

## **Between Consumerism and Anticolonialism: Detergent Advertisements in Iranian State Television**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper traces how 532 detergent advertisements broadcast by Iranian State Television from 2011 to 2015 exploit Western or Western-like names and words as a synthesis of Western influence and Iran's anti-colonial discourse in post-revolutionary era (i.e.: the Islamic Revolution of 1979). According to the Law of the Parliament of Islamic Republic of Iran, choosing or using an alien word for national organizations or products is forbidden. Despite anti-colonial policies, the use of Western words or names and a hybrid strategy in the exploitation of Western-like terms is evident; many advertisements used both strategies (491 Western and 343 hybrid out of 532 cases, respectively 92.29% and 64.47%). However, Iranian advertisements are not mere replicas of Western advertisements; they circumvent the Law and bridge Western colonial influence with Iran's anti-colonial discourse.

*Keywords:* Iranian State Television, advertisement, detergent, Western words, colonialism and anti-colonialism

### **INTRODUCTION**

Visual media play an important role in each society. Integrated with their culture, it is an indispensable part of people's lives. For sociologists, television is one of the most powerful media (Brujerdi Alavi & Hadad, 2012, 214), and this constitutes the significance of TV advertisements: they construct and deconstruct the values (Brujerdi Alavi & Hadad, 2012, 214), especially in Iran, where 79.2% of all produced advertisements are shown on State Television (Abdollahian & Hasani, 2012, 91).

A vast majority of studies have been conducted on Iran's advertisements. Some survey their sociocultural influence on the lives of Iranians, especially after the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 (Amouzadeh & Tavangar). Advertising techniques

in Iran and their indebtedness to great tradition of Persian classic literature have been also a matter of scrutiny (Azad, Zarifiand, Hozori & Hashemi, 2012; Ghandeharion & Rostami, 2017a). Body politics and gender studies in advertisements including the representation of women have been discussed as well (Haghighi Nasab & Hedayati, 2005; Kazemi & Nazer Fasihi, 2007; Ghandeharion & Rostami, 2017b). Though the studies on Iranian advertisements are not limited to the articles named here, there are still some topics to be covered, such as the significance of naming and wording in Iranian advertisements, the literature for which is scarce.

Choosing the product name for marketing and packaging is one of the important aspects of advertising. A product name introduces the product, signifies its services, and summarizes its meaning. It is the first thing that people see and remember (Principles, Importance and How to Name a Brand, 2014). Thus, owners and producers spend much time on it, or consult a naming expert just to have the catchiest name. Moreover, to have an acceptable name, the owners must consider legal and common laws; thus, the naming process is difficult and demanding (Principles, Importance and How to Name a Brand, 2014).

It seems that the majority of Iranian advertisements utilize Western or Western-like words (English mostly and some French) for their product's names, for marketing, and for packaging. At first glance, it appears to be a trivial issue, but not when considered in the light of Iranian advertising laws. The Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran passed a law in 1996 declaring that all companies are forbidden to choose an alien name for their products (Law of Prohibition of Using Alien Names, Titles and Terms, 1996). Thus, Iran is considered to have an anti-colonial stance, a resistance to foreign influence. Colonial discourse is not limited to the choice of Western names, however. It can be interpreted as the portrayal of English words on the package, as well as the peripheral elements such as the depiction of Hollywood celebrities, Western houses, music, and fashion.

Wording and naming in advertisements has been ignored in previous studies. And to fill the gap, the paper has chosen detergent advertisements. Though choosing Western or Western-like names is not pervasive among all the other types of advertisements<sup>1</sup>, it is significant in the case of detergents. First, all advertised detergents are made in Iran. As such, detergent companies are legally expected to use Persian or Iranian names and words. Second, Western or Western-like words are more frequent in this category; they challenge advertising laws more than the other ads.

## **THE ARGUMENT**

This study examines 532 unique detergent advertisements broadcast in Iranian State Television for four years (2011-2015). Its method combines quantitative and qualitative data analysis. To the extent, it has meticulously counted the frequencies and the percentages of the advertisements, it is quantitative. It is qualitative since it investigates the nature of, and reasons behind, the use of Western or Western-like words. Many advertisements have revealed the prevalence of Western culture (491) and some have been of hybrid nature (343); needless to mention that 302 items had both qualities and thus were counted in both categories. Results show that 92.29% of the advertisements used Western names and words and 64.47% used a hybrid strategy in the exploitation of Western-like terms; this usage is tempered by linguistic innovations where foreign names signify some meaning in Farsi or at least in an Iranian context. This hybridity illustrates that although anti-colonial discourse pervades Iranian public life, State Television detergent advertisements comply with yet circumvent such laws. They balance the demands of anti-colonialism and the need to appeal to Iranian consumers, synthesizing competing impulses in Iranian society.

### **Against the West: Anticolonialism in Iran**

To appreciate this classification and the prevalence of Western words, it helps to understand the political context of Iranian society, especially after the 1979 Revolution. Al-I Ahmad, the Iranian anti-colonial activist (1923-1969) was one of the first writers to discuss the subject of colonization and Western influence. His ideas served as one of the pillars of Islamic Revolution (Algar 9-22). For Al-I Ahmad (1984), one of the main reasons behind such influence is rooted in the superiority of Western technology and the attractiveness of modernization (30). In fact, what Iranians want from such imitation is scientific improvement, which however ends in “Westoxification,” “Euromania” or “West-struck-ness” (Al-I Ahmad 40-47). Naturally, this imitation can happen in some areas that are closely connected to technology and modernization, which are exemplified by, among other things, detergent advertisements.

According to Al-I Ahmad (1984), Iran as a developing country does not manufacture machines that represent industry and technology. Thus, Iranians had to be consumers of, and are dependent on, Western products, industry, and machinery. They have to exchange their culture, their governments, their agricultural products, handicrafts, and, in a nutshell, their whole life for Western technology (Al-I Ahmad 30). As long

as Iranians are technologically dependent, Western influence is inevitable, regardless of any law or policy. According to Najafi Sulari (2013) Western countries are the pioneers in TV productions, especially advertisements, which serve as a model for Iranian advertisement industry. Iran is thus reduced to being a follower.

After the Islamic Revolution (1979), Iran attempted to be an independent, self-governing society free from colonial influence (Asgharzadeh 37-38). The governors and politicians of the country have always sought to protect the nation against the influence and transgression of foreign countries, especially Westerners who have been regarded as the most powerful and greatest colonizers (Asgharzadeh 37-38, *SNN News*, 2014). This worldview soon found its way to the judiciary of Islamic Republic of Iran, which reinforced an anti-colonial ideology via legal and religious authorities (Pesaran 696-701). Article 152 of constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, written in 1979, reveals Iran's view toward the Western superpowers.

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it. [It emphasizes] the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with respect to the hegemonies of superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peaceful relations with all non-belligerent States (As cited in Shehada 69).

Passed by the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran on 21<sup>st</sup> November and promptly finalized by the Guardian Council on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1996, "Prohibition of Using Alien Names, Titles, and Terms" mandated that the Persian language— the second language of Islam and Islamic culture after Arabic—must be one of the pillars of national identity and integrity (Law of Prohibition of Using Alien Names, Titles and Terms, *Majlis.ir*, 2019). To respect the dignity and to maintain the originality of the Persian language, all legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, public offices or private institutes are obliged to abandon the use of any alien word and term in their naming conventions, correspondences, and branding. The use of such foreign terms is illegal for all Iranian products (Law of Prohibition of Using Alien Names, Titles and Terms, 1996). The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance observes and inspects all institutions and deal with the offenders. In Line One, the Law orders the Academy of Persian Language of Iran to coin words by collaborating with universities and institutes and submit the report every six month. Line Five has given all companies a two-year time span to change their names after this law is passed. By alien names, the legislators mean Western

words used in North America and Europe, especially England. Arabic is not prohibited because it is the first language of Islamic world (Najmabadi, *Rasekhun Net*, 2014). Line Eight of the Prohibition Law warns producers and company owners that if they do not follow the rule, they will be punished. A first offense will result in a written warning by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance; a second one will oblige the company to change its logo or brand's name that had signified the foreignness; a third will temporarily suspend the license; and the fourth will revoke the license (Law of Prohibition of Using Alien Names, Titles and Terms, 1996). It is important to mention that if the word has been already imported to Persian dictionaries or the Western word is more popular and frequent than the Persian one, great degrees of leniency are observed in the application of the rule especially in terms of license suspension and revocation. The companies can refer to Line Two that affirms the exemption of those alien words with infrequent Persian equivalents especially if the Academy of Persian Language confirms so.

Furthermore, religion plays an influential role in Iran when it comes to naming and word choice. According to Islamic doctrines, the power of speech is one of many God-given blessings to humanity (Mohammadi Bide, 2012). Through this power, human cannot just communicate, but also name subjects, actions, products, and even create (Mohammadi Bide, 2012). Also, any name, be it the title of an institute, a person, or an object, has a mental effect on the hearer. The Prophet Muhammad recommends that parents select the best names for their children since in Judgment Day, they will be held responsible for their choice (The choice of proper name for a child, *hawzah.net*, 2017). Parents are suggested to pick an Arabic or Arabicized name of imams and prophets for their newborn children (Mohammadi Bide, 2012).

This anti-colonial ideology persists in Iran today. The highest-ranking officials in Iran state, "[We] hate the word brand, why should we look for the foreign signs and words?" (Official speech delivered on the occasion of Workers Week, *Aftab News*, 2016).

### **The Dominance of the West: Prestige and Preference**

Despite such anti-colonial attitudes in Iran and the Prohibition Law of Using Alien Words, Western words and names in advertisements continue to be used, indicating a deviation, circumvention, if not resistance to official state policy. The persistence of English and other foreign languages in Iranian advertisements, whether print or visual, is undeniable. Shooshtari, and Allahbakhsh (2013) examined such influences

on the level of print advertisements and enumerated some of the main reasons behind such mimicry, which can be common for all types of advertisements. English helps attract and persuade audiences, introduce the products as international, signify prestige, and connote the promises of modernity and globalization (Shooshtari & Allahbakhsh 82). If the name of the company sounds Western, the marketability of the product is guaranteed because West signifies superiority, reputation, and technological advancements (Jevons 117). Indeed, according to Shooshtari and Allahbakhsh (2013), a Western name, especially English, implies that the product is global.

Scholars refer to the worldwide usage of English language in non-English-speaking countries, especially the pro-Western attitude in Iranian consumer culture (Jafari, 2007; Shooshtari & Allahbakhsh, 2013; Jafari & Goulding, 2013; Ghandeharion & Badrlou, 2018, 335-336). Some factors for this fascination for the West is rooted the position of English language as the lingua franca. Thus, its prevalence is in direct relation with technology, modernity and globalization. Iran is not exempt from this trend in global market. Among different fields of commerce, English is most commonly used in advertising as a sign of modernization and globalization (Amouzadeh & Tavangar, 2008; Jafari & Goulding, 2013; Ghandeharion & Badrlou, 2018, 336-340). Though English language is taught in Iranian schools, it is neither the native nor the official language in Iran. It is yet pervaded in Iran's advertisements (Shooshtari, & Allahbakhsh 83). The usage of English language in Iran signifies a sense of international identity, connects Iranian with their diaspora in the West, and indicates their desire to unite with global movements.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: COMPLYING WITH AND CIRCUMVENTING IRANIAN NAMING LAWS**

This contrast, as it were, is reflected in the nature of Iranian detergent advertisements. Four hundred and ninety-one items out of 532 (92.29%) exhibit the prevalence of the West and Western words in the advertisements. At the same time, however, the advertisements manage to comply with Iran's Naming Law. Three hundred and forty-three unique advertisements out of 532 (64.47%) revealed a hybrid nature. Such duality, as it were, is reflected adversely in how the advertisements exploit Western words, of which there are six according to our observations. Table 1 summarizes the results of the research dividing the data into the Western and the hybrid utilization of language in the advertisement.

## a) Western:

1. "English words on the product's package" (274 items out of 532, 51.5 %, Table 2)
2. "Generic Western words" (128 items out of 532, 24 %, Table 3)
3. "Western words, not specifically related to detergents but related to technology" (69 items out of 532, 12.96 %, Table 4).
4. "Western words, technically related to detergents" (121 items out of 532, 22.74 %, Table 5)

## b) Hybrid:

1. "Western or Western-like names of the products/ companies, partially meaningful either in a specific region in Iran or words that are partly Persian and partly English" (124 items out of 532, 23.3%, Table 6).
2. "Western or Western-like names of the products/ companies, but meaningful in Persian language" (219 items out of 532, 41.16%, Table 7)

**TABLE 1**  
The General Proportion of the Ads in terms of Frequency and Percentage

Different Categories of Words	Word Choice	Total Frequency (total no. of ads, Percentage 532)	Total Percentage (Each category)
English words on the product's package		274	51.5%
Generic western words that are frequently used in Iran		128	24%
Western words, not specifically related to detergents but related to technology (with no Persian equivalent)	Western	69	12.96%
Western words, technically related to detergents (with no Persian equivalent)		121	22.74%
Western or Western-like names of the products/companies that are partially meaningful in Iranian linguistic domain	Hybrid	124	23.3%
Western or Western-like names of the products/ companies, meaningful in Persian		219	41.16%

*Note:* Some advertisements had more than one instance of the usage of Western words.

### Western Words: Imported, English or Less Frequent

This section illustrates how advertisers deploy Western words with this aim to persuade and attract audiences, even as they seemingly violate or circumvent national laws. The portrayal of English words is the violation of the rules yet the company can claim that the product has a Persian-written side as well (Table 2). By using the words that their Persian equivalences are less frequent (Table 3) or those words that are not available in Persian dictionaries (Tables 4, 5), they circumvent the laws. It is revealed how Iranian consumer culture is unwilling to shape national linguistic consciousness regarding some aspects of Westernization, especially technology and modernization (Tables 4, 5). The untranslatability of the words and their usage means there is no sense of identification in Persian language to relate the concrete or abstract idea to those Western words.

**TABLE 2**  
**English Words on the Product's Package**

Word	Frequency (Total number of ads, 532)	Percentage
Portrayal of English-written side of the product	189	35%
Automatic	31	5.8%
New	24	4.5%
Ultra thick bleach	14	2.6%
Perfect	6	1.1%
Gold selection	5	0.93%
Numbers	5	0.93%
Total	274	51.5%

Both sides of detergent containers carry the name and the features of the product, written in Persian and in English on opposite sides. Though the audience is mostly unable to understand English, the advertisements display the English side more prominently, 189 out 532 advertisements (35.5%) (Table 2). Words like 'New', 'Automatic', 'Gold Selection', 'Perfect', and 'Ultra Thick Bleach' are seen in the ads while the narrator chants their Persian meaning. All numbers are written in English instead of Persian. One hundred and eighty-nine cases had an English-only package. The frequency and prominence of English indicate prestige, reliability, and thus marketability.

'For Export' was a common and frequent label written on the English side of detergent containers. For an Iranian audience, the label signifies 'prestige', 'high quality' and 'reliability' since only the best national products can be merchandised; and when



the English word, 'Export' rather than '*sāderāt*', is added to the package, the message of 'trading with West' is inferred. Thus, 'high quality' and 'West' are again linked together to imply the message of superiority. No Iranian companies advertised their capability of exporting to African or Asian countries. Although 'For Export' label has close affinity with globalization and internationalization, it seems as if only West is the target of globalization. Interestingly, some companies like 'Cif' or 'Doshadof' write "For Export" on their packages, even though they do not export their products (the specification of Iran's top exporters, *torbath.ac.ir*, 2017). Thus, it seems that "for Export" is mostly a colonial strategy for marketing in an anti-colonial country.

Iranians prefer to buy Western products even if their quality is inferior to the national merchandise since Western manufactures are identified with high quality, prestige, and technology (Karami, 2017). Despite legal prohibitions, businesses try to appear Western to fit the taste of their audiences and help ensure that their products are more attractive and marketable. Thus, some companies use generic words like 'Upload', 'Series', 'Extra' and 'Brand' (Table 3).

Furthermore, 'penalty' is also employed because it is related to one of the most popular sports in Iran, soccer (Football, the most popular sport, *IRNA*, 2017). Instead

**TABLE 3**  
**Generic Western Words: Western Words with General Meaning and Persian Equivalence**

Word	Frequency (Total number of ads, 532)	Percentage
Guarantee (Including ISO and Henkle guarantee )	87	16.35%
Trademark	14	2.63
Extra	7	1.3%
Brand	4	0.75%
Auto-wash	2	0.37%
Carwash	2	0.37%
Dashboard	2	0.37%
Machine	2	0.37%
Ring	2	0.37%
Series	2	0.37%
Wax	2	0.37%
Penalty	1	0.18%
Upload	1	0.18%
Total	128	24%

of the word, '*zemānat*', advertisements use 'guarantee', 'ISO Guarantee' and 'Henkel Guarantee.' It appears that only such labels can promote product reliability. The frequency of the car-related words like 'Carwash', 'Auto-wash', 'Wax', 'Ring', 'Dashboard', and 'Machine' signifies Iranians' love for luxury cars (Table 3). Indeed, in recent years, the most luxurious and expensive cars like Porsche have been imported to Iran (Moheb Malaki, *Mehr News*, 2016).

Tables 4 and 5 reveal that companies try to exploit any possibility by utilizing foreign words for their marketability: be it the technical words related to detergents (22.74 %) or those, which signify technological advancement yet not specifically associated with detergents (12.96%). In total, all English words with no Persian equivalence are 35.71 % of the whole body. Near half of the advertisements use English words to represent the myth of West as a source of technological advancement. The 'Enzyme' and 'Amylase', an English chemical word, are meant to impress the audience. 'Oxygen', 'Capsule' and 'Essence' are repeated by different companies, resulting in more frequency and hence, attracting more attention. Since 'Phosphate' and 'Microbe' are used by sister companies, the reason of their frequency is more of attraction rather than competition. The word 'Nanotechnology' is fashionable in Iran signifying modernization in clothing, packing and fabric advertisements. However, the word has a low frequency in detergent advertisements because it is a relatively recent phenomenon.

**TABLE 4**  
**Western Words, Not Specifically Related to Detergents but**  
**Related to Technology (no equivalence in Persian linguistic domain)**

Word	Frequency (Total number of ads, 532)	Percentage
Cream	14	2.6%
Formulation	14	2.6%
Gel	9	1.6%
Eucalyptus	6	1.1%
Technology	6	1.1%
Acid	4	0.75%
Aluminum	3	0.56%
Laboratory	3	0.56%
Protein	3	0.56%
Steel	3	0.56%
Glycerin	2	0.37%
Sink	2	0.37%
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>12.96%</b>

**TABLE 5**  
**Western Words, Technically Related to Detergents**  
**(no equivalence in Persian linguistic domain)**

Word	Frequency (Total number of ads, 532)	Percentage
Phosphate	25	4.6%
Enzyme	18	3.3%
Microbe	16	3/00%
Oxygen	15	2.8%
Capsule	12	2.2%
Essence	12	2.2%
Silicon	6	1.1%
Anti-bacterial	3	0.56%
Bacteria	3	0.56%
Amylase	2	0.37%
Electricity	2	0.37%
Nanotechnology	2	0.3%
Protease	2	0.37%
Virus	2	0.37%
Nano ceramic	1	0.18%
Total	121	22.74%

Technological words that are not directly related to detergents but are associated with the place, type and scent are frequently exploited (Table 4). Since detergents can be used in kitchen, words like 'Aluminum', 'Steel', and 'Sink' are repeated. It seems that words like 'Protein', 'Glycerin', 'Acid', 'Eucalyptus', are related to food products, yet they are closely connected to the type of stain that the advertisement claims to remove. The pleasant herbal odor as in 'Eucalyptus' or 'Lavender', instead of their Persian equivalents (*okalipts* and *ostokhodus*) or Persian herbs, follows the same advertising strategy. The reason for the frequency of 'Cream', and 'Gel' is that they are first used by sister companies.

'Formulation' and 'Laboratory' are heard in French accent rather than English because the Iranians are more familiar with their former pronunciation. Less than a century ago, French was the main foreign language taught in Iranian high schools and universities. That is when 'Merci' was imported to Iran with the same meaning, 'thank you'. As mentioned in both *Moin* and *Dehkhoda* dictionaries, even the word 'farang', meaning 'foreign' or 'West' in Persian, comes from the word 'France' ("farang", *Moin*, 2014 & "farang", *Dehkhoda*, 2014). Both dictionaries are the most cited and

most comprehensive in Iran. Hence, 'France' is prestigious because of the charm associated with French language. Later, French is substituted with English, the lingua franca. The reason behind the frequency of 'formulation' is that this expression is related to one special company that airs many advertisements.

As mentioned in the law of parliament, Prohibition of Using Alien Names, the company will be penalized in case of using a foreign word for the name of the product or the company, first by warning, second by obligatory revisions, then by temporary license suspension and later license revocation. If the companies receive any warning (i.e. first offence), they will try their best to solve this issue and apply minor changes, revisions or adding an Iranian subtitle rather than continuing with their production under the same name.

It is necessary to know that the Law directly addresses the use of alien words for the name of product and banning the usage of foreign words in the text, audio or video of advertisement is merely implied. A great degree of leniency is observed in the Law when terms related to science, technology and modernization are concerned especially if one refers to Line Two where exceptions are mentioned. In most cases, the Western word is one of the entries of Persian dictionaries or its Persian equivalent is not popular or even unknown to the Iranian public. Yet, using alien word or name affects the advertising strategies. The company cannot air its advertisement via State Television if it does not comply with the anti-colonial stance. Because the company can claim that there is no word in Persian linguistic domain, the only option is to use the English / Western word. As for the seemingly English words, the company can justify its usage in different geographical domains in Iran or can break the word into two parts: Persian and English. This is how Iranian advertisements exploit ambiguities or loopholes as part of their circumventing the anti-colonial stance of the Naming Law.

#### **HYBRID TERMS: WESTERN OR WESTERN-LIKE WORDS MEANINGFUL OR PARTIALLY MEANINGFUL**

This section shows how national companies exploit Western names by linguistic innovation to sell their products and circumvent the Naming Laws. It must be noted that Western names can be used only if the companies are originally foreign or if there is no word to describe the product in Persian linguistic domain (Branding and Primary Solutions, 2015). The claim is described in the analysis below (Table 6-7).

**TABLE 6**  
**Western or Western-like Names of the Products**  
 (These words are not directly available in Persian dictionaries  
 but they have equivalents in a specific region in Iran)

Word	Frequency (Total number of ads, 532)	Percentage
Pril	50	9.39%
Softlan	27	5.0%
Damestos	14	2.6%
Vash Extra	7	1.3%
Primax	7	1.3%
ABC	4	0.75%
Spif	4	0.75%
Doshadof	3	0.56%
Home Plus	3	0.56%
Net Plus	3	0.56%
Germy Side H	2	0.37%
Total	124	23.3%

Note: Different pronunciations and transliterations of the words are included

**TABLE 7**  
**Western or Western-like Names of the Products,**  
**Meaningful in the Persian Language**

Word	Frequency (Total number of ads, 532)	Percentage
Attack	114	21.4%
Active	35	6.5%
Persil	32	6.0%
Cif	14	2.6%
Idra	7	1.3%
Posh	6	1.1%
Pink	4	0.75%
Top	3	0.56%
Raish	2	0.37%
Take Off	2	0.37%
Total	219	41.16%

Note: The same transliteration in Persian

All companies or products with Western names have a Persian accompanying name as well. Depending on the context, they promote or demote their Persian name as the main title or subtitle. The frequency of 'pāk' (clean, pure and honest) is dominant in the Persian version of the company or product name signifying the detergent's high quality. 'Pril' and 'Persil' detergents are produced by *Pāk Vash* (beautiful and clean); 'Primax' and 'Posh' are made by *Pāk Sān* (clean look); 'Home Plus'; 'Net Plus'

and 'Spif' are categorized under '*Pāk Shoo*' (wash clean). 'Pink' is '*Pak Roo*' (clean face) and 'Top' is '*Pāk Nām*' (clean name) Company. The national identity (Iran/ Persia/ Aryan), modernization and technology also shape the name of the company: 'Cif' and 'Damestos' are both made by 'Unilever Iran'; 'Doshadof' is referred to as '*Gostareh Sanati Pars*' (the industrial Persia) and 'Take Off' is '*Bita Rose Ariya*' (The unique Aryan rose). In some cases, the industrial quality is privileged: 'Germy Side H' is '*Fazel Derakhshan*' (shiny and learned in manufacturing); 'Idra' is '*Fānāvaran Karza*' (industry and workmanship); 'Attack' is '*Shimi Ghahramān*' (the chemistry hero) and 'Active' is '*Padideh Shimi Gharn*' (the chemistry/ chemical phenomenon of the century). Interestingly, '*Shimi*' as exactly pronounced in the French, '*chimie*', is directly imported to Persian linguistic domain and thus is not interpreted as a violation against the Law. In one case, the company highlights the fragrance: 'ABC' Company has a Persian name, '*Condor*' (frankincense).

Expectedly, in the advertisements, the Persian name of the company is marginalized and unheard in most cases. Using words with the same spelling, but with different pronunciations is another technique to incorporate Western or English words and shape the name of product or the company. Non-Persian names of the companies are 'Pril', 'Softlan', 'Primax', 'Spif', and 'Doshadof'. 'Pril' has the highest frequency. 'Pril', if pronounced as 'Pootil', means 'barrel' in southern regions of Iran. Moreover, since it is licensed by a German company, Henkel, advertisers emphasize this fact. 'Softlan' can be alternatively pronounced as two words, 'seft' and 'lan' in southern regions, meaning 'hard' and 'not' or rather a combination of 'not hard' as the English meaning signifies 'soft'. 'Primax' if pronounced as 147 permās means 'asking' or 'freedom' depending on the region (*Dehkhoda, Moein* and *Amid*). Both 'Spif', and 'Doshadof' can onomatopoeically, 'speef' and 'doosh', represent the brand that is specialized in detergent sprays.

Partly Iranian and partly western is another strategic linguistic novelty exploited by the companies. The advertisement of the detergent 'ABC' has a motto: 'the alphabet of cleanness'. If we assume the order of Persian alphabet, it must start ABP (alif, be, and pe), with 'p' as the third alphabet; however, the third letter somewhat echoes the sequence of the English alphabet. ABP in Persian can be translated as 'alpha to omega'. Since the Iranian customer is not familiar with 'alpha and omega' and the Greek or Christian heritage of the expression, the hybrid ABC is shaped instead of ABP. 'Vash Extra', the name of a product of Pāk Vash Company, bears the Persian 'vash', meaning 'beautiful'; yet has 'extra' as the English component (*Dehkhoda, "vash", 2014*). The products 'Home Plus' and 'Net Plus' obviously reveal tendency to English language. Nevertheless, 'Pelās' in Persian means 'mat' (*Amid, "pelus",*

2014). 'Germy Side H', can be divided to 'Germy', a village in Northwest of Iran, 'Saed' as 'arm' and the English letter 'H'. Similarly, 'Damestos' is the combination of English 'dame' and Persian 'oostas' or 'master of craftsmanship'.

Some detergents have chosen Western, partly Western, or Western-like words as trademark names. This helps them build an international and global reputation that is branded as 'Westoxication' or 'cultural invasion' by Iranian conservatives (Jafari & Goulding, 2013, 65-90). To offset such criticisms, companies use different strategies to have names that *sound* Western and yet have some Persian roots or flavor (Table 7). This strategy provides a Western aura even as the unfamiliar Persian equivalent complies with Iranian law.

Another strategy is to use English (-sounding) words that are also meaningful in Persian. For example, 'Posh' is meaningful in English as well as Persian, implying 'to wear'; however, 'to wear' must be transliterated as '*poosh*.' The name is closely related to detergents since it implies wearing neat fragrant and posh clothes. The name 'Top' is also English, but in Persian, 'top-top' is an onomatopoeic word that means 'beating.' In the advertisement, the Persian meaning is emphasized by representing the beating heart of the neat house, which is the detergent *Top*. The logo of *Top* is written on a red heart with moving heart-signals as the foreground of a clean house.

Similarly, choosing names that do not sound Persian, but exist in the Persian dictionary is another marketing strategy to signify the ambiguous origin of the product, be it cultural globalization or localization. By cultural globalization, the English or Western meaning is emphasized. By localization, the dialectal or geographical meaning of the name is highlighted. Official Persian dictionaries like *Dehkhoda*, *Moin* or *Amid*, include the name of the products (Table 7) in their entries with English or Western roots. 'Attack', 'Active' and 'Take Off' are three entries in *Moin* that directly mention the English origin ("attack", "active", "take off", 2014). Also, though the names sound Western, they are meaningful in a special region of Iran, or they are a dialectical pronunciation of a familiar Persian word, or a geographical name in the country. For instance, *Dehkhoda* introduces 'Ātāk as the name of a place near Iran's border with Turkmenistan, in Khorasān province in the northeast region of the country (2014). Similarly, 'Active' can be pronounced as 'Yaktow' that means 'unique and unrepeatabe' or 'one-fold' in Middle Age Persian language (*Dehkhoda*, "yaktow", 2019). 'Persil' in Persian dictionaries has a French root meaning 'parsley,' (*Dehkhoda*, "persil", 2014) which connotes not only the West but also the nature-friendly quality of the detergent. Similar to 'Pril' and 'Persil' advertising strategy and their connection with the West (German Henkel), Cif:

Unilever Iran Company abridged as Cif, boasts about its French origin (Cif Official website, 2019). 'Cif' is a Persian word meaning 'beach', that most Persian speakers are unfamiliar with this meaning (*Amid*, "cif", 2014). All these products were frequently shown on TV except for 'Take Off', which was at that time a relatively new product.

This combination of globalization and localization reveals how the companies try to balance the anti-colonial discourse of the government with the audiences' taste, attraction and the way they look at products (Ghandeharion & Rostami, 2017a, 70). Since advertisements highlight the Western or English meaning to show their ability to compete internationally rather than having a dual impression of Western/Iranian, the product names are meant to be interpreted as solely Western. Sometimes, companies use English words that are indirectly similar to a Persian word. For instance, although 'Pink' is an English word, denoting a background color for the advertisement, 'pinak' written in the same way in Persian letters, means 'luck' (*Dehkhoda*, "pinak", 2014). 'Raish' with a different pronunciation but the same transliteration denotes 'middleman' or 'mentor' (*Moin*, "riesh", 2014), while with the same pronunciation in Persian, 'rish' means 'beard.' Of course, a company that claims its product keeps the skin baby-smooth can hardly be expected to use 'beard' as its trademark. Yet, it does mean compliance with Iranian law. 'Idra' is another English-sounding word to Iranian costumers since they are familiar with American companies like Idera Pharmaceuticals and Idera Software; it is pronounced in Persian, 'idara', meaning 'here' (*Dehkhoda*, "idara", 2014).

The tension between the colonial and anti-colonial discourse is resolved through synthesis, a process uniting opposites into a hybrid linguistic domain in advertisements. The strategies utilized by the companies reveals the relationship between business and the state. In this respect, the colonial (Western) influence in Post-Revolutionary Iran invokes anti-colonial ideology. On the one hand, a colonial discourse privileges modernization, technological advancement, and Western advertising over Iranian products. On the other hand, an anti-colonial discourse, supported by the laws, religion, and public speech of policy makers, reinforces Iranian self-reliance and independence. TV advertisements— forbidden to betray any Western influence while using Western or Western-like names and words— synthesize this contrasting relationship. Our discussion mainly refers to the circumvention of anticolonial policies in Iranian advertisements. The use of foreign words or signs is worldwide, whereas it can have different reasons in different countries. Moreover, each sign from each country can have a special connotation and thus, a different impact. Because of the postcolonial stance of this research, the profound influence of the West upon other countries is of significance.



## CONCLUSION

Iran's foreign policy since 1979 has sought to ward off foreign influence and domination, especially from the West. This fact is portrayed in laws regulating advertisements on State Television. In 1996, the Iranian Parliament forbade alien names for national products, from those of institutions, organizations, and offices. A study of TV advertisements, however, reveals that the Law is not followed thoroughly; some advertisements, mostly detergent, circumvent the Law by choosing Western or Western-like names. The paper analyzed advertisements that used the exact English names with no Persian equivalent; this linguistic exploitation conveys a sense of the products' suitability in the international market. The paper shows that some detergent advertisements chose the Western names and words even though the Persian equivalent is available. In the cases that the words are meaningful in both Western and Persian languages, the former, especially English, is preferred and dominates, as producers try to look more attractive and persuasive to their audiences, who see more prestige and marketability in such products. We have described how these ads serve as a synthesis of colonial discourse and their nationalist antithesis or post-colonialism. In the end, the analysis offers a glimpse into the nature of Iranian society, one that is caught in conflicting discourses while managing to balance them to their own advantage.

## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> According to the official website of Iranian State Television, advertisements are classified into various groups: educational institutes, banks and insurance companies, cars and industry, restaurants and shopping centers, home appliances, furniture, edible products and fast food, detergents, hygiene products, beverages and exhibitions.

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