

Media-worthy traditions: Musical collaboration, nation building and neoliberal logics in *Coke Studio Pakistan*

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Coke Studio Pakistan is a decade-long music media show, featuring collaborations between pop, eastern classical and regional musicians. Featuring a varied repertory including original compositions, most of its content consists of fusion arrangements of regional, classical and vintage filmi songs. Sponsored by Coca Cola as part of its advertisement strategy in Pakistan, the show promotes itself with the slogan “the sound of the nation.” Displaying a state-of-the-art production, this fusion proposal aims to bring local and old-school musicians and repertories to the Pakistani urban youth, as well as to disseminate a positive image of Pakistan around the world. This is attempted by means of a global-scope media strategy that integrates TV, streaming services and social media, in which musical performance is complemented with a reality TV-based narrative component. This occurs in the context of the efforts of Pakistani entrepreneurs and artists toward their continued insertion into the global market while overcoming the country’s negative international reputation due to religious violence.

In this paper, I argue that *Coke Studio Pakistan* advances a model for the relationship between music and nation based on a reinterpretation of the western discourse of tradition under neoliberal logics. By studying the content-creation practices by musicians and producers, the discourses and objectives of corporate leadership, and the perspectives of consumers, I explore the alternative interpretations and emerging demands on how the nation should “sound,” as well as its related agendas in the context of the neoliberal global market and politics. This analysis aims to explore the political implications of a nationalist model of multicultural citizenship promoted by the private sector, including issues of creative freedom, diversity representation, responsiveness to audiences’ demands, and international politics.