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A Foreign Brand Under a Chinese Veil: an Analysis of the Chineseness Constructed and Presented in KFC China’s TV Commercials

Abstract:

TV advertising is one of the most widely-employed avenues through which transnational companies speak directly to local consumers. It provides an opportunity to observe the dynamic interaction between the global and the local at the micro level. Drawing inspiration from the cultural studies of advertising and relying on interpretative methods, this paper chooses KFC China’s TV commercials in the 2000s as a prism to consider the way Chineseness is strategically constructed and presented to cater for Chinese cultural sensitivity. The main contributions of this paper are twofold: first, the case study of KFC China’s advertisements exhibits a richer picture of the tension between globalization and localization in terms of image representation; second, the comparative study of KFC commercials in three regional markets (Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) has demonstrated how the degree of localization may vary within the same cultural community contingent on the social historical particularities.