

## **WHICH ONE IS MORE IMPORTANT IN ADVERTISING? CREATIVITY OR ETHICS IN DESIGNS? WITH CASE STUDY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, the changing consume types and consumer behaviours causes to be more creative in advertising. To be different, to reach the target audiences with effective messages pointed out the need of creative strategic studies. The objective of this studies is to reach the target audiences with the most different and effective way. Due to this reason, the ethics part of advertisements can be missed. So that the most important dilemma of advertising is creativity and ethics. This study is based on some criterias that has used content analysis to understand the ethical point of view of creative advertisements. With this study creativity strategies used as given in the literature and the ethical parts and characteristics are searched in this advertisements. The research methodology is qualitative, content analyzed method. Simple Random Sampling used in this research as total Billboards Advertisements in Istanbul in March and April 2004, 50 Billboards are chosen random. The Nonethical parts of this advertisements criterias are; sexy dressing, deceptive and misleading messages, unfair competition and using slang or dialect as. This researched point out that; to be more creative, more effective and impressive, this analyzed Turkish Billboard's figures and messages are full of nonethical characteristics. To generalize this study the sample size can be widen and be covered all around the Turkey. Lastly, it is possible to say that, self regulation system should be more effective on advertisers' practices.

Keywords: *Creativity, Billoard Advertisements, Ethics*

### **YARATICILIK MI ETİK Mİ? REKLAM TASARIMLARINDA HANGİSİ DAHA ÖNEMLİ ?**

### **ÖZET**

Son günlerde değişen tüketim kalıpları ve tüketici davranışları reklamcılıkta daha yaratıcı olunmasını gerektirmektedir. Daha farklı olmak, hedef kitleye daha etkili mesajlarla erişmek reklamcılıkta yaratıcı stratejik çalışmalarını işaret etmektedir. Bu çalışmaların amacı, hedef kitleye en etkili ve en farklı yolla erişmek olduğu için, reklamların etik kısmı gözden kaçmaktadır. İşte bu nedenle reklamcılığın en önemli ikilemidir; yaratıcılık ve etik. Bu çalışma, yaratıcı olarak görülen Billboard ( Açık Alan ) reklamlarının içerik analizi yöntemiyle belirlenen bazı kriterlere göre analiz edilerek, etik değerlere uyup uymadığını saptamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmayla, seçilen reklamlarda literatürde yer alan yaratıcılık kriterleri, etik bakış açısıyla irdelenerek, içerik analizi yöntemi uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın yöntemi kalitatifdir, içerik analizi kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yaratıcılık, Billboard Reklamları, Etik*

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## **1. CREATIVITY IN BILLBOARD ADVERTISING AND CREATIVE ADVERTISING STRATEGIES IN THE LITERATURE**

Creativity is an ability to produce new and original ideas and things; imagination and inventiveness, also means to find the new way of new combinations Kocabaş F. and Elden M., (1997:20). The creative strategy in advertising is; to choose the original and right way to reach the target audiences with the right and original idea and image. Before explaining the basic advertising strategies, there are advertising approaches, which are used in creative advertising strategies.

### **1.1. CREATIVE ADVERTISING APPROACHES :**

Before ads are handed off the advertising agency and actual creative work begins, it is important to consider the broad framework and creative approaches open to copywriters and art directors. This rational and emotional approaches and some of the research that has been done on each. This rational approaches are; comparative advertising, inoculative advertising and refutational approaches, emotional approaches, using endorsers and the use of distraction in advertising.

- 1.1.1. Comparative Advertising: It is the type of advertising, in which two or more specifically named brands of the same product are compared in one or more attributes. From a strategic point of view, comparative advertising is more appropriate for follower brands than for leader brands.
- 1.1.2. Inoculative Advertising: It utilizes the principles of inoculation in medicine. The objective is to inoculate the audience with small doses of the offending campaign (competitor arguments) so that when the full campaign hits they will be less susceptible and resistant to those arguments.
- 1.1.3. Refutational Advertising: It involves explicitly stating competitive claims and then refuting them. It is often contrasted to supportive advertising which focuses on a one-sided presentation of brand benefits only White R., (2000: 90).
- 1.1.4. Emotional Advertising: There is a whole category of approaches rely on emotions or feelings and pathos as the essential ingredient. Emotion-avoking approaches are most suitable when the product category is one where buying is based on a "feeling" benefit either the low-involvement small pleasures of candy or soda pop or the highly involving feelings associated with products like perfume, sports cars or jewelry.

- 1.1.5. Using Endorsers in Advertising: Endorsers are often used in testimonial advertising and are examples of source-oriented approaches. There are many types of sources in advertising and a model of source factors shows the range of source components and the cognitive and affective ways in which the credibility of any of the components can be assessed.
- 1.1.6. Consistency Theories in Advertising: They encompass a range of theories of attitude change that explain endorser and source effects.
- 1.1.7. Distraction Approaches: A final approach in advertising called distraction and involves trying to distract the audience from counterarguing during the viewing or listening process Batra R., et al., (1996:409-410).

After this advertising approaches it will be useful to see the advertising strategies. The basic creativity strategies in advertising are:

1. USP( Unique Selling Proposition ): This strategy allows us to show the different ( unique) sights of our product or service. This unique sights are given in the advertising message, they are the basic ideas of the advertising message, which emphasizes the benefits for the audience: Especially, the scrutiny of advertising critics, it is considerably easier to justify or explain advertising that is clever, tasteful, and entertaining than advertising that is not so described. In that regard, the approaches of Ogilvy or Bernbach are somewhat easier to defend than the style attributed to Rosser Reeves . He proposed that each product develop its own Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and use whatever repetition is necessary to communicate the USP to the audiences. There are three guidelines to the development of a USP. First, the proposition needs to involve a specific product benefit. Second, it must be unique, one that competing firms are not using. Third, it must sell. It therefore it must be important enough to consumer to influence the decision process. Reeves relied heavily on product research to support specific claims. This support often took the form of rather elaborate experiments. Once an effective USP is found, Reeves believed that it should retained practically indefinitely. Such a philosophy requires vigorous defending. The Reeves approach was undoubtedly successful Rajeev Batra R. et.al, (1996:448-449).
2. Brand Image: Every advertisement should be thought of as a contribution to the complex symbol which is the brand image. The greater the similarity between brands, the less part reason plays in brand selection, says Ogilvy, Ogilvy D., (1964:100-101). His strategy allows to give the (product), brand a special characteristic and identity ( image). This strategy is the sum of the attitudes and all the psychological meanings that the consumer develops for a brand.

3. Positioning: This strategy is used to form or change an image of a product or service in consumer mind Elden M., and Kocabaş F., (1997:32-33,47).
4. Star Strategy: This strategy is used to gain a brand star identity with help of a star person. Because of the reminder and imitate impact of star persons, it is used in advertisements EldenM. And Kocabaş F., (1997:129).
5. Execution: One of the most sacred laws in evaluating an advertisement is to determine if it really communicates a persuasive message or if it is merely clever or memorable. The primary job of an advertisement is to sell to communicate a persuasive message. David Ogilvy's first rule for creators is "What you say is more important than how you say it". Bernbach, the creator of this strategy, replied that "execution can become content, it can be just as important as what you say". In Bernbach style, the execution dominates. To say that Bernbach emphasized execution is, a rather than incomplete description of his style. What kind of execution, because there are no rules, are only certain characteristics that can be identified. The advertising demands attention and has something to say. Second, the approach is clean and direct. To Bernbach, it must be as simple, and swift and as penetrating as possible. Third, the advertisement should stand out from others. Finally, the often repeated rule that humor does not sell is ignored. Bernbach frequently uses humor to gain attention and to provide a positive reward an advertisement reader. Bernbach deemphasizes research, believing that it tends to generate advertisements too similar to those of competitors Rajeev Batra et al. (1996:443-445).
6. The Inherent Drama: In this strategy, the advertisement should have the common touch without being or sounding patronizing. The key words are believable and warm: the approach aims for believability with warmth. In the spirit of providing a common touch, Burnett looks for the "inherent drama" of a product-the characteristic that made the manufacturer make it, that makes the people buy it. The objective is to capture the inherent drama and make it "arresting itself rather than relying upon tricks" Higgins (1965:44). Leo Burnett, the creator of this strategy, is impatient with dull factual recitation or a cleverness with words. The preferable approach is to dig out the inherent drama and present it in a warm, realistic manner. The inherent drama is often hard to find, but it is always there, and once found it is the most interesting and believable of all advertising appeals Mayer M., (1958:70).
7. Entertainment and Emotion: Phill Dusenberry advocates flexibility and "Shunning of the familiar" as basic tenets for good creative strategy, "Don't get too happy too soon with the first idea that comes into your head". His style is one that tries to make heavy use of emotion and warmth, and to create commercials that are very entertaining, through the use of star endorsers and star commercial directors. He uses the latest cinematic techniques, including rapid cutting and eye-catching visual images and tries out special effects

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worthy of Steven Spielberg or George Lucas. It is his characteristic of this style “elevate people above the product” to use people in lively and engaging situations. In the Pepsi campaign, for example, the emphasis is on “Pepsi people”. This approach is especially clear in his ads for the “Choice of New Generation Alter S., (1985:4).

8. Irreverence: Lee Clow, his style is designed to create impact and he emphasizes the need for an honest dialogue with the consumer and respect for consumer intelligence. Good advertising is a dialog with people. It is advertising that lets consumer bring something to the communication process, as opposed to some of the more validly criticized work in our profession in which they try to grind the benefits of a product like soap or cake mix into a poor housewife’s head by repeating it 37 times in 30 seconds Pendleton J.,(1985:5)
  
9. Small-Town Warmth: Hal Riney is known as a perfectionist, who makes complex ads that look like films-using cuts, overlapping dialogue, and stage props are another element of his style. He has emphasized the need to take creative risks in creating memorable and sales-increasing advertising Rajeev Batra et al.(1996:456). (The last two strategies can hardly be used in Billboards Advertisements, due to this reason, they are out of the analyzed).

There are of course, many other creative advertising approaches, styles and strategies that could be presented. After ethical advertising approaches, the Billboard advertisements will be as sample from creative point of view analyzed.

## **2. SEARCHING FOR ETHICS IN ADVERTISING**

### **2.1. Ethical Approaches in Advertising**

In Industrialized Society every person becomes an Individual, thus the consumer types differentiates ; social, cultural and psychological different comes out even in a family. The advertisements became an authority in society. They show the way what to do for being a model, image like in the ads. The advertiser tells us; buy it, use it and buy another thing to substitute. Advertisements also tell us; we can buy success, happiness and love with that advertised products, service and brands. So that the consumer also buys the life-style with the product. The Advertisements became the role of educators and family. While watching the ads, consumer compares the life in ads and his own life and finds his life ordinary and meaningless. Because of this reason, the advertisements became an imitated model and image Gün F., (1999:53-62). In our society the ethical investigations comes out because of all this points of advertisements. First of all, we should explain, what ethic is and how can we use ethical approaches in

advertising. Ethic is known as moral values and consuetudo in terminology and plays a role as social rules in a society. Cause to technological fast development, the need of hedonist consumer should be matched with advertisements for hedonistic popular culture Şimşek M., (2001: 291). Searching for ethics in advertising comes out with critics against advertising. This critics are about; misleading information about a product or service (deceptive advertising), unfair competition, women as sexual object, children as easy victim and indirect customer, psychological, cultural, sexual advertising impacts.

### **2.1.1. Deceptive And Misleading Advertising**

Conceptually, deception exists when an advertisement is introduced into the perceptual process of some audience and the output of that perceptual process differs from the reality of the situation and affects buying behaviour to the detriment of the consumer. The input itself may be determined to contain falsehoods. The more difficult and perhaps more common case, however, is when the input, the advertisement is not obviously false, but the perceptual process generates an impression that is deceptive Richards J.,( 1991:118). There are three major components of deception definition:

- A. There is a misrepresentation, omission, or practice that is likely to mislead.
- B. The consumer is acting responsibly in ten circumstances.
- C. The practice is material and consumer injury is possible because consumers are likely to have chosen differently if there was no deception.

Misleading messages or images are just lies; unfair and dishonesty. The aim of this type of advertisements is just cheating the consumer. Ethics has some power in deceptive and misleading advertising. Deceptive and misleading advertisements can also be controlled by competitor lawsuits and by self-regulation. The advertising industry has developed an ambitious program of self-regulation, which rests largely on the support to industry itself. It has provided relatively fast and effective results in comparison to action using the Advertising Associations in Turkey ( Rvd, Rd, IAA ). Turkey is also a member of the EASA ( European Advertising Standards Alliance ) and admitted the Act No.4077 on consumer protection and amended Act no. 4077 EASA, ( 2004:40), Armstrong .,et.al , (1979:237-238).

### **2.1.2. Unfair Competition**

Generally it is used in a lot of advertisements, especially in testimonial advertisements by showing the competitors product as the weak one. In advertisements it is forbidden to use the competitors product, service, brand name, brand logo, symbol e.t.c. This behaviour is called unfair competition and is protected with competition laws in every country. But a lot of company use unfair competition to show itself or its product strong and better than the competitors Kinnear T.,&Root A., ( 1988:40-42).

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### **2.1.3. Gender(Women/Men) as Sexual Object**

Especially in advertisements for men, or men products women are used as sexual object. With help this sexual power, men buy everything, under every circumstances. Using women as a sexual object in advertisements is effective and powerful for men, but wearthless for women. This advertisements include messages like to be sexy , beautiful and charming means everthing and the only way to impress the men. Here begins ethical arguments. Because it is unfair to use a gender ( men or women no matter ), as model of sex object. Sex-role portrays in advertisements constitute another extensively studied topic. During the past decade, the use of sexual appeals in print advertising has become almost commonplace. Reichert stated that sexual appeals can be persuasive, sometimes more than other types of appeals used in social marketing campaigns (GünF.,& Çelik C., 2004:512).

### **2.1.4. Children As Easy Victom, Indirect Consumer**

Generally advertisements are informative, persuasive for adults. This means the person who can understand perceive and choose a message, product, service. But because children can't understand, perceive and choose like an adult, it is forbidden misleading advertisements especially for children products. Due to children are under this circumstances the easy victom of this advertisements, it is not ethical to use children in misleading advertisements, products, places.

### **2.1.5. Billboard Advertisements' Language**

In advertisements the used language is very important. To be more effective, impressive advertisers tend to use slang or some dialects in advertisements language. They think they become more popular by using this strange language types. They use this language style to underestimate the dialects, which make it unethical.

There are a lot of ethical critics for advertising. The most important and well know are explained. But in advertisements the masseges are given with help of the cultural differences, social class differences; so it is one of the biggest arguments of ethic.

Especially in Turkey, this social classes are nested. But in determining the target audience and giving the message, it is easier and effective for advertisers to give the message with different way to different social segments. But to divide the society in segments with different language style and dialects and underestimate this dialects is not ethical Millstein I., (1964:439). Because the study is about Billboard advertisements, the characteristics of this out door media should be explained: .

1. Billboards advertisements affect the target audience very strong, because of its big size; big punto written message and image. This medium is used as a vice-medium to print media.

2. The message in Billboard advertisements should be short, interesting and clear enough to understand.
3. The researchs showed that, it's more effective, using strong emotion in the billboard advertisement messages.
4. It is more effective and reminder to use creative images in Billboard ad's.
5. The billboard should be perceived in the first sight, because nobody has time trying to understand it. This characteristics separates Billboards from all other media Teker U., (2003:171).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to answer the question; Are the creative advertisements ethical? Can they be ethical, should they be ethical?

#### **3.2. Objectives**

1. To content analysed the Billboard advertisements with codes,
2. To criticize this creative advertisements from ethical point of view,

(Such as language, sex, unfair competition, children as a object )

#### **3.3. The Research Model**

The Model of this research is Qualitative Research; the category is content analyze method, in which the advertisements are analysed and criticized from two point of views: creativity and ethics.

#### **3.4. The limits of the Study**

All billboards advertisements are choosen from İstanbul in Turkey, those published in March –April 2004. In billboard advertising the women model, women and men figures are used together. All samples are in turkish.

#### **3.5. Coding Procedure**

Each Advertisement was coded in two dimensions by content analyzed.

- 3.5.1. Advertising Creative Format:** This dimension included USP, Brand İmage, Positioning, Star strategy, Entertainment, Comperative characteristics in advertising messages in Billboards.



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**3.5.2. Advertising Nonethical Format :** Deceptive or misleading message, unfair competition, women/men figures appeals (sexy dressed, naked, etc.), used language (slang, subcultural dialect to underestimate the dialect etc.), used children as a model.

With advertising creative format, the creativity strategies are searched in the advertisements(Billboards). This strategies are explained in 1.1(page 1-3).

With advertising ethical format, the ethical strategies and basic ethical figures are analyzed as explained in 2.1. (page 3-5).

The specified categories in each billboard was coded as positive (1), negative (0).

Advertising creative format positive was coded ( a1), negative (a0).

USP (a1.1), is coded, the message or image shows the unique sights and / or benefits of the product, service or brand .

Brand Image (a1.2.) is coded, the message or image or the figure, includes a special characteristic and identity ( image) for the product , service or brand.

Positioning (a1.3.) is coded as a message, image or figure, which is used to form or change an image of a product or service in consumer mind.

Star Strategy (a1.4.) is coded as a message, image or figure, which is used to gain a brand star identity with help of a star person.

Entertainment (a1.5.), is coded as a message, image or figure, which is used to “elevate people above the product” to use people in lively and engaging situations. Comperative (a1.6.), searched for words, in which two or more specifically named brands of the same product are compared in one or more attributes like size, qualifications, price.

Execution (a1.7), is coded as advertisement communicates a persuasive message, image like to direct way to sell the product or service.

Advertising nonethical format positive was coded (e1), negative (e0).

Deceptive or Misleading Message (e1.1)

Women/Men figures sex appeals ( e1.2) (sexy dressed e1.2.1), nude (e1.2.2.)

Used language, message (e1.3) ( slang e1.3.1, underestimate subcultural dialect (e1.3.2)

Children (e1.4)

### Unfair Competition (e1.5)

This means, if any of the creativity format is found (a1), if not (a0), it is the same as nonethical format coding; if any of the nonethical format is found (e1), if not

(e0). After this coding, it is searched that, how many of a1 has also e1 identification? Because the aim of the study is to understand the ethical or nonethical sights of creative advertisements, due to this, the (a0) results are out of the study ( not creative ).

\*Misleading or deceptive messages means, unfair information or image about product or brand and its price and qualifications.

\*For women sexy dressed means; sklit, skirt mini skirt, low-necked blouse or clothes, nude body were accepted as indicators of sex style of dressed. For men tight, stick t-shirts, naked body were the indicators. This dimension didn't include body language such as mimic, gesture and posture. In this study Billboards are analyzed from messages and women , men figures' dressing appeals.

\*Unfair competition codes means, with showing or telling ( message ) the competitors brand as the weak one and using unfair information about competitors' product, brand or service and price.

### **3.6. The Research Hypothesis**

**H1.** The creative billboard advertisements in Turkey hasn't nonethical parts as given in the literature.

**H2.** The women/men are not shown in sexy dress of creative Billboard advertisements in Turkey.

**H3.** None of creative Billboard advertisements messages' are misleading and deceptive in Turkey.

**H4.** None of the creative Billboard advertisement's language is subdialect or slang.

**H5.** The creative Billboard advertisements messages include unfair competition.

### **3.7. Sampling Method**

The population (universe ) is all Billboard advertisements in Istanbul in March-April 2004. The sample method is simple random sampling , the sample is 50 Billboards from Istanbul from different 15 places such as;

Kadıköy-5 Billboards,

Beşiktaş-5 Billboards

Etiler-5 Billboards,

Maslak-2 Billboards

Bebek-5 Billboards

Bahçelievler-2 Billboards

Nişantaşı- 3 Billboards

Fatih – 2 Billboards

Ataşehir-3 Billboards

Ataköy- 3 Billboards

Taksim-3 Billboards

Avcılar-3 Billboards

Levent-3 Billboards

Caddebostan-3 Billboards

Suadiye-3 Billboards which are choosen random.

### **3.8. Data Analysis Methods**

In this content analyzed study , the advertisements are analyzed from creative and ethical strategies, which is given in the literature review.

### **3.9. Findings**

**3.9.1. Creativity (Format ) Identifications:** From 50 Billboards, the creativity identifications are analysed:

% 15 ( a1.1), %40 ( a1.2), %20(a1.3.), %10 (a1.4.), %5(a1.5) and % 10 (a0).

This means, % 90 of advertisements has one of the creative strategies:

% 15 of the advertisements ( Billboards) used USP strategy, %40 of them used brand image strategy, %20 positioning strategy, %10 used star strategy, %5 entertainment strategy and % 10 didn't use any of this strategies.

**3.9.2. Nonethical (Format) Identifications :** The nonethical format for the codes are analysed :

% 20 (e1.1), % 60 (e1.2; % 80 e1.2.1 ), %5 ( e1.3.2), %5 (e1.5). From the ethical point of view, this creative advertisements have nonethical codes, characteristics. This finding didn't supported H1. % 60 of this advertisements have women/men figures sex appeals ( 24 Billboards ; % 50 of them are sexy dressed women/men 12 Billboards, % 50 normal dressed 12 Billboards ), there was'nt any nude figure. 24 Billboards have women/men figures sex appeals, so that H2 hasn't been supported either. It is also found that, % 20 of this advertisements have deceptive or misleading message: 8 billboards. By looking for deceptive messages or misleading; 5 of them were mobile phone ads, 2 of them were textile ads, 1 of them was bank ad. The messages were exaggerated and there were unfair discounting information about price and product qualifications and also brand image.

This finding didn't supported H3 either.

It is also found oft that % 5 of the creative advertisements, 2 Billboards message's, underestimated the subcultural dialect with using normal turkish words in subcultural dialects written style. ( ana, yohsa, nasıı yani, göyümüz...) This finding supported H4. As a last result, % 5 of the creative advertisements, 2 Billboards messages' include unfair competition with showing or telling the competitors brand as the weak one ( Both of them were the mobile phone ads; very famous brands, Telsim and Turccell).

## **CONCLUSION**

One of the most important dilemma of advertising: How ethical can the creative ads be ? This question was the objective of our study. Our analysis shows us the creative advertisements samples are analysed from the ethical point of view as given in the literature. Our hypothesis weren't all supported though we acknowledge the limitations of the sample used. The data analysed under total 50 advertisements and examined one to one by content analyzed.

We found that , creativity, to be different in advertising , brings also unethical approaches, practices in Billboards ; as sexy women/men figures appeals, dressing, misleading or deceptive messages, unethical language style ( dialect, slang) and unfair competition. We found out with this analyzed that; in Turkey, in turkish ads, billboards, this unethical advertising practices are %100 used. Generally, it is know that this

unethical practices are forbidden according to the Act 4077 to protect the consumer, IAS( International Advertising Self-Regulation System, EASA, ). But to be more creative, more effective and impressive , this analyzed Turkish Billboard's figures and messages are full of nonethical characteristics. To generalize this study the sample size can be widen and be covered all around the Turkey. Lastly, it is possible to say that, self regulation system should be more effective on advertisers' practices.

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