Chapter 3
The Use of Cultural Factors in Storytelling in Digital Advertising:
The Case of Turkey

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ABSTRACT

In today's world in which an economy of attention is dominant, brands have recently come to utilize the power of stories so as to make sure that their brands create an impact on their target audience among millions of other advertising messages. By focusing on the case of Turkey and relying on a descriptive literature review approach, the goal of this study is to show how storytelling is used by brands in the ever-increasing digital advertising studies, and why the use of cultural factors in this communication process is significant, and what are the important points in this process.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone is selling something, but not everyone is buying. Today's consumers are skeptical of commercials and marketers. They can spot a spin or a pitch within the first two notes of a jingle. And with so much noise in the marketplace, companies are willing to go to great lengths to be noticed. This is a world where 500 million tweets, 4.3 billion Facebook messages and 500 million hours of YouTube footage are sent, posted and uploaded every day. In this world, only brands that are able to establish more meaningful connections with people will prosper. Brands need to know why people care and make their brands meaningful accordingly (Bollore, Meaningful Brands, 2017, p. 1). At this point, what the brand itself conveys is not listened to verbatim in this intensely competitive market, whereas what the brand shows is partially paid attention to. It has been observed that the brands have been focusing on 'storytelling' in the recent years so as to relay the message effectively to the other party and to make sure that the message leaves a permanent mark in these people's minds. The facts that the human brain has

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a tendency to listen to stories and that people are inclined to have their guard down while listening to a powerful story have been effective factors for the brands in turning this situation into their advantage.

Stories help us understand human nature. By helping us identify with characters during their quests to achieve certain goals, stories teach us lessons about who we are and what lies within our potential. But this teaching is realized through implication, not explanation. Stories don't tell us how to think or what to value. Rather, they provide a welcomed freedom to self-select the truths that we read into them. This is why they can be immensely powerful. We use stories to learn about ourselves and about the world around us (Jensen, 2002, p. 2). Marketers have recognized our need for stories, and during the last decade the marketing technique of storytelling has become widely popular (Vare, 2014, p. 1). Storytelling, in a marketing-oriented context, is a company's use of a true or fictitious story as a way of differentiation. A company can create a unique position in the consumers' minds regarding itself by building its business, or a part of its business, around a story and thereby enticing the consumers' emotions effectively. In advertising, storytelling has always been a dominant form, but with ever growing competition and need for differentiation, storytelling has nowadays taken a more refined form with the creation of explicit worlds around different brands (Vare, 2014, p. 1).

BACKGROUND

According to Cocco and Muccio, storytelling is the social and cultural activity of sharing stories, often with improvisation, theatrics or embellishment. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation and instilment of moral values. Storytelling is a way of sharing and interpreting experiences, because experiences engage people's minds.

Besides, the brands achieve to make us follow them through stories and reach to a certain goal by eliminating the predicaments of the characters in the plot of the story. The story that is created by a brand will gain power to the extent that the listener is able to see his/her own values and cultural components in the story or identify with the character(s) in question or the plot of the story (Signorelli, 2012, p. 1).

According to the literature, the scenarios of advertisements are organized in either an argumentative or narrative way. Whereas the former focuses on the logical presentation of product attributes, the latter is best described as a story (Chang 2009, p. 21). To date, narratives in advertising have attracted little attention from researchers. The literature so far has treated advertisements as transmitters of product attribute information in a logical manner to convince consumers of the validity of specific brand claims. There are a number of reasons behind such a view, not least because "the archetypal language of science, the social system that studies the effects of advertisements, happens to be argument." Narrative advertising on the contrary, portrays a story about a character's brand experience." Narratives function as attractants to get customers transported and hooked (Escalas, 2004, pp. 37-40). This may distract consumers from looking critically at an advertisement and may rather evoke positive feelings that can be associated with the brand advertised (Escalas, 2004, p. 40). Narratives and sense making have unanimously found a decisive foothold in advertising. A host of advertisements have a plot in a form of a modern tale, with a problem solved in the end by a hero, i.e. the product or the brand. Research has shown that advertisements structured as narratives may be more persuasive than factual advertisements, where product features are simply presented in an analytical form (Escalas, 2004, p. 40). "When the consumer sees ads that can refer to herself/himself, the narrative self-referencing is less vulnerable to weak argumentations than common analytical thinking" (Escalas, 2004, p. 40). The use of narratives in advertisements strengthens reception

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