 3. Global and local features in beer commercials

Table 3 indicates a dominance of global features within the international and Romanian beer brands. These dominant global features have a double meaning: (1) they represent general issues without any local specificity; (2) they make connection with many countries, similar to a cultural journey or with universal information (identified in mythology, astronomy, geography etc.).

As the international brands are concerned, most commercials belong to the second meaning of the term “global”: astronomical phenomena (a *Bud Light* commercial entitled *Asteroid*), religious aspects (*Stella Artois* – Dove – Christmas celebration), or merely saving the world.

As the Romanian beer brands are concerned, many commercials do not bear any specificity, describing universal situations that might happen all over the world. The local aspects emphasize, as expected, traditions, historical events, or cultural personalities. The diversity of local elements is predictable for international brands as long as they belong to so many places. There are a couple of visual stereotypes specific to the American world: cowboy, sky-scrapers, The Liberty Statue, many black people, language. Those have been used by all five international brands included in the empirical data for the commercials broadcast for the American market.

Both the global and local aspects involve the necessity of adapting to the market and of preserving the brand history. Brand identity is very well protected by *Stella Artois* which preserves French language (sometimes the accent, names or only a single word) in commercials broadcast on the English or Irish market by weaving it with local humor or customs. Local beer commercials use a simple strategy to promote this double perspective as it is the case of *Bucegi* and *Ursus*: the verbal connection with Europe and the visual references to Romania. For example, in one commercial, the message *Ursus* sends is the following: *We brought Europe closer to you*. As we have already mentioned, *Bucegi* developed a rich campaign based on bantering the European rules whose impact was not so pleasant for Romanians.

Concluding, the balance between the global and local aspects in beer commercials highlights the power of the consumers’ market and the brand authority for international beer brands, on the one hand, and the integration into European Union, for Romanian brands, on the other hand. Some brands decided to create local messages, ignoring the origin country. For example, none of the beers belonging to *Heineken* Romania reveal any kind of connection with the country of brand origin, which, actually, is not a surprise, considering that other *Heineken* commercials included in our empirical data have no specificity.

3.4. Represented profiles of the main heroes in beer commercials (RQ4)

Our study focuses on advertising products, namely on commercials for beer, not on consumer's behavior. Although we strongly believe that the heroes in commercials are a projection of real consumers since they play the prototypical role of a man asking for a beer. This way of thinking lies on the following syllogism:

P1: Men usually drink beer.

P2: Many heroes in commercials are men.

Conclusion: Many heroes in commercials drink beer.

This syllogism helps us in analyzing the consumer behavior within the entire corpus we selected, considering that the represented heroes act like a beer drinker. We are very interested in the relationship between individual and collective behavior, and in the hero profiles identified in the selected commercials.

According to Hofstede (2010), there are five dimensions of national culture: power distance, individualism/ collectivism, masculinity/ femininity, uncertain avoidance and the long/ short-term orientation. Hofstede considers that we face two types of society: individualistic cultures or ("I" cultures) and group acting cultures. Analyzing the beer commercials, the results provide a similar balance between individualism and collectivism, for both international and Romanian brands. The frequency criterion reveal that individualism is dominant (33 commercials dedicated to international beer brand and 22 to the Romanian beer brand), while collectivism is less present (17 for global beers and 22 for the local ones). Most of the discursive markers are verbal: the first person (my *Guinness* beer, my dream). There are also visual markers, when the hero is not surrounded by other beer drinkers, but he deals with a conflict on his own. Group acting is more visually suggested, by men participating in same action at the same time, and achieving the same result, available for everyone. Even if those cultures are maybe not individualistic from other points of view, the beer drinkers belong to this "I" world, because they consider the product as a top priority and they fight for it.

This brief insight into the individualistic and group acting cultures may help us in highlighting the profiles that a beer drinker may have and in establishing possible relationships between these profiles and the market. Table 4 indicates the variety of man profiles identified in our empirical data. The study reveals different kinds of heroes and the drinker behavior was the main criterion used to integrate them into a category.

No.	Profiles	International brands	Romanian brands	Total number per profile
1.	The creative	8	3	11
2.	The winner	6	3	9
3.	The dreamer	2	2	4
4.	The hero (saver)	6	2	1
5.	The dare-devil	2	1	3
6.	The Cupidon	9	2	11
7.	The adventurer (Don Quijote)	1	2	3
8.	The hat-trick (Hermes)	4	2	6
9.	The star	2	2	4
10.	The greedy-guy	1	0	1
11.	The faithful guy	1	0	1
12.	The outcast	1	0	1
13.	The optimist	2	10	12
14.	The ambitious	2	4	6
15.	The business man	1	4	5
16.	The childish man	2	1	3
17.	The irresponsible	0	2	2
18.	The expert	0	3	3
19.	The ecologist	0	2	4
20.	The responsible	0	5	5

Table 4. Represented profiles of the main heroes in beer commercials

The optimist is the most frequent profile used in beer commercials and it registered the highest frequency in Romanian beer commercials. In the second position there are two profiles: the creative man and Cupidon (11 representations each). Whereas the

international commercials representing beer drinkers focus on success, competition, profession, or love, the Romanian commercials represent the local characters as having fun and looking for adventure.

4. Discussions and conclusions

Considering the relevance of narrative formats, we may say that beer commercials invest a lot in action in order to create a strong profile for drinkers. This explains why the positioning based on consumers has drawn attention: they are often invested with dynamic representations. The story line and the slice of life formats allow to identify every diverse personality profiles of people involved in daily life. Either they are ordinary people, or successful business men, they deal with problems and associate beer with a form of power or entertainment. Individualistic behavior makes them more interesting and drinking beer becomes not an ordinary fact, but it means adopting a lifestyle.

Briefly, there are two portrayals of beer drinkers easily to be distinguished:

- The first one, the ambitious prototype, is concerned with responsible work, and he is involved in business, striving for success and beer motivates him to act more efficiently. Most of the time, this profile corresponds to expensive brands, and the character is not involved in family business, but in professional ones.
- The second one likes to be a joker, to organize parties and enjoy being surrounded by friends, and beer is his means to have fun, to become popular, as long as it is associated with spending free time. Unlike the previous one, the goals of this beer drinker do not imply so much responsibility.

International commercials promote their beers by representing the first profile, and using global features, taken into consideration the fact that a successful man or a winner should have the same qualities. In this situation, the commercial model is standardization or, sometimes hybridization. When it comes to Romanian commercials, the creative strategy lies on the localization or hybridization model, leaving aside standardization.

Coming back to the issue of choosing the best format, Sandra Moriarty (1991: 76) considers that an advertising appeal can also be viewed as something “that moves people, speaks to their wishes or needs, and excites their interests”. For this reason, commercials focus on ways to highlight informational or rational appeals, on the one hand, and emotional appeals, on the other. Both categories can be illustrated by choosing different TV commercials, according to their message and the target insight. Belch and

Belch (Belch, Belch 1998: 266-268) clarify the meaning of these categories, considering that rational appeals “focus on the consumer’s practical, functional or utilitarian need for the product or service”, while “emotional appeals relate to the consumer’s social and psychological needs for purchasing a product or a service”. Therefore, the international commercials appeal to a rational consumer, preoccupied by his economical status, while the Romanian commercials emotionally address to the beer drinkers. Obviously, this conclusion relies on the quantitative data provided by the analysis of the 100 international and Romanian commercials.

Summing up, beer campaigns offer the chance to identify the consumer profile, based on its homogeneous behavior, rational or emotional, but the way a brand supports its image and values is heterogeneous. Even if beer is a very homogeneous product, whose qualities and components cannot be an issue for differentiation, its drinkers, in comparison with other alcoholic drinks like wine or whiskey, belong to so many heterogeneous classes. Romanian advertising industry creates more campaigns for middle-class, and, therefore commercials would rather prefer humor or men enjoying life. This study may be further conducted to analyze whether other alcoholic drinks emphasize similar profiles, or they are specific to beer commercials.

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