

INFORMATION CONTENT OF PRINTED ADS BELONG TO A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

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Abstract: Through an examination of print ads about informative content, this paper goes some way to see the impact of changes in the economic and cultural environment on ads. Although much has been written about informative content of ads, no known longitudinal study has examined the information content of Turkish print ads in historical manner. The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the historical development of Turkish print ads according to informational content. A content analysis of 303 Turkish newspaper advertisements was conducted. It was found that Turkish newspaper advertisements generally contain a large amount of information relative to similar content studies. But also there is a significant decrease on the number of multiple cues from late Ottoman to 1960s.

Key Words: Informativeness of Advertising, Content Analysis

BİR GEÇİŞ DÖNEMİNE AİT BASILI REKLAMLARIN BİLGİ İÇERİĞİ

Özet: Bu çalışma, basılı reklamların analizinin ötesine geçerek reklamlardan ilgili döneme ait ekonomik ve kültürel değişimin etkisini görmeye çalışmaktadır. Reklamların bilgi içeriğine yönelik alan yazında çok sayıda çalışma bulunmasına rağmen Türk reklamlarını tarihsel anlamda ve boylamsal şekilde ele alan böyle bir çalışmanın varlığından söz edilemez. Bu çalışma ile Türk reklamının gelişimi, bilgi içeriği bakımından irdelenmektedir. Bunun için 303 reklama içerik analizi uygulanmıştır. Türk reklamlarının, alan yazında yer alan diğer ülkelerde olduğu gibi, geniş bir bilgilendirme içeriğine sahip olduğu ancak 1960'lardan itibaren bu içerikte göreceli bir azalma olduğu anlaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Reklamların Bilgilendiriciliği, İçerik Analizi

I.Introduction

Advertising promotes products and services that businesses are trying to sell. In addition to promoting a product or service, advertising serves multiple functions. In most of marketing courses, books and papers these functions were summarized in four titles which are informing, influencing, reminding and adding value. Some cultural factors as values and norms, language, beliefs, communication style, decision making process of the society would have significant impacts on the style (informative or persuasive) and the content of advertising. The study of information content of advertisements in different cultural environments becomes an important issue since the impact of globalization.

Information provided within the advertising content could effects directly or indirectly on the consumer buying decision process. Information

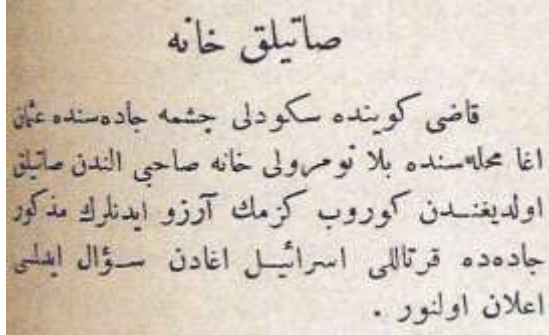
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content analysis of advertising was first used by Resnik and Stern (1977) who defined an advertisement as being informative when a consumer could make a more intelligent buying decision after exposure to an ad. The study established a classification system based on 14 criteria which represented potential categories of information. The 14 criteria were used by many of researchers to measure information content. Some of these studies have focused on similarities and differences in informative aspects of advertisements (Weinberger and Spotts, 1989; Cutler and Javalgi, 1992; Nevet, 1992; Wiles *et al.*, 1996) and some studies have analyzed the information content of ads from dissimilar cultures (Lin, 1993; Taylor *et al.*, 1997).

In this study a content analysis of 303 Turkish newspaper advertisements from late of the Ottoman Empire to first years of Turkish Republic was conducted. Major purpose of the analysis is to examine information content of print ads from the end of an empire to first decades of newly established republic.

II. The Late 1800s and Early 1900s

First examples of the print advertising in the Ottoman Empire were issued by 1880s. One of the first advertising activities in the Ottoman Empire were newspaper ads (Ceride-i Havadis (1840), Tercüman-ı Ahval (1860), Tasvir-i Efkâr (1878), Tercüman-ı Hakikat (1878), Servet-i Fünûn (1891), İkdâm (1896) were first private newspapers). Limited and out of date printing technology and also low literacy levels has negatively impacted the development of print advertising. At the beginning, lackness of advertising agents forced the journalists to take the task of preparing ads (Çakır, 1997, p. 38). When we look at the contents of advertisements up to 1900s we see that most of the ads were local announcements and issued in very limited numbers. It is also possible to say that quality of the ads in this term were remained far behind its European counterparts. First newspaper ads in the Ottoman Empire were issued in the newspapers of foreign embassies, minorities and foreign traders. By the mids of the nineteenth century, with an increase in the number and types of newspapers, significant progress has been registered in print ads. But the Balkan Wars and the First World War has postponed the expected development of advertising industry until the early of 1900s. Most of the ads belong to this period were containing only informational text about local products/services and personal properties (real estate etc.). Print ads of this period looks more like publicity or announcement. Some examples has shown below;



Picture 1:

House for sale

In Kadıköy, Söğütluçeşme street, Osman Ağa district, house for sale by its owner, if you wish to visit the estate you need to go district and find Mr. Kartallı İsrail Ağa. 1898



Picture 2:

Theater play print, called "Aşk Esrarı", for 4 kuruş
5th edition of the book called "Kenzü'l-Fukarat" and second print of theatre play called "Zavallı Çocuk" from early price. 1874



Picture 3:

Mineral water from the city of Bursa
It is better than European brands
It is good for liver and kidney diseases
Price is affordable
Available in Celal Bey Han in Bahçekapısı 1895



Picture 4:

In Karaköy Street of Galata, İstanbul
Wearings for women and children
Price is affordable and high quality
Latest designs from Paris 1897



Picture 5:

Bicycle fixing and selling
In Beyoğlu, next to Odeon Theater
Expert on fixing
1896

III. The Early 1900s to 1923 (Just Before the Establishment of Turkish Republic)

By early of 1900s in the Ottoman Empire, imported goods and brands has provided competal environment. Especially some forms of modern advertising has been appeared in newspapers those belong to retailing industry products. Ads had started to contain more visual contents and variety of products/service had increased. Some ad samples belong to this period has shown below:



Picture 6:
Toothpaste
absolutely
incomparable
1903



Picture 7:
People prefer this
brand more than any
others
Dental water "Odol"
1903



Picture 8:
Genie Russian rubber from
the Provdnik factory.
Look for logo
Available only in exclusive
stores
Distributed from Büyük
Ticaret Han, İstanbul
1904



Picture 9:

In Beyoğlu, Doğru Yol, no.376
Best American and French
shoes for women-men-kids
Fashionable summer shoes
available
1908



Picture 10:

Silk, linen, cotton handkerchiefs
suitable to be used as a present
You do not need to look for in other
shops.
Quality and affordable prices.
1909



Picture 11:

Kingsford starch
Some milk, eggs and Kingsford
enough for a summer meal
Easy recipe even a child can prepare
You can also make cookies and many
other recipes
Try it
Recipe attached to box
1909



Picture 12:

Best of shoe polishes
Black lion
Available in A. juli.,Çuhacı
Han, no.11
1920

IV. The Early Years of the Republic of Turkey (1923-1960s)

After the establishment of Republic of Turkey, many transformations took place in lifestyle of society. Some of these changes also impacted content of ads. Increasing competition and variety of products has built an environment where ads were not only containing technical information but also performance levels and comparisons with other brands. Also visual content of the ads has been started to be better than earlier ones.



Picture 13:

Studebaker cars
 Latest models
 Convertibles in a few minutes
 Istanbul branch: Beyoğlu,
 Grand Garage
 1925



Picture 14:

Beauty Cream
 Refreshes skin
 Better than any other brands
 For moistured skin for women
 and men
 Producer: Necdet EKREM
 Available in pharmacies
 1926



Picture 15:

Dunlop Tires
Product longevity and conform
Istanbul branch, Beyoğlu
Grand Garage
1926



Picture 16:

New Osram lamps
Please check the box
Best light with Osram lamp
1928



Picture 17:

"Zenit" Electricity Clock
No need tuning, no battery,
no magnet
Available in Turk Inc.
1928



Picture 18:

Vampire, vacuum cleaner
1930



Picture 19:

Fish oil
Brand of 40 years
1932



Picture 20:

Shaving blades
Famous, sharp
For 40 Kuruş
1946



Picture 21:

Refrigerator
All around the world
1952



Picture 22:

Middle and long buses
 Immediate delivery
 Spare parts easy to find
 1960

V. Research Method, Sampling and Coding

This study utilizes the previously established Resnik-Stern (1977) information classification system, which sets out 14 informational categories. To be considered informative, an advertisement needed to contain at least one of the fourteen information cues (listed in Table.1). Early content analysis studies have examined the information content of print advertisements were conducted by Hong *et al.*, (1987); Madden *et al.*, (1986); Harmon *et al.*, (1983); Stern *et al.*, (1981); Dowling (1980). Most of these studies have utilized the Resnik and Stern (1977) classification system. A total of 1.724 advertisements from 1880 to 1969 were gathered from Turkish newspapers (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet) and an archive book (İlan-ı Ticaret) during the summer and autumn of 2012. Only 303 ads were agreed upon and deemed appropriate (avoiding seasonal variations) for analysis. Two judges noted whether the advertisements were informative or non-informative. After both judges had evaluated all 303 ads independently, the extent of their agreement on informative/non-informative cues was computed by Perreault and Leigh's (1989) reliability index. The reliability indexes were high enough for each category (from 87.2 to 92.6 percent).

VI. Findings

Table.I reports the number of ads that contained each of the 14 information cues. Performance was the informational cue most often used (%60.7) in advertisements followed by availability (%53.7), quality (%23.4), and price-value (%20.1). Table.1 also shows that a total of 675 informational cues were communicated in the 303 Turkish advertisements for an average of 2.22 cues per ad.

Table 1: Frequency of appearance of the 14 criteria

Rank	Criteria	No.	%
1	Performance	184	60.7
2	Availability	163	53.7
3	Quality	71	23.4
4	Price-value	61	20.1
5	Components-contents	56	18.4
6	Packaging-shape	32	10.5
7	Taste	29	9.5
8	Nutrition	21	6.9
9	Guarantees-warrantees	20	6.6
10	Independent research	19	6.2
11	Special offers	18	5.9
12	Safety	1	<1
13	Company research	0	0
14	New ideas	0	0

n=303 advertisements
no. criteria per ad: 2.22

Content analysis of the advertisements revealed that %96.6 of the ads satisfied at least one of the criteria. As shown in Table.2, almost one out of three ads contained at least three informative cues. When the number of cues was increased to two, health/beauty and durables advertisements registered as a moderate decline in information content, while food/drink ads showed a sharp drop.

Table 2: Information cues by product type (at least)

	Product Category			Total
	Food, drink	Health, beauty	Durables	
no cue	5 (%5.1)	2 (%1.9)	3 (%3)	10 (%3.3)
at least				
one cue	94 (%94.9)	102 (%98)	97 (%97)	293 (%96.6)
two cues	60 (%60.6)	77 (%74)	80 (%80)	217 (%71.6)
three cues	30 (%30.3)	43 (%41.3)	37 (%37)	110 (%36.3)
four cues	11 (%11.1)	17 (%16.3)	15 (%15)	43 (%14.1)
five cues	4 (%4)	3 (%2.8)	1 (%1)	8 (%2.6)
>five cues	2 (%2)	0	0	2 (%0.6)
Total	99	104	100	303
% of informative ads	94.9	98.1	97	96.7
cues per ad	2,09	2,3	2,3	2,2

As shown in Table.2, advertisements in health/beauty and durables are generally more informative than food/drink. About half of the durables ads contain only two cues, and ratios of only one cue and only two cues for food/drink ads almost equal (Table.3).

Table 3: *Information cues by product type (only)*

	Product Category			
	Food, drink	Health, beauty	Durables	Total
no cue	5 (%5.1)	2 (%1.9)	3 (%3)	10 (%3.3)
<i>only</i>				
one cue	34 (%34.3)	25 (%24)	17 (%17)	76 (%25)
two cues	30 (%30.3)	34 (%32.6)	43 (%43)	107 (%35.3)
three cues	19 (%19.1)	26 (%25)	22 (%22)	67 (%22.1)
four cues	7 (%7)	14 (%13.4)	14 (%14)	35 (%11.5)
five cues	2 (%2)	3 (%2.8)	1 (%1)	6 (%1.9)
>five cues	2 (%2)	0	0	2 (%0.6)
Total	99	104	100	303

Information content of print ads between periods look balanced for the ratio of at least one cue (Table.4). But when take into account the ratio of ads which contain at least two cues, it is possible to accept the existence of significant decrease. Consequently, the more information cues taken into account, the smaller was the percentage of after Republic ads compared to late Ottoman ads that proved to be informative.

Table 4: *Information content of print ads*

	Late of Ottoman (1880-1920)	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s
	no. of ads (% of sample)	no. of ads (% of sample)	no. of ads (% of sample)	no. of ads (% of sample)	no. of ads (% of sample)
<i>at least</i>					
one cue	58 (98.3)	59 (%98.3)	59 (%96.7)	61 (98.4)	56 (%91.8)
two cues	52 (%88.1)	46 (%76.7)	43 (%70.5)	40 (%64.5)	37 (%60.7)
three cues	32 (%54.2)	23 (38.3)	24 (%39.3)	21 (%33.9)	12 (%19.7)
four cues	15 (%25.4)	11 (%18.3)	9 (14.8)	5 (%8.1)	3 (%4.9)
five cues	5 (%8.5)	3 (%5)	0	0	0
>five cues	1 (%1.7)	1 (%1.7)	0	0	0
Total	59	60	61	62	61

VII. Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

This study represents the content analysis of Turkish newspaper advertisements. 293 out of 303 ads that were examined can be categorized as "informative" according to the Resnick- Stern criteria. The average ad contained 2.22 cues. The author hypothesize that main factor which contribute to the high information content of Turkish newspaper advertising is the limited experience of most Ottoman citizens with consumer purchases due to limited availability of goods and services. During the late of the Ottoman Empire and the first decades of the Turkish Republic, a wide variety of consumer goods were simply not available to the average citizens. Especially up to 1900 most of the print ads could be accepted as individual announcements. Since opening the Ottoman market to imported goods of Europe, availability of different products has increased substantially. These changes in the economic and cultural environment represented a unique phenomenon for demand and supply mechanism. Thus, increasing variety and availability of products and also competition impacted on ad content.

Advertisements are found similar in overall information level for different periods. Examined ads, give priority to the information cues such as performance, availability and quality of the product/service. It is not possible to say about a significant difference on informative cue ratio for different product categories.

In depth analyses and reviewed/extended criteria are required in order to explain and comment on informative content of print ads of the different periods belong to culture. It is expected that these findings, followed by further extended analyses would give insight for multidisciplinary studies.

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