

Research Article  
**Araştırma Makalesi**  
DOI: 10.20981/kuufefd.35110

**Abamüslim AKDEMİR**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. | Doç. Dr.

Uludağ University, Education Faculty, Social Sciences Teaching, Bursa/Turkey  
Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi, Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenliği, Bursa/Türkiye  
akdemir@uludag.edu.tr

## **Globalization and Adorno's Industrialization of Culture**

### **Abstract**

With the arrival of the last quarter of the twentieth century, the rapid and pervasive changes that occurred in almost all aspects of life including but not limited to art, philosophy, architecture, and literature removed the international borders. The world gradually became homogenized. This new epoch emerged under the name of globalization in the contexts such as new world order and postmodernity. With globalization, subjects eating the same food, drinking the same beverages, listening to the same music, and watching the same things also began to think and feel the same way. The liveliness created by different cultures was replaced with the mass culture, mixing everything together and making them homogenized and universalized. What makes all of these possible is the "Culture Industry". Believing that the Marxist critical social theory was no longer adequate, Adorno developed a new critical social theory against this new order based on the Frankfurt School of critical theory and predicated upon a critique of mass culture. In his theory, he used the concept of culture industry. He chose the term "culture industry" instead of "mass culture" and saw culture as a product systematically produced and disseminated by the culture industry, instead of something that was born out of the mass itself.

### **Key Words**

Culture Industry, Globalization; Mass Culture, Theodor Adorno.

The rapid changes in information and communication due to developments in science, technology and economy have eliminated international borders. The world has turned into a large village where common values are emerging. This phenomenon has made itself felt in almost every field of life since the last quarter of 20th century and new trend of this emerged under the name of “new world order”, “postmodernity”, and “globalization”. The current trend of this phenomenon which is globalization has turned out to be the focal point of discussions in every field of human knowledge.

Human rights, among others, became one of the main issues of discussion in the discourse because globalization Globalization dominates the World with the promise of promoting human rights, liberal economy and open market. This new era was defined by Fredric Jameson as modernization, post-industrial, consumption society and show society. To him, new economic order and social life have formed the beginning of new government in the cultures (Jameson, 1993, p.27). This new development has mingled cultural, social and economic together with globalization. The borders have become much more ambiguous in culture.

With the process of globalization, the rationalization form of modernity was opened to discussion as meaning, order and content became problematic. Direct relationships were formed with the methods of bringing closer diverse lives ontologically that were not related to each other. According to Benjamin, man has lost his freedom and singleness. Every object is the mirror of another. Those objects eating, drinking, listening, watching the same things have now started to think and feel the same things exactly. Everybody is the same (Dellaoglu, 2003, pp.21-22). Within this process, the postmodern view which addresses the homogeneous mass has now created mass culture or popular culture. The new humanity as products of mass culture do not give rise to creativity.

It has made men an inactive object who can be directed and controlled instead of putting them into a mutual discuss atmosphere. Culture and entertainment have mingled with each other in the fantasy world of mass communication tools (Swingewood, 1996, p.36). Its culture and works of art have now become meta and its function has been only to entertain and has reduced conscious totally to inactivity.

Globalization considers eclecticism as the basis of culture. On one hand, it mixes everything to each other through mass culture and makes them global by loading them with homogenous contents. It, on the other hand, brings sub-cultures, localization, tradition and differences to the fore. For instance, individual begins to listen to reggae music, watches cowboy film on tv, has his lunch at Mc. Donald's, dinner at a local restaurant. He uses Paris perfume in Tokyo, wears redra clothes in Hong Kong (Appignanesi and Garrat, 1996, p.47). Elite and popular culture forms have migled with each other.

Mass culture has destroyed aesthetic sensitivity with the concepts of imitation, irony and pastiche and rejected aesthetic elitism. It has demonstrated a populist attitude with the understanding of “Anything goes”. Money is the sole measurement rather than aesthetic criteria. Everything that the artist spits is money. There is nobody where everybody is the same. There no longer, exists such a thing as object. All those have been caused by “Culture Industry”.

The concept of “Culture Industry” was used for the first time by the thinkers Adorno and Horkheimer of Frankfurt School taking mass culture criticism as the basis in the “Dialectics of Enlightenment.”.

As one of the important members of the Frankfurt School which was mainly concerned with the critical theory, Adorno (1903-1969) believed that the Marxist critical social theory was no longer adequate to solve the problems and tried to develop a new critical social theory. According to his way of thinking, both capitalism and Soviet socialism, in practice, pose problems in the political and economic fields that are hard to solve. By means of a new critical social theory, Adorno sought to overcome the chaos created by the historical conditions in the theoretical field together with globalization. He used the term “culture industry” to define this new situation.

The most widely criticized feature of Adorno's culture industry is its misleading aspect. On the basis of this criticism lies Marx's meta fetishism. According to Adorno, those produced by culture industry are not the works of art that have become as meta but those metas produced for Market from the very beginning. The concept of culture, industry, start when culture became a commercial commodity and money in the classic term became a culture during the late capitalist era, and have struggle to form a theory of daily life this concept (Dellaloğlu, 2003, p.23). Culture industry has reduced individuals to a living meta in the name of consuming to consume. The individual has formed a living area with the product. As Adorno says “The typical cultural existence of culture industry are no longer product but has been turned into product besides other features” (Adorno, 2003, p.72).

The culture industry is, in the simplest definition, the industrialization of culture and human has become an industrial product within the industrial society and has become a thing. The individuals have created an area of living with the product. The main reason here is to gain satisfaction by kitch products without aesthetic. Limitation has replaced the real one. The society, on the other hand, consists of individuals that are totally consumers and of which behaviours have been determined in advance. Adorno explains it as: “Every one should behave suitable for their levels determined before and should move towards the mass production categories produced for certain types of consumers”(Adorno, 2007, p.51). In such a case, consumers have become materials of statistics.

For the individuals, being adaptable has replaced their consciences. Industrial mind subjects workers to model of mental cooperation. It expands effort in order to make them accustomed to the system. Though it seems at first sight that this gives individuals freedom both in their working life and cultural industry, men (individuals) in such case have always been a subject (Adorno, 2007, pp. 81-82). Culture industry, consciously, has been a barrier before the development of free individuals.

Though the products of culture industry create a monotonous atmosphere, it has been successful in attracting men by its very nature. Similar and charming products do not allow their customers move out of the circle. As Adorno explains; the men who are now consumers became the ideology of entertainment industry which they cannot get rid of (Adorno, 2007, p.96). Cultural industry imposes an entertainment equal to

thinking. Man, unconsciously and with no resistance, accepts this insistence (Adorno, 2007, p.56).

The administrators have, according to Adorno, directed the mass and changed them into the means of propaganda and tourism. Thus, the artistic works that industry of culture created made art object and merchandising. In this context, the best way to merchandise and present all the products to consumption is advertisement.

In the process of industrialization of culture, advertising to have formed an area of surrealism. Advertising not only creates desire but it also forms a reality of being an object. Adorno (2007, p. 96) states that advertising is the elixir of life of culture industry. Behind advertisement, the sovereignty of system is hidden. Everything having no mark of advertisement is regarded as meaningless economically. Adorno explains the success of advertising in the domain of culture industry in the light of the fact that though consumers know that advertisement is not true, they continue to purchase the cultural objects and sustain to use them with a strong desire. (Adorno, 2007, p. 107)

While Adorno strongly defends modernist art, he criticizes the mass culture as a result of the industry of culture. He objects to capitalist and socialist totalitarian regimes since they intervene with the human freedom. He regards the culture that was created by means of technological facilities as a tool of mass manipulation. The process of being object that Hollywood, Broadway, Manhattan and Rock'n Roll directed actually accelerated Adorno's criticism who migrated to New York during the World War II. The mass culture or popular values towards particularity or individualism came to the fore. The dominance of subject overwhelmingly became restricted and the power between subjectivity and culture declined. (Connor, 2005, p.364). In postindustrial culture, thus, high culture understanding integrated with commercial and mass culture. The standards of culture irresistibly lost and the cultural products made individual an ordinary carrier of the social tendencies. According to Adorno, the industry of culture occurred through the instinct of profit which has always been prevailing (Adorno, 2007, p. 112). This is the reason that made everything object and the changed of the object itself into culture. Therefore, the individual who has become alienated towards effort in the face of production become also alienated to life and the whole existence through consumption's becoming aesthetic in the face of consumption.

Adorno's subject, which is his object of analysis is not the employee but the customer in consumption society. The subject's meaning that he attributed while using culture industry is not the same as from the meaning that mass culture or popular culture attributed to subject. In mass culture, authentic people is mentioned, people's culture has a role for the mass culture. Thus, Adorno cannot stand the implication of his view in that in culture industry people does not create culture. Rather people are included in the industry culture. They are not the subjects but the objects. In conclusion, today's people are more objective and more passive than those living in the period referred to by Adorno. People have changed what they consume into fetishism. Brand sovereignty has occupied people's life space. Therefore, Adorno's remark which goes back to 50 years has turned out to be true in the present.

## Küreselleşme ve Adorno'nun Kültür Endüstrisi

### Öz

Yirminci yüzyılın son çeyreğiyle birlikte sanattan felsefeye, mimariden edebiyata hemen hemen yaşamın her alanında kendini hissettiren hızlı değişim uluslararası sınırları ortadan kaldırdı. Dünya giderek homojenleşti. Bu yeni durum küreselleşme adı altında, yenedünya düzeni, postmodernite gibi söylemlerle ortaya çıktı. Küreselleşme süreci ile birlikte aynı şeyleri yiyen, aynı şeyleri içen, aynı şeyleri dinleyen, aynı şeyleri seyreden özneler aynı şeyleri düşünmeye, aynı şeyleri hissetmeye başladılar. Farklı kültürlerin oluşturduğu renklilik yerini kitle kültürüne bıraktı. Her şeyi birbirine karıştırıp homojenleştirerek evrenselleştirdi. Bütün bunları olanaklı kılan ise “Kültür Endüstrisi”dir. Bu yeni durum karşısında Theodor Adorno kitle kültürü eleştirisini esas olarak Frankfurt okulunun eleştirel teorisi üzerinden Marksist eleştirel toplum teorisinin tıkanığını düşünerek yeni bir eleştirel toplum teorisi kurmaya çalışmıştır. Bu teoride o kültür endüstrisi kavramını kullanmıştır. Kitle kültürünün yerine kültür endüstrisi kavramının alınması kültürü kitlenin kendi içinden çıkan bir şey değil, kültür endüstrisinin sistematik olarak üretilip yaygınlaşmasına bağlamıştır.

### Anahtar Sözcükler

Küreselleşme, Kültür Endüstrisi, Kitle Kültürü, Theodor Adorno.

## REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W (2003) “*Kültür Endüstrisini Yeniden Düşünürken*”, çev. Bülent O. Doğan, *Cogito*, Sayı: 36, Yaz 2003, pp. 76-84.
- Adorno, T. W. (2007) *Kültür Endüstrisi- Kültür Yönetimi*, çev. N. Ünler, M. Tüzel, E. Gen, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları.
- Apigenes, R. And Garratt, C. (1996) *Postmodernizm*, İstanbul, Milliyet Yayınları.
- Connor, S. (2005) *Postmodernist Kültür*, çev. Doğan Şahiner, İstanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Dellaloğlu, B. F. (2003) “*Bir Giriş: Adorno Yüz Yaşında*”, *Cogito*, Sayı: 36, Yaz 2003, pp. 13-36.
- Jameson, F. (1993) “*Postmodernizm ve Tüketim Toplumu*”, çev. H. Güleriyüz, V. Aytar, *Edebiyat ve Eleştiri Dergisi*, Ocak-Şubat 1993, İzmir.
- Swingewood, A. (1996) *Kitle Kültürü Efsanesi*, çev. Aykut Kansu, Ankara, Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları.