

## Rock as a Self-Evolving Commodity

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Among musical genres, rock music is particularly important due to its ideological strength [1]. The ideology of rock involves a rejection of those aspects of mass-distributed music, which are believed to be soft, safe, or trivial, those things that may be dismissed as worthless “pop”—the very opposite of rock (Keightley 2001)[2]. Although the idea/hypocrisy of rock rejects mass-consumed or mass-produced music, millions of people purchase rock music products which produce feelings of freedom, rebellion, opposition, authenticity, and uniqueness in different geographies and cultures. Thus, one can think that this illustrates an evidence for the global consumption ethos. Yet, my research has illustrates different findings and insights.

In my study, I explored the evolution of rock in Turkey that occurred two decades earlier and was different than in other non-Western countries. It was never banned nor did it emerge as a counterculture, as in the cases of China or Russia. Rock in Turkey neither became subservient to a state ideology, as in the cases of Mexico and Quebec in the early 1960s, nor became as influential as was the case in East Germany where rock musicians acted as catalysts in the actual course of events which led to the destruction of the Berlin Wall nor played an important role in the formation of national culture as happened in Israel. Türkçe Rock was also never a blatant imitation of its Anglo-American counterparts.

In Turkey, the evolution of rock has started in the late 1950s. When the Beatles arrived in 1962 with “Love Me Do” and broke the American dominance, the first Turkish rock’n’roll single, “Bir Eylül Akşamı/It’s So Long” by Erkin Koray was launched almost at the same time. None of the bands in the country sing in English today. Cover bands used to perform popular songs from both foreign (as used in the daily language) and Türkçe Rock, that is, rock in Turkish. Among friends, rock is no longer in English. It is only rock and it’s in Turkish.

Interviewee: I listen to those who make rock, I mean Türkçe Rock.

Researcher: How about foreign rock?

Interviewee: I don’t listen to foreign music (M, 24).

In the clubs, the audience no longer wants listening to the foreign rock covers. Türkçe or “Turkish” signifies both the language and the nationality in English. The name “Turkish Rock-Türkçe Rock” refers only to the language. The shelves of the music retailers also illustrate this distinction.

It is often suggested that both transnational companies (TNCs) and the internet act as catalysts in the globalization process. When the rock boom in the mid 90s happened, there was no Internet and widespread consumption of rock music in Turkey has been through local production as if it were a local genre, that is, without the marketing efforts of TNCs. Global record companies were not able to enter the music market, but Coca-Cola, have started sponsoring the largest rock festival of the time, “Rock’n Coke” in 2003. Its rival “Rock for Peace,” was organized by activists and local rock bands became an equally popular festival in 2006 with more than 60,000 participants. Today,

many rock festivals are held in the country. Even small towns organize rock festivals that are called “Türkçe Rock Festival” so as to attract tourists from big cities [3]. Turkey has joined the Eurovision Song contest by rock bands (e.g., Mor ve Ötesi became the 7th runner in 2008 and Manga 2nd in 2009) – the public complains when the lyrics are in English, but never about the genre.

The evolution of rock in Turkey can illuminate the future of globalization. Arguably, no other commodity in the world, except football (soccer), has evolved dialogically to that extent. It no longer symbolizes Americanization. In local culture, different forms merge and Türkçe Rock becomes an internalized and different experience. It is clear that the local rockers have discovered ways to create their own modes of both producing and consuming rock music. This Western genre has self-evolved and become a part of a culture often deemed “non-Western”.

Following the school of Attali (1985)[4] who says that music is a practice that is capable of prefiguring changes in the political economy and in social developments, there arises an important question for future research: Are there other self-evolving commodities in the world?

### Notes

[1] A full-length version of this paper is published in September, 2010 in *Journal of Macromarketing*, p. 238.

[2] Keightley, Keir (2001), Reconsidering rock. In *The Cambridge companion to pop and rock*, ed. S. Frith, W. Straw, and J. Street, 109-42. Cambridge: Univ. Press.

[3] Please see a detailed study on the rock festivals in Turkey in Yazicioglu and Firat (2007), “Glocal Rock Festivals as Mirrors to the Future of Culture(s),” in *Consumer Culture Theory, Research in Consumer Behavior*, R. W. Belk and J. Sherry (eds), Vol. 11: 85-102. Oxford: Elsevier. The place of rock music and identity formation is explored in Yazicioglu and Firat (2008), “Musical effects: Glocal identities and consumer activism”

[http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v35/naacr\\_vol35\\_306.pdf](http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/v35/naacr_vol35_306.pdf)

[4] Attali, J. 1985. *Noise: The political economy of music*. Manchester: Univ. Press.

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