An insight into the brand-conscious Saudi generation of ‘Drifters’

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Research Structure

• Conceptual problem formulation - explored through elicited and iterative qualitative data collection

• Synthesis of Branding, Consumer Behaviour and Sociological Literature

• Inductive Reasoning and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: as a basis for formulating Participant observation methods – then culminating in Critical Discourse Analysis

• Working paper
Drifting an informal American-English term for over-steering a car through an apex, or straight often opposite lock. Judged according to technique, style and car control, it represents the tip of an iceberg of a deep-rooted sub-culture - blending creative sports expression with: fashion, music, slang, sexuality, participant/observer-
Methodology

• 3 methods of Participant Observation method were used: external, passive and balanced – in Arabic and English: Which were deployed in the following settings:

  – Covert observation at drifting events in Saudi Arabia

  – Critical discourse analysis of websites, user generated content and web-forums: e.g. Facebook, YouTube, online drifting chat rooms

  – In-depth interviews with Saudi drifters and Saudi non-drift participants
Initial Findings

• Saudi Drifters demonstrate traits of: Innovation, creative expression, collective-individualism, risk-taking, control, and self-defined socio-religious ambassadorship. Furthermore, they are internet savvy, multi-lingual cultural magpies.

• Also, culturally conservative societies, such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), are planted in a virtual world of hyper-pluralism and self-expression. This yields higher degrees of:
  – Revolutionary hybridization and complex tacit boundary setting
  – Opposite generational behavioral traits. It is however still unclear whether this is temporal and generation specific, or progressively continuous
  – Ratification of social status and identity through brands
Analysis and observations of drifting in Saudi Arabia, derived from online and on-site, yielded the following major findings:

- More attention paid to the drifters’ identity rather than car brands. The title of video clips carried drifters’ names, with the intention of attracting more viewers.

- Modifications made to original manufacturer’s designs receive more attention than the brand itself. E.g. cheaper creatively customised cars appeared more attractive than expensive unmodified cars.
The authors observed the following factors as being key when creating the right environment for a *cult of sub-culture*:

- Cultural surrogate hybridization
- Virtual participation and rolling news
- Brand Friendships
- Authenticity
- Socio-Religious ambassadorship
Thank You Very Much