


Chapter 22

The Use of Food in Cinema as a Soft Power Instrument

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ABSTRACT

Regarding reaching large audiences, cinema is one of the oldest known advertising tools and is often used by countries as a soft power tool. Although food's social and cultural reflections in the cinema are not a new development, it has increased in recent years. It is thought that cinema increases intercultural interaction and helps to reshape borders in the globalizing world. Sensing social concepts such as food and marginalization, the relationship between food and gender, food, and social discrimination related to daily life are conveyed through cinema. One of the biggest motivations for writing the chapter is to examine the soft power effect of culinary culture in the cinematic narrative. In this study, the relationship between soft power and cinema was examined. At the same time, the use of food as a soft power element in cinematic narrative is examined. In this context, the importance of food as a soft power source in cinema in terms of nation branding and the place of Turkish culinary culture in cinema has been discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION

The positive effect that a country achieves by using its cultural resources effectively is called soft power. Mass media are frequently used by nations that desire to achieve this power. Soft power can also be summarized as nations' efforts to impact other countries by using cultural resources. In this context, cinema is frequently used as an essential mass media tool in reflecting soft power (Rawnsley, 2021a). For this reason, many states benefit from cinema as a soft power element. Hollywood cinema is at the forefront of these countries, which is the soft power of the United States of America (USA).

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After September 11th, the US announced the possible threats to its lands, citizens, and culture and how to deal with these threats, both to its people and the whole world, through Hollywood cinema. In other words, the USA uses cinema, one of the soft power elements, to spread its lifestyle and culture to other countries and bring its own characteristics and habits to people in other countries. China, which is always stated to have an attractive and traditional culture, promotes its soft power on the international platform through cinema to teach its language and culture worldwide (Nye, 2014; Zhou, 2015). From a soft power perspective, the Indian film industry maintains its influence across Bollywood countries (Thussu, 2013).

The phenomenon of food, which has played many intermediary roles since the beginning of human history, is characterized as a potent tool in conveying social life, increasing interactions by blurring intercultural boundaries, and at the same time, conveying the symbolic relations of sociological phenomena. On the other hand, cinema has the power to reflect social class, create body image, and convey religious belief and cultural characteristics on its own, as a political weapon as powerful as food in conveying social life. In this context, examining the themes in the transfer of the food phenomenon through cinema is imperative and measuring the impact of power in the sociological context (Uçkan Çakır et al., 2020; 2022).

Popular culture, which is formed due to the cinematic transfer of food, emerges not only as a fundamental component of the nation's economic competitiveness but also as a powerful resource for cultural diplomacy with its social impact at the global level (Nye and Kim, 2019; Kim, 2021). In this context, food is seen as a phenomenon that socializes the individual by having solid emotions and cultural transfers in the lives of individuals and, at the same time, reflects their social characteristics (Germov and Williams, 2008: 6). Food, which is at the center of individual identity (Fischler, 1988: 275), is examined in a multidisciplinary framework as a fundamental phenomenon in terms of reflecting sociocultural characteristics. In this context, an analysis was carried out on the representation of food in the cinema as a soft power tool.

2. DEFINITION OF POWER AND SOFT POWER

To examine any concept for the first time and to make definitions of that concept, first of all, a dictionary should be consulted (Ohnesorge, 2020). Taking action from this explanation, it is necessary to talk about the concept of power before examining the concept of soft power. It is seen that there are 36 definitions of the concept of "Power" in the Cambridge Dictionary published by Cambridge University publishing house (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). One of these definitions is expressed as "the ability to control people and events," and the other as "the amount of political control a person or group has in a country." Nye (2009: 1) defines power as "the ability to influence the behavior of others to get what one wants." By David Buchanan (2020: 59), It is defined as "the ability to overcome the resistance of others, use your own will, and achieve results consistent with your interests and goals."

The concept of power seems simple and is generally used in social and interpersonal relations. Although there is little consensus about power, a controversial concept by its nature, it is possible to talk about it being a part of all relationships and every social interaction in the world. When evaluated in this context, power has four principles: changing the existing situation, being a part of the interaction, dealing with daily events, and strengthening the other in social relations (Keltner, 2017). Perceptions of how much change governments can achieve in the global arena depend on perceptions of their economic

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