Emil Grigorian Echmiadzin Letter Advertisement: Ethnicity and Buying Power

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**Emil Grigorian Company History**

Emil Grigorian (EG) is an Armenian family owned jewelry company which specializes in gold and fine jewelry manufacturing. They have 3 stores currently operating in Yerevan, and one more store opening this spring, as well as stores and suppliers for stores all around the world including Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, Cyprus, Latvia, and now the United States. EG is the biggest jewelry plant in the region and has vast manufacturing possibilities. The stores in Yerevan are located in the best areas possible including the Northern Avenue, Yerevan Mall, Arshakunyats street (flagship store under the factory) and the one to open this spring on the Republic Square. The original name of the company before the rebranding campaign was Yerevan Jewelry Plant 1 Gnomon. The company was founded in 1951 during the Soviet Union, and was privatized after the collapse of the USSR. In 2015 the name was changed to Emil Grigorian, after the founder and current director and CEO of the company Emil Grigoryan. Although since the privatization the jewelry plant and the company had made a lot of progress with sales, the company became truly recognized worldwide and popular after the current head designer and COO of the company Mrs. Sona Grigoryan, the daughter of the founder, moved to Armenia. Amongst the many changes she made within the company, one of the most important changes was the focus she put on Armenian inspired designs. The rebirth of the company was secured with newly created Armenian themed jewelry as well as the previously created pieces such as the Emil Grigorian Golden Armenian Etchmiadzin Alphabet Necklaces. Although these pieces were very popular when they were originally produced in 1998 by the request of the Catholicos of all Armenians Vazgen I, who asked for the smaller replica of Echmiadzin Alphabet Tablet to be made for the church. After the miniature version of the Echmiadzin Alphabet tablet was made, Emil Grigoryan asked for the Catholicos’ permission to make necklaces of the same Etchmiadzin Letters. The Catholicos agreed and blessed the collection.

With Emil Grigorian opening more store locations and becoming more popular it was important for the company to re-instill their Armenian themes and collections to be shown to the entire Armenian diaspora. Thus, I decided to create a short film/advertisement video for the company, more specifically about the Echmiadzin Alphabet Necklaces.

**The Advertisement Background**

For my creative project I created a video advertisement which showcased the Emil Grigorian Echmiadzin letter necklaces. I came up with the idea while speaking with my friends from Russia: we were speaking about the fact that in Russia, Armenians were called “Xach”. This was a derogatory nickname, which originated due to the fact that Armenians would always wear crosses (xach- the Armenian word for cross). During this conversation I came to the idea that in reality this word should not be derogatory because it is purely a reminder that Armenians will always retain their religion, heritage, and culture. We wear our crosses with pride and one Armenian can always recognize the other by looking at their cross. Unfortunately, in our culture crosses are rarely worn over clothing, making it harder to identify an Armenian by their cross. I was gifted the Emil Grigorian letter necklace when I was young and it has become an irremovable part of me. No matter which country I went to, if I ever saw or met an Armenian they would always compliment the necklace. Thus, I connected the two concepts together and thought that these Emil Grigorian letter necklaces could become an “identifier” between Armenians. Of course, the elements of my idea changed as I gained a better understanding after doing research which I will speak about in the research section of this paper. One of the most important elements, which was presented in the advertisement, was the fact that Emil Grigorian is an Armenian brand; it is the oldest jewelry company in Armenia, made in Armenia, and it incorporates historic Armenian designs into modern and original pieces. The individuals wearing the Etchmiadzin letter necklaces in the advertisement highlighted the Armenian nature of the brand. Although the letters were first manufactured in 1998, tapping into the rise of national pride among Armenians in Armenia and in the diaspora, the letter necklaces are making comeback. After speaking to the owners of the company we came to the decision to go through with this project.

**Advertisement Description**

The video starts off with shots of the train station in motion. People are walking around, entering and exiting trains. Throughout this footage, the viewer is introduced to the three main characters. The three main characters are wearing the Echmiadzin Letter necklaces. They are zoomed into, and followed throughout more than the extras. One of the characters, Alex is getting off the train. He bends down to tie his shoes, and then there is a close up of his Echmiadzin Letter necklace. Another main character, Narine, walks into the station with a suitcase and buys tickets. There is a zoom in on her necklace. The shot then goes on to the leading character, Ani. She is looking out of the window, gathering her thoughts. There is a zoom into her Echmiadzin necklace. The next shot is her walking through a hall. She then suddenly realizes, that the hall is full of motionless people standing about 2 meters away from each other. At that moment in time, she is the only one who is moving which throws her into a state of panic. As she walks around examining people she sees another person moving, it is Alex. She walks in his direction taking her headphones out and her pace becomes faster and faster. As they get closer to each other passing motionless people the camera zooms into the necklaces. This moment is very powerful because even though these two individuals are strangers, like everyone else in this room, their heritage and their ethnicity are what will connect them throughout decades. They go on and find another person, Narine, who is also wearing the necklace. They stand in front of each other and the camera then phased out to give a full view of the three main characters. The next shot is of Narine’s letter necklace (Armenian letter Z) which dissolves and fades to the Emil Grigorian Gold Armenian Echmiadzin Alphabet (miniature, the full-size original is in Echmiadzin itself). Then the line on the screen then reads “Find your letter, find yourself”. The final shot is of the Emil Grigorian logo. in addition to the Emil Grigorian logo**.**

**The Process**

I firstly interviewed over 4 videographers and different studios for my advertisement. I felt like the videographer had to have a sense of the “Armenian vision” like I did. I ended up being referred to Gevorg Nersesuni, an incredible videographer and artist who has shot campaigns for several big scale companies including Kilian. We discussed my vision for the advertisement and with a few remarks on his behalf started contacting the crew and the actors. After long hours of work, we came to the realization that this campaign was a large production effort and had to include advance filming equipment which we rented out as well as crew members including musical arranger, set designer, assistant director, make-up artist, director of photography, and editor. Our budget for the advertisement originally was around 2000$ and after all the costs were added up it came out to be approximately 1800$. The music we chose for the ad was one of Garegin Grigoryan, the founder’s brother, pieces which was later arranged by our crew member. It was important for the EG that we use this musician’s music since Garegin had passed away at a young age and the founder wanted to honor his memory. The name of this piece by Garegin Grigoryan is called “Vairi Varde” which translates to The Wild Rose. This musical piece was originally written and performed on a piano, which makes it very melodic and romantic. As Garegin Grigoryan was very ahead of his time with his compositions one cannot compare this or any other piece of his with anything else or any other composer. It is a modern piece which incorporates the classical structure, it also contains many Armenian themes and motifs. It starts out very calmly with a few simple accords and then becomes faster as the storyline becomes more complex so does the music. This piece has a lot of mystical accords which I wanted to highlight, so I gave the original music to a musical arranger and he added a few violin excerpts. The two main female leads were scouted by me, early December, and the male lead were found through an agency. I found it of most importance for the main actors to look and be Armenian, because I wanted their looks to reflect the image of EG. It is very common for companies nowadays to use Russian or other foreign models or actors because they fall into that particular, Western standard of beauty. During the Soviet Union the beauty standard was pale skin, blue or green eyes and of course blond hair: Russian looks. Unfortunately, this beauty standard stuck around in the Armenian culture until now. Thus, I wanted to break free of that stereotype and chose actors who reflected the Armenian nation, some with deeper skin tones and others very pale. The rest of the individuals that were featured in the ad were friends or family. This was done to cut the costs as much as possible for the company. Everyone in the commercial had to wear neutral colors so it would not take away from the jewelry being filmed. I had originally planned to film this advertisement in the Zvartnots Airport but due to Covid restrictions and budget limitations I chose to film it in the Yerevan Railway Station. This minor change was welcomed because it did not take away from my original idea of the commercial. Because the setting of the commercial should had been an international location, a place where one may easily come across different nationalities, the train station seemed like a perfect alternative to the airport. We arrived at the train station at 9 o’clock in the morning and the set designer started setting the places while looking at the written-out script. At around 9:30 the videography team arrived with the equipment and started setting everything up. Due to many complications with the extras who were originally supposed to be friends and family, last minute we had to hire actors to play the roles of the extras. Because this happened last minute, the extras arrived in very colorful and unsuitable clothing, thankfully, I had anticipated this and packed an entire suitcase of neutral clothing. I had also brought` props such as books, bags, briefcases and more to make it more natural. We first filmed the parts of the main characters and scenes from the train as well as the train station. The station was recently beautifully renovated so we thought it would be best to include scenes from the station. The videographer switched his equipment several times from a tripod, gimbal, and moving trolley tripod depending on which scene he was filming. The lighting equipment was also moved and switched depending on which area of the train station we were filming. We faced a few problems while filming with the crew because the videographer had miscalculated the time we were going to spend filming. The videographer had said that the filming would take from 9-2 but it was from 9-6. The actors did a great job and the film itself turned out beautifully.

**Analysis**

Several aspects of the commercial had dual meaning and were more than what the eye tells from the first glance. The aspect of the advertisement where everyone freezes is also symbolic now due to the 44 Day War which shocked Armenia and diasporan Armenians to the core a few months ago. During the war, much of the international community stayed silent on the issue of Turkish and Azeri aggression against Armenians. To many Armenians this silence felt like betrayal from the international community because only Armenians spoke out about it. While thousands of Armenian boys were dying the world stood still, frozen, just like the extras in the video. Additionally, the main characters standing in a semi- circle at the end is also symbolic and plays into the idea that no matter how or where you live you will always find a piece of your heritage and a piece of yourself in another Armenian person.

**Research**

*Instagram*

When I was researching Instagram grids and algorithms I realized the video had to be on the shorter side. Because of the short attention spans the line of the advertisement is short, the two repetitive phrases help the reader remember the phrase and associate it with logo and Emil Grigorian name. The video itself is less than 60 seconds because it has to fit into an Instagram post without a secondary swipe. Another reason why it will be short is because later on when this video is promoted it needs to be short enough to fit in the stories. I also gathered with the Emil Grigorian social media team and together we looked at the insight information of their followers. We discovered that 90% of the followers were women between the ages of 18-54. The countries which we have most interactions with are Armenia, Russia, United States, Lebanon and France. We also looked at the most popular posts and what made the followers react the way they did.

*Focus Group*

After speaking to my professor, Mica Hilson, he suggested I gather a focus group and conduct interviews. I conducted a focus group where I gathered 6 diasporic Armenians and asked them questions about their Armenian identity. My first question to the focus group was how Armenian did they feel. Two of the people in the focus group said that they felt a bigger connection to the country they were living in rather than to Armenia. However, the other four send that they felt very Armenian and despite the fact that they had lived outside of Armenia for most of their lives they had a longing for Armenia and for the Armenian people. This question segwayed into many of the participants speaking about the fact that they had attended Armenian schools or Armenian Sunday schools during their childhood and they had great connections with the Armenian community in their cities. Many of the participants said that they would take their children to Armenian schools. They also felt that it was very important for their children and future generations to know their culture and history as well as the language. After this I asked how important it was for them to shop Armenian brands. Because this focus group was gathered right after the war many of the participants said that they would rather shop Armenian brands than anything else. For them having the tag that says made in Armenia was absolutely vital. One of the participants said that for Christmas every year she would buy her girlfriends little necklaces and bracelets with the Armenian infinity sign or other Armenian motives. I then asked what prices she had paid for these necklaces and bracelets and she said that for a necklace much smaller than the Emil Grigorian necklace and without any diamonds she paid approximately $400. After giving the participants the prices of the EG letter necklaces the participants were in shock**.** After giving them the prices of the pieces, the participants said that they had not seen or heard of prices that low for gold jewelry with diamonds anywhere including social media. Many of them said that they were very interested and would buy the letter necklaces if they were available in their countries or would order online. I then went on to ask weather an Armenian last name in the brands name affected the purchasing power. The two participants that had said that they felt a bigger connection with the countries that they had lived in rather than in Armenia said it wouldn’t really but the other four said that an Armenian last name would increase their purchasing power. One of the participants said that after the war she exclusively bought from Armenian brands and those brands which had an Armenian last name in the brands name were more welcomed in her book. I then asked if the extent of “Armenianess” represented in these companies’ brandings affected their perception of the brand. All six of the participants said that the more Armenian the advertisement was the more likely they were to show their friends and share their pride of having a good Armenian brand be on the market. I went on to explain the synopsis of the ad that I was going to film and all of the participants said that it was a great idea. They said that the plot was very understandable and they could clearly relate to it. One of the participants said that he often found himself trying to look out for Armenian dialect in international places such as the airport. His comment made all the other participants reminisce on feeling home when hearing or seeing an Armenian person. At the end of the interview the participants said that they would most certainly buy from Emil Grigorian now that they knew it made strides to be more Armenian. This interview really made me understand that it was critical for the commercial to include Armenian themes in the ad. After this focus group I decided to use Garegin Grigoryan’s music because it also had many Armenian themes in it as well. Overall this process was very informative to both me in making this advertisement and generally to EG for future endeavors such as opening a store in the locations where the participants lived.

*Survey*

I also conducted a survey which I spread through my personal, Emil Grigorian’s Instagram and Facebook as well as the AUA Facebook group. I had originally planned to pass the survey before and after filming of the advertisement but having conducted the focus group I realized that it was best to conduct just one survey. The first question of the survey was “What is your nationality?” The answers were: 76.5% Armenian 14.7% other and 8.8% American. The second question was “How closely would you identify as an Armenian on a scale from 1 to 10?”, the average answer was 8.75. The third question was “What is the most important part of being Armenian?”, and the majority of the answers to this short answer question was cultural values, pride, heritage, wisdom tradition, food, family and supporting Armenians all over the world. The fourth question was “How important is it to you to support Armenian brands on social media from scale 1 to 10?”, the average answer was 8.67. The fifth question was “Does a tag made an Armenian matter to you?” 85.2% said yes, 11.1% answered indifferent, and 3.7% answered no. The sixth question was “If so then how much on a scale of 1-10?”, the average answer was 8.29. The seventh question was “Were you familiar with the brand Emil Grigorian prior to the survey?”, surprisingly 88.9% answered yes and 11.1% answered no. The eighth question was “How likely are you to inquire more information on the brand after being introduced to it?” 48.1% answered very likely, 48.1% answered likely and 3.7% answered unlikely. The next and final question was “If so, how much would you rate the designs of the pieces from 1 to 10?”. The average answer was 8.92. This survey strengthened and supported my theory that Armenian people all around the world maintain a close connection with their Armenian identity. After the survey I am became more certain and assured the brand itself that the advertisement would be successful in the buying power would increase after the advertisement. Containing Armenian themes in the advertisement and highlighting the brands Armenian nature of the brand would only increase the buying power.

**Future Steps**

In order for the commercial to have a successful impact on the company, the company has to also invest in marketing. The suggestions that were made during our meeting with the company were all oriented more towards social media, and not television. Due to this, the video clip is under 1:30 long, so that it can be edited to be featured on a TikTok page, which only allows for videos under 1 minute. I have also advised that the company uses an SEO and a social media marketing specialist to boost the video post and use the sponsored feature that both Instagram and Google have. The company should ideally allocate a monthly $500 budget in order to see satisfactory results. The company was advised to sponsor the video not only in Armenia, but also in countries where the Armenian diaspora is concentrated, such as Russia (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Krasnodar), USA (Glendale, Fresno, Boston and New Jersey), France (Paris, Lyon), Argentina (Buenos Aires), and Lebanon (Beirut). This is crucial in order to fulfill the mission of the project: connect Armenians all over the world through this Armenian piece of jewelry. I have also advised the company to do a behind the scenes video, where the founders or the marketing managers would speak about the Echmiadzin collection, how it was born, and what led to the idea of the video. It is crucial that Vazgen I is mentioned. Vazgen I is the one who created the pano as well as the one who blessed the letters and the pano miniature. I have made sure there is plenty of behind the scenes footage in order to realize this project.

**Literature Review**

As I am going to produce a video advertisement for a jewelry company in which the theme of the advertisement is going to be cultural identity and sense of belonging with the use of the gold Armenian letter necklaces, I have been analyzing what factors would play into the increase of sales in Emil Grigorian. Throughout my literature review I found that the main factors which would play an impactful role in my project and research gathered would be the use of ethic marketing, current marketing trends, and diasporic statistics through the medium of videography and video advertising. The main purpose for these particular literatures was the connection of using one’s ethnicity and its’ nuances to target a group of customers as well as examining and monitoring growing trends in the jewelry industry which would increase sales worldwide.

*Current Marketing Trends: Jewelry Marketing Trends*

The 2020 jewelry market forecasted to be highly dynamic, globalized, and competitive. A number of trends must be capitalized: branded jewelry growth, fashionability acceleration, and change in the supply-chain processes (Dauriz, Remy, Totchermann, 2020). The authors of this literature based their research and analytics on comparing the apparel industry with the jewelry industry. Thus far, the jewelry industry has in many ways mimicked the apparel industry’s trends and development at a slower rate. The article concludes that trends that are widely used in the apparel industry will eventually emerge in the jewelry industry. In this article the authors discuss in many ways in which globalization has played into both of the industries for example, “In 1990, there were just 2 Swarovski boutiques; by 2012, there were 860.” (Dauriz, Remy, Totchermann, 2020). This growth is attributed to the globalization and the changing landscape of marketing, including the use of social media to shape the brand identity. This approach is also similar to that of the De Beers company and ways in which they became the most iconic diamond supplier (Abram, 2018). The authors also analyzed that even though a small percentage of sales in the jewelry industry are done online, “…one- to two-thirds say they frequently turn to social media for information and advice.” This means that the social media platforms and advertisements are crucial in the buying process.

Jonathan Durante argues that most important marketing trend for social media going forward is short videos. Changes in FB and Instagram algorithms, short attention spans and market saturation allow for short video content to thrive (Durante, 2020).  Durante claims that the traditional forms of marketing are not nearly as effective as media marketing used today, particularly video marketing. Focusing mostly on the fact that short attention spans and short attention-grabbing videos go hand in hand, the author supports this new medium for marketing. These short videos can then be sponsored and the “insight” option, otherwise known as the statistical information of the social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, can be analyzed and used to reach to a bigger demographic. The sponsored insight option provides statistical information regarding the geography, gender, and age of the social media users.

*Ethnic Marketing*

Due to the growing diversity worldwide, businesses have begun to use new tactics to reach the culturally diverse consumer base. The new ad campaigns are tailored to specific groups, which mirror the culturally distinct desires, needs and wants, based on the 5 core dimensions of belonging (Neville, Oyama, Odunewu, 2014). The 5 core dimensions which appealed to one’s sense of belonging are history/memory, place/people, acceptance and pride, language/culture, interconnections. Marketing to a particular ethnic group has been producing a lot of revenue for each company. Although the authors of this work discuss the ethnic and cultural state of Aboriginals in Australia, this study could be applied to any ethic group. In particular, the authors discuss the fact that the Aboriginals’ spread across Australia is similar to the idea of a diaspora. Even though they live in one country, they are the minority, who live among others, and have to go through the same stages of assimilation as a diasporic or an immigrant.

The form of multiethnic niche marketing has become a staple in most large companies' advertisement repertoire due to its success (Halter, 2002). Halter claims that regardless of how many generations pass the immigrant placed in foreign society, and regardless of that society identifying as individualistic or collectivist, an immigrant is just as likely to identify with his or her personal ethnicity as a first-generation immigrant. Halter also passed a survey to a group of individuals in the US and asked several ethnicity-related questions as simple as, “Where are you from?”. The author found that individuals who in their survey answered this question as “American” and did not identify a particular ethnicity had lower education rates. Additionally, poverty was much more common among these individuals. This only brought the author closer to the idea that marketing for ethnic groups rather than the general public is a better, more fruitful choice.

This same concept was applied in a real video marketing campaign during the Toyota Camry ethnically tailored ad, as the video advertisement was created per ethnic group: Caucasian, African American, Latino, and Asian American markets. The effects were much more prominent and resulted in an increased return on investment (Maheshwari, 2017). Toyota played a particular add for a particular TV channel, such as the advertisement including a Latina woman on a Mexican TV channel. Each particular ethnic advertisement had elements of that particular ethnic group and how they live their lives.

*Armenian Diaspora History and Statistics*

In order to understand current diasporic trends and marketing “appeals” we first have to have an analytical insight into the history and statistical information of the diaspora. The immigration and other patterns are viewed in a statistical framework which helps marketing specialists explore which particular diasporic group to appeal to. The author argues that because Armenians migrated to the United States at different times throughout the history their social, economic, and cultural background could differ. (Bolsajian, 2018) In Halters article the author mentions a 3rd or 4th generation Armenian woman, and the more she grew economically and socially the more she became connected to her Armenian roots. This only proves the statistical information Bolsajian discusses of Armenian diaspora being more connected to their Armenian roots based on when they became diasporic.

*Conclusion*

Many studies have been conducted to deduce the effect of marketing and how it affects purchasing power and return on investment. The literature contributes greatly to the field of jewelry and video marketing, as it dissects a spectrum of information within the themes of ethic marketing, current marketing trends, and diasporic statistics through the medium of videography and video advertising. Although the information provided throughout the literature is not always directly specified to the jewelry industry, studies show patterns that are proven true in industries with similar consumer tendencies, such as the clothing and fashion industry.

Human behavioral and reasoning predispositions in regards to the sense of belonging are analyzed through the lens of a particular nation in the literature, however, the authors predict that the study answers the same questions for a different nationality. The importance of the notion of belonging is necessary in order to receive an effective outcome by creating marketing campaigns that feel inclusive to the consumer. This concept was proven true in later experiments, as larger companies, such as Toyota, came out with campaign that directly used the method of ethnic marketing in order to create the feeling of belonging.

Although the literature provides a spectrum of information, several studies are somewhat dated. Even though the information is very relevant, because behavioral and thinking patterns adhere to the same model, as it is evident from the successful Toyota campaign, the extent of globalization was not at its peak when these studies were being conducted and articles were written. The next steps in the research would be to update the dated bits of information, and analyze the relevancy in the new, globalized world. Additionally, it is important to ask questions that would include the effect of the recent pandemic to determine the necessity of adhering and altering marketing campaign ideas and trends.

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