

Global Brand Culture: A threat to Localization (A Study Specific to Urfi's Urdu Short Stories)

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Abstract:

Globalization, in the name of development, is rapidly ingesting the localization of backward and developing countries including Pakistan. Modernism beyond the limits and unreasoning race of fashion are major threats to ethical and social values. Eastern values are being overwhelmed by the western ones. The burgeoning impact of international brands under the shed of globalization in Pakistan has flickered debate about their effect on local culture. These global establishments often countersign lifestyles, standards and esthetics entrenched in Western ideals which can dominate traditional local customs, dress, language and social norms. Literature is a true depiction of its culture. The contemporary Urdu literature, too, depicts the aberration in Pakistani culture due to globalization. Irfan Ahmed Urfi is a renowned Urdu Short Story writer who interweaves his stories with an illustration of the deviation in local norms and culture. The paper focuses on the peculiar study of the impact of globalization on local story narrative by Urfi.

Keywords:

Globalization, localization, Pakistan, Eastern values, Irfan Ahmed Urfi, Urdu Short Story

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Introduction:

Globalization has a great influence on economy (Umar et al., 2024a, 2024b), trade (Ramzan & Khan, 2019), media (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023, 2025; Ma et al., 2024) and on culture (Ramzan et al., 2023, 2025) as well. Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, globalization experienced significant growth, with rapid rises in international growth and regional agreements (Anderson & Obeng, 2020). Under globalization, the world is being transformed in a global village and different cultures are being intermingled (Jalalzai et al., 2025). It affects locality up to optimum. Brand culture is an outcome of globalization that affected third world countries severely. Pakistan is one

of them. As local literature started to depict globalization, so the brand culture is a hot topic too. The paper is based on the study of brand culture presented in contemporary Urdu short story by Urfi.

Research Method and Limitation:

The research paper is qualitative in nature. It presents documented and descriptive research. The study is limited to the Urfi's Short Stories in perspective of globalized brand culture.

The Study:

Globalization is the growing interdependency and incorporation of economies, societies, and cultures universally through the movement of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas across borders (Ramzan & Khan, 2024a, 2024b). Batool, I., & Naz, A. (2023) states that globalization brought a huge cultural devastation especially in third world societies. Pakistan is also enlisted in third world countries so it also encounters with such devastation (Li & Akram, 2023, 2024). A globalized fashion, dress, food and other day to day brands apparently meet the accurate needs of the customer while promoting modernity; but on the other hand, such brands promote individuality over the cultural structure and communal traditions. Brands shape the public, especially youth, for adaptation of a globalized culture. This ultimately results in the elimination of local culture. As the traditional culture of Pakistan is being replaced by globalized brand culture, local literature in Pakistan started to change its interpretation too. As trends in food, clothing and other approaches to life are being changed remarkably and rapidly, so the literature is being modified likewise. Irfan Ahmed Urfi is one of the top list Urdu short story writers who in his short stories, portrays all the problems emerging by globalization in a pretty well manner. Bibi, R., & Batool, I. (2023) states that Urfi subjects the diversity and deviance of the modern age in his short stories. In the context, some excerpts from contemporary Urdu Short Story by Irfan Ahmed Urfi denote this change as given below:

“Us kā pizza take away outlet shahr kī aik masrūf tarīn kārōbārī market kī zair ē zamīn manzil main thā.”

“Her Pizza Take Away outlet was established in the basement of a busiest commercial market.” (Urfi:2018, p:36)

Pizza is a Western food and its publicizing in Pakistan is an acceptance note of its global identity. Its commercial value shows the dominance of global food culture over the local food trends especially in urban areas. It shows how commercial areas in Pakistan are being necessitated by global customer tendencies, highlighting modernity and Western effect over indigenous practices. It definitely weakens the local distinctiveness and cultural legitimacy. The shift shows how local and traditional entities gradually meeting the loss of identity in contrast with a global trend.

“Kab hī jahān sirf basement main us kā take away point thā ab vōh usī tīn manzilā palāzē kī vāhid mālik thī. Us kā pizza house mulk

bhar main tō keyā dunīyā bhar main har us community main maqbūl hō chukā thā jis kā is shahr main ānā jānā lagā rēhtā hē. Home delivery, t'luqāt ē āmā, kārōbārī taraqī sē vābastā tash.hīrī sargarmīyōn kā in'qād, rasad ō talab kē masār'l, mulāzmīn kē pēshā varānā mu'āmlāt kē ilāvā farnchise kī tōsī' aur phir apnē pizza kē makhsūṣ brand kī product line kā baiṛā us kī tamām ṣalāhīataīn aur quvataīn māngtē thē.”

“Once upon a time there was her take away point in the basement, now she was the sole owner of this three-tire building. Her pizza house earned a high fame not only in the country but in each and every community from where people use to come in this city... Home delivery, public relations, promotion tactics for business growth, demand and supply matters, professional matters of employees, extension of franchise and the product line of her own special pizza brand; all demand her guts and potential up to optimum.” (Urfi:2018, p:53)

The passage shows that globalization and Western business models have redesigned local entrepreneurship. The conversion of a small takeaway point into possession of three-tier building and a nationally recognized pizza brand reflects the rise of Western style business expansion and franchise culture in Pakistan. Pizza, a markedly global food item symbolizes how foreign consumer habits have been putative, localized only in presence but rooted in global capitalist ideology. The success story discloses a deeper cultural shift. The business growth is not simply economic; it represents the incorporation of Western values such as individualism, material success and corporate expertise often at the cost of local identity, public ease and local food culture. The supremacy of foreign food drifts like pizza chains drives innate cuisines and small-scale local restaurants into the background; representing cultural displacement under globalization. It represents the tension between progress and cultural destruction. While it showcases entrepreneurial strength and modern efficiency, it concurrently reflects how Western consumer and business models redefine success and identity, steadily swapping indigenous economic practices, local tastes and cultural authenticity with globally commercialized ideals.

“Jab vō darāmad shudā jean kī utran aur angrazī main likhī tēhrīrōn sē sajī jhuṭī sachī branded shartāīn pehn kar ghar sē nikaltā tō dūr sē dikhā'ī dainē vālōn kō kisī ma'mūlī sipāhī kā sapūt nazar ānē kī bajā'ē kēnt main rehnē vālē kisī faujī afsar kā lāḡlā dikhā'ī daitā.”

“When he used to come out of his home wearing a second-hand imported jeans with alike branded shirts embellished with English quotes, he seems to be a son of some force officer residing in cantonment instead of an ordinary sepoy.” (Urfi:2018, p:72)

It represents how Western inspiration has rationalized social identity, class discernment and expressiveness within Pakistani society. The statement of a man wearing “second-hand imported jeans” and “branded shirts embellished with English quotes” reflects the deep cultural diffusion of global consumerism where clothing has become a means to display modernity and social prestige rather than cultural belonging. Even though the clothes are second-hand, their Western origin and association with global brands give the wearer a sense of higher identity. This highlights the transformed mindset where people prefer foreign products; no matter their quality or origin; over locally made items, considering them symbols of progression and superiority. The observation that “he seems to be a son of some force officer residing in cantonment instead of an ordinary sepoy” further exposes the link between appearance, class and power in an increasingly globalized society. Western-style dressing becomes a sign of advanced social status and compel public to adapt artificial imitation to remove noticeable peculiarities between classes. It actually kills localization and promotes duplicity.

“Gucci Parada bags aur designner perfūmōṇ sē lade phandē hujūm main rāstā banātā jab mēṇ us kē qarīb puhncḥā tu vōh kān par Bluetooth pehnē nihāit ravānī main kiśī kārōbārī mu’āhidē kī ḥatamī shiq zubāni tē kar rahī thī.”

“When I got close to her after making a way from a crowd carrying bags of ‘gucci prada’ and designer perfumes; she, having Bluetooth ear pod, was dealing a business contract fluently.” (Urfi:2018, p:53)

The urban society of Pakistan is deeply influenced by global culture. Luxury brands like Gucci, Prada reflect the inspiration of local public by the foreign goods and labialization. General public shows and maintains its status and modernity with all such imported products. As a result, local market and expertise go down while comparing to import business. Furthermore, the lifestyle of a business lady depicted in the excerpt shows how the local life style is influenced by globalization. Her business dealing style perfectly portrays her as a Western skilled lady and not as a local and traditional woman of Pakistan. Traditional norms, values, communication as well as concrete traditional entities are rapidly vanishing under globalization. It might be said that general mindset is totally replaced by the globalization.

“Vōh coffee kā order lē kar chalā giyā. Mujhē thōrī bōht bhūk bhī lagī thī. Kōī halkā phulkā snack bhī mangvānā chāhtā thā magar mēṇ yē daikh kar hērān hō rahā thā kē jitnī qīmat kā kabhī family size pizza hōtā thā āj utnī qīmat kā kōī thānvī item bhī nahīṇ thā.”

“He went back after taking the coffee order. I felt a craving. I wanted to order some lite snack too but I surprised to see that in the amount of money once a family size pizza might be ordered, now even not a side item was offered.” (Urfi:2018, p:56)

It shows how globalization and consumer culture have changed local economic veracities, food habits and social standards. Coffee craving is a sign of adapting a global food as it does not belong to Subcontinent and is visibly imported. Coffee bars and fast-food points took place of traditional food style in Pakistan. The rapid demand of global food causes a reshape of local economy results in inflation. Local affordability means nothing in front of these global consumer models. Such practices are gaping between cultural identity and day-to-day life because modern life on global pattern requires more expense than the traditional. The resulting life is artificial, and detached from indigenous values.

“Is sārē kē bāvajud nain naqsh itnē tīkhē aur jāzib thē kēh agr vōh vāqī’i kisī amīrānā māhōl kī jam pal hōta tō... chaurāhōṇ pr baṭōr model kō’ī international brand baich rahā hōta.”

“In spite of all, his face features were attractive enough that if he would belong some elite residential area, then he; as a model, must be selling some international brand through the billboards on road squares.” (Urfi:2018, p:72)

The impression that a person’s physical attractiveness would only be recognized or valued if he belongs to some elite residential area discloses how class and Westernized lifestyle have become prerequisites for prominence and acceptance in Pakistani society. This demonstrates the mindset where worth and success are measured not by local or individual qualities but by association with globalized elite culture. Moreover, the concept of selling some international brand through the billboards emphasizes how Western consumer imagery dominates public spaces and imagination. Local faces, apparel and products are hardly celebrated unless they conform to global marketing standards. This reflects a cultural shift where even advertising is now a vehicle of international consumer standards consuming local aesthetics and values.

“Bahir kē thīthartē māhōl kē muqāblē main andar kā māhōl kisī pizza take away point kē oven kī tarāḥ garm aur gēhrā thā.”

“As compare to freezing outdoor, the indoor was hot like an oven of some Pizza Take Away point.” (Urfi:2018, p:125)

This excerpt ironically reflects how global commercial imagery and lifestyle have become deep-seated in local language, expression and daily experience. Can the statement not be valued if the indoor environment would be of a traditional kitchen of Pakistan? In fact, brand culture has influenced the psychological and etymological erection of society and replaced indigenous cultural references with global commercial culture.

“jazzbōṇ kī rasad ō talab nē jismōṇ kē is super store main jibilatōṇ par gōyā brand name aur price tag chispāṇ kar rakhē thē. Har jazzbā aik shē kī traḥ zīnā ba zīnā shelfōṇ main clearance sale kē banner kē nīchē sajā parā thā. Aur šārif ḍarūrat aur khāhish kē taṣādum main

ulajhtā khālī shopping cart kō dhakailtā aik sē dūsrē corridor main u
turn līyē jā rahā thā.”

“The demand and supply of the emotions have fixed the brand name
and price tags on the super store of human figures. Under the banner
of clearance sale, each emotion was placed side by side in the
shelves. The customer having a conflict between need and desire,
was moving the empty shopping cart from one corridor to the other.”
(Urfi:2018, p:127)

Globalization did affect not only the material life but emotional life as well. The super store mentioned in the excerpt is not a store of common, but of a sexual toy store. The presence of such store in Pakistan, and then its depiction in local literature definitely declares the dominance of western culture over the local norms of the society. It challenges the limits of local morality in alliance with the religious perspective. Such stores represent the advent of a globalized intimacy that converts private, culturally sensitive matters into public possessions. In Pakistani society, where traditional and religious values emphasize timidity and moral check, the idea of marketing sexual products openly reflects a deep cultural interruption obsessed by Western ideals of discrete liberty, physical self-sufficiency and market development.

“Rāt ga’ē marketōṇ kē jaltē bujhtē kōnē pehlē sē ziyādā bāronaq hō
chukē thē. Jō kabhī tavē par burger fry kartē thē ab plāzē main fast
food ki take away window khōlē baithē thē.”

“Market corners became more hustling bustling late night. Those
who used to fry burgers on skillet, now they opened a fast food Take
Away window in the Plaza.” (Urfi:2018, p:49)

The image of market at night reflects how urban life in Pakistan has modified to global patterns of nightspots, consumption and commercialization. Traditional markets that once closed early and orbited around community-based trade are now modeled after Western-style urban economies; busy, revenue driven and based on customer suitability rather than social interface. The shift from “frying burgers on a skillet” to “opening a fast-food takeaway window in the plaza” represents the progression from traditional street vendors to rationalized food trades. This change, while signifying economic growth, also divulges the erosion of local culinary identity. Instead of local snacks or traditional foods, fast food has become the new standard of success

“Maiz par aish tray rakhtē huē kan akhīōṇ sē merī chust jean main
ubhartē bulge kō sehmī huī nazar sē daikhtē hūē apnē āp main yūṇ
simat gaī jaisē mēṇ hī vōh bhūt hūṇ jis kē bārē main us nē mukhtalif
ṭarah kī kahānīāṇ sun rakhī thīṇ.”

“While placing the ash tray on the table, she scaringly noticed the bulge from my tight jeans and withered in herself as if I am that very monster she heard about different stories.” (Urfi:2018, p:39)

The embarrassment and restlessness shown by the girl symbolize how clothing choices influenced by Western styles can sometimes clatter with local cultural norms of modesty and decency. In Pakistani society, traditional attire such as shalwar kameez has long reflected values of simplicity, comfort, and respect for social boundaries. Wearing tight jeans; an imported style related with Western individualism and body display; often generates cultural tension in public and social connections. Bulge itself represents a sexual approach of the society.

“Vōh aik bain ul aqvāmī shōhrat yāftā brand kē showroom main khavātīn kē līyē makhṣūṣ zair jāmē baichā kartī thī. Brand kē showroom kī mulāzmat kō us nē kuch hī dīn main khair bād kēh dīyā.”

“She used to sell peculiar ladies undergarments of an international famous brand... she left the job in the brand showroom just after few days.” (Urfi:2018, p:132)

The excerpt explains the cultural tension between local values and the growing influence of global consumerism. The act of selling ladies undergarments of an internationally famous brand signifies how global fashion and intimate consumer goods have entered Pakistani markets familiarizing products and ideas that often clash with traditional modesty and cultural norms. The existence of such a brand in Pakistan shows how anti-localization has expanded beyond food or lifestyle; it now infiltrates areas of personal identity, clothing and body image promoting global concepts of beauty, confidence and distinctiveness that vary from local traditions. The decision to leave the job reflects the distress and internal conflict that many individuals in Pakistan experience when exposed to work environments designed by global consumer standards. This denotes resistance to the commercialization of modesty and femininity which rejects local ethical and cultural compassions.

Results:

The study shows that globalization affects not only the material world but also the art including literature. The picture of brand culture developed under globalization depicted in above mentioned short stories clearly states the threat to the localization. It needs to be addressed by social reformers and economic developers so that the identification of the nation may sustain.

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