

Script: "Cairo & Its Branded View"
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LEAD IN: Have you ever wondered about your affection for foreign products? Did it ever take you to think about how and when it started? In my Audio Documentary, I tackle the challenges and the facts that lead to such a deep-rooted attachment.

MUSIC: FADE IN: "Longtime" by Reman (plays in the background for 132 seconds)

Aya Ahmed (AA): "We have this perception of that western things are always good because they're like living longer they're good quality they're made in a more professional way. What happened in the past made us think of this perception that everything is good whether it's made outside, not in Egypt." (00:19)

SFX: Clock ticks sound effect plays in the background for 8 seconds.

Time is one of the most valuable assets in life. It is the reason behind your presence and future. It helps you understand who you are, and what are your real affections as well as perceptions. By referring to your yesterday, you might get an answer for why you love and like this or that. One of the most prominent things that most of us are attached to nowadays is the affection for foreign products.

AA: "The brand thing wasn't actually in my mind until ... until I entered the uni. It wasn't that major thing in my life." (00:09)

NAT SOUND: clothes hanger in the background (00:06)

AA: "But when I entered uni, I started actually to buy like more brands because many ... many of the students here like they actually evaluate you based on the brand you're wearing which is ridiculous." (00:12)

That's Aya Ahmed, a student in the American University in Cairo A-U-C who suffered from several challenges because of the attachment and affection for foreign products.

AA: "I'm a senior double major in political science and economics... Actually I didn't have like so many friends and I thought that by being good in shape or by wearing like brands and stuff it would odd to me." (00:14)

So she was just like ...

AA: "Okay, I am going to buy anything that is not made in Egypt." (00:03)

In high school, Aya started to follow Instagram bloggers and brand pages to get an idea about the way she should look.

AA: "I started to follow them and then try to imitate them. I tried to imitate how they actually wear... how they like put pieces." (00:09)

For Aya, a branded item has certain characteristics.

AA: "It's something like it's signed. It's luxurious. It's mainly really expensive. As well as, like how it's actually rated over the world." (00:10)

SFX: Clock ticks sound effect plays in the background for 10 seconds

We can understand the reason behind our current affections by time travelling to the past with Dr Omnya ElNagar, a faculty professor in the Department of Political Science in the AUC.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: "Longtime" by Reman

MUSIC: FADE IN: "Rugiada" by Mattia Vlad Morleo (plays in the background for 93 seconds)

Omneya ElNaggar (OE): "This is a very old process dating from first encounters of Westerners in the Orient through contacts via trade perhaps missionary missions."(00:16)

SFX: Horse hooves sound effect plays in the background for 5 seconds.

Such a process is understood within the framework of Orientalism.

OE: "Orientalism refers to attitudes by the West trying to understand and restructure their knowledge regarding the Orient. So it is a creation of imagined other in order to tame this other; in order make this other understood from the frame of mind."(00:20)

In this sense, the orient means the Middle East.

OE: "Orientalism is usually referred to a term by Edward Said who is a Columbia University professor. And that came after his book Orientalism by the same title published in the 1970s." (00:16)

About the same time, the affection for foreign products was highly noticed under the regime of President Anwar El Sadat.

OE: "And especially through his open door policy or El-Infitah, trying to have sort of economic liberalization and political participation, increase political participation, etc." (00:13)

The Open Door Policy, also called Infatih Policy in Arabic, started in 1971 as an effort to liberalize the economy by attracting, encouraging, and welcoming foreign investments to the country.

MUSIC: FADE OUT: "Rugiada" by Mattia Vlad Morleo

MUSIC: FADE IN: "Meant to Be" by Rob Costlow (Plays in the background for 160 seconds)

Adel Beshay (AB): "'Cenia' ... it has to be branded. It is in the culture; it is in the culture of everyone in Egypt you know.... And in economics they teach it. They call it ostentation consumption. People like to imitate and to belong to a certain thing. This is very strong in this country." (00:22)

That's Dr Adel Beshay, a professor in the economics department in the AUC.

But for now, the Egyptian economy has experienced a recognizable deterioration, which has influenced most if not all of us.

AA: "Now with the devaluation of the pound everything is actually doubled. The inflation rate is actually skyrocketing. So I can't buy the same clothes with same amount of money I used to buy."(00:14)

NAT SOUND: a cashier man mentioning a total cost in Arabic. (00:12)

The Central Bank of Egypt has in fact de-evaluated the Egyptian currency against the US dollar, from LE 8.8 to 17.6 LE in 2016. Such a decision was one of the main key demands by the International Monetary Fund in order for Egypt to receive a loan of \$12 billion.

Ashraf Sheta (AS): "I want to tell you about specifically how it affects a certain industry, which I belong to, which is textile and readymade garments. It affects us unfortunately negatively because some segments are into buying foreign products .They spend a lot of money. And as you know Pakinam We are suffering from devaluation or for our local currency. And eventually this affects the whole overall economy and unfortunately it gives some sort of misperception to people about how your social status is." (00:39)

That's Dr Ashraf Sheta, a professor for entrepreneurship, management and innovation at The American University in Cairo. He also has a deep-rooted experience for 30 years in the textiles industry field.

AA: "So basically local brands or Egypt made brands, they're not that good quality. They are not that good finished."(00:09)

Our current affection for foreign branded items has been transmitted to us through different mediums.

AA: "It's mainly due to media like media magazines TV. Every single thing that actually changes our perception." (00:08)

OE: "Social media."(00:01)

SFX: WhatsApp message for Android sound effect plays for 1 second.

OE: "You see this kind of distortion of how the Middle East and how the Orient in general is represented. It is a very strong tool because it's pervasive. It's widely used. It

infiltrates the society without even a need to be present physically or to exert more effort.” (00:21)

MUSIC: FADE OUT: “Meant to Be” by Rob Costlow

MUSIC: FADE IN: “Arabikom” by Royalty Free Music (Plays in the background for 39 seconds)

Chances for Egyptian brands to compete on a global level can still exist and survive. One fine example that I can draw your attention to is Concrete brand that was built in 1989. It's one of Egypt's leading textile and garment manufacturing groups in the Middle East and the world. Some can argue that Concrete styles are a bit simple, but the brand is well known for its high quality productions.

AA: “You might find like good pieces, and I actually go buy those small pieces, which are like a t-shirt or a basic. When it's like really good, okay I am going to buy.”(00:12)

MUSIC: FADE OUT: “Arabikom” by Royalty Free Music

This audio documentary was produced by Pakinam ElGohary for the Audio Production course at The American University in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in Fall 2017.

Special thanks to the interviewees Aya Ahmed, Dr Omneya ElNagar, Dr Adel Beshay, and Dr Ashraf Sheta. Music Credit goes for Jamendo and Royalty Free Music. Sound effects were used from YouTube, and finally the NAT Sounds used were gathered by myself.