

THE KEY TO COMPETENCY OF
COMMUNICATION IN THE NEW WORLD

HOW PERSUASION AND PERCEPTION WORKS

EDITOR
DR. ÖĞR ÜYESİ FATMA KAMILOĞLU

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- HOW PERSUASION AND PERCEPTION WORKS**

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RESUME

Dr. Fatma Kamilođlu completed her undergraduate and master's degrees in Public Relations and Publicity at the Faculty of Communication, Istanbul University. She earned her Ph.D. in Advertising from the Faculty of Communication at Marmara University. She subsequently conducted postdoctoral research at George Mason University in Virginia, USA. Motivated by her interest in political communication, she later graduated from the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Istanbul University (AUZEF) as a second-degree program.

In addition to her academic career, Dr. Kamilođlu has extensive professional experience in the private sector, having served in various positions including Editorial Manager, Brand Consultant, Political Communication Consultant, and Market Research Project Coordinator.

Dr. Kamilođlu specializes in strategic communication, public relations, advertising, brand management, political communication, digital media, persuasion, and perception management. Her academic research focuses on brand equity, consumer and voter behavior, place branding, new media, artificial intelligence, and the societal impacts of communication technologies.

Dr. Kamilođlu currently serves as an Assistant Professor in the Department of New Media and Communication at Niřantaşı University in Istanbul, Türkiye.

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FOREWORD

In the 21st century, perception management and persuasion are two concepts that go hand in hand with each other. While perception management is considered a negative form of communication by the public, persuasion is considered a form of communication based on trust. Consistency in communication, reliability, emotional bonds, social acceptance, mutual communication, competence on the subject, and appreciation are the basic elements of persuasion. Manipulative tactics in the process of persuasion can lead to distrust and backlash. Perception management refers to the process of deliberately influencing, changing, and transforming the way people perceive information, events, news, and the agenda through various communication studies. The ability to influence public opinion through strategic and holistic communication has become easier with new communication environments.

This book explains how perception management and persuasion techniques are used in different fields in the context of new communication technologies and media from an interdisciplinary perspective. In the book, Dr. Kamiloğlu tried to determine the reasons why the population that has never received the Covid-19 vaccine remained unvaccinated despite the intense persuasion tactics of the media. Kamiloğlu conducted field research on audiences that resisted persuasion and perception management techniques.

Deepfakes have enabled the mass creation of fake videos that are widely used in disinformation campaigns. However, Dr. Samoilenko and Inna Suvorova argue that deepfake technology can also be used for social good, with social activists, filmmakers, and journalists using it to draw the public's attention to various causes. The chapter reflects on how climate change activists use deepfakes to draw attention to their cause by infiltrating the general public's discursive arenas.

Dr. Erdoğan and Dr. Erçetin conducted a field study to determine the effects of media and new communication environments on voter behavior by referring to the factors affecting voters' voting behavior. Dr. Kreps explains how strategic health communication and persuasion tactics can be used as critically important processes to support cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and survival, which are essential in the fight against cancer in society. Strategic health communication that follows established principles from the study of persuasion and social marketing can build needed awareness about cancer risks and responses, while promoting trust and cooperation.

Dr. Girişken and Dr. Ocak delve into the profound implications of mirror neurons in the context of consumer persuasion. The effectiveness of this concept in persuasion was examined through the example of consciousness advertising

analysis. This research underscores the pivotal role of mirror neurons in bridging human cognitive processes with the dynamics of consumer persuasion. Dr. Tkáčová explains how ten manipulative techniques have been transferred from traditional media to online media (i.e., new media applications), with a focus on online manipulation. Based on these manipulation techniques, she conducted research within the scope of examples of manipulation in Slovak online media.

Dr. Kanbir and Dr. Derinözlü touched on the power of storytelling in the communication of brands with consumers and in the process of persuasion. Understanding the role of storytelling in brand communication and the importance of telling good stories in the persuasion process, brands use stories in almost every marketing activity. Brand consultant and communication expert Matteo Rinaldi highlights the paradoxical relationship between people and marketing, where they may dislike advertisements but love brands. He discusses how people, as consumers and marketers, use marketing strategies every day in their personal and professional lives, and how a deep knowledge of their real motivations can explain people's behavior. Dr. Yüksel tried to create a conceptual background for Twitter by associating the concepts of digital communication and new media with persuasion and perception management. Dr. Pembecioğlu and Dr. Çomak, in the specific case of the movie *The Magician's Elephant*, question whether perception management is structurally, linguistically, semiologically, and psychologically related to the children's world.

We hope that this book will make a significant contribution to those who work on media, new communication environments, persuasion, and perception management, as well as those who are interested in the subject. I would like to sincerely thank those who contributed, especially the chapter authors.

Dr. Fatma Kamiloğlu

December 2025, Istanbul

MANUFACTURING CONSENT IN THE MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE PERSUASION PROCESS: A FIELD STUDY OF THE UNVACCINATED POPULATION

Fatma Kamiloglu¹

Abstract

The power of the media to persuade, change and transform public opinion is undeniable. Through the process of propaganda and manufacturing consent, the media is effective in determining the agenda of public opinion, adopting an idea, or exhibiting a behavior. The main source of information used in the Covid-19 outbreak, which has affected the world agenda including our country, has been the media. However, it has been frequently emphasized in the media that Covid-19 vaccines are the most effective protection method in the treatment of the epidemic and that they must be under the name of public health. Despite media persuasion tactics and the production of consent that people should be vaccinated, an average of 9% of the population over the age of 18 has never been vaccinated. In addition, the intense media propaganda and the production of consent, the demographic and ideological characteristics of the unvaccinated masses, their motivations for not getting vaccinated, their trust in institutions and the media, and their resistance to the media are issues that need to be examined. For this purpose, an online survey was conducted with a total of 2038 unvaccinated people who represent the mass of people who have never been vaccinated all over Turkey by adhering to the quantitative research technique.

Keywords: Media, Manufacturing Consent, Persuasion Techniques in the Media, Covid-19 Unvaccinated Profiles

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Introduction

Studies on mass media reveal the effectiveness of the media in persuading, shaping and directing public opinion. The first examples of studies carried out to determine the effects of the media on public opinion can be found in Walter Lippman's 1922 book "Public Opinion". According to Lippman, in parallel with the agenda created by the media, people create their own agendas. The key factor here is that the media highlights some of the issues on the agenda more prominently and conspicuously in order to attract the attention of the public (Lippman, 1922). In order to ensure that public opinion is gathered around a certain idea or ideology, social design and control have been tried to be achieved with a common enemy and the targets shaped around that enemy. While this enemy, of course, is communists and terrorists, the common goal is for Americans to be in league with the official ideology and power. While the public opinion was engaged in these enemies and goals and the production of consent was achieved, the media ignored many issues that were in the interest of the public (Chomsky, 2003).

The media uses a variety of propaganda and persuasion techniques to persuade the public of an idea, ideology, attitude, or behavior. In order for the public to form consent to information, that is, for the media to produce consent, there must be a small but powerful group of people and a majority of the audience following the messages and news coming from this powerful group. The selection of news, the way it is presented, the contents of programs, the topics of discussions are used as a means of manipulating public opinion. Thanks to the intensity and content of the news coming from the media, the public is convinced and thinks that this persuasion is done voluntarily at the end of the day. In the process of producing consent, the media "shapes things around a certain ideology, making some things unfold, some things not visible, some questions being asked, other questions being ignored, and topics being framed in a certain way" (Chomsky, Aljazeera 2017).

According to Chomsky (2017), while the media is deliberately used by governments as a propaganda tool, the main task of the media is to make propaganda. In the world system, where the class interests of a small group of elite elitist rich people are at the forefront, propaganda that protects this balance is undertaken in media news and all content (Tekinalp, 2006, 167). The World Health Organization stated at the Munich Security Conference in February 2020 that fake news is what spreads as fast and dangerous as the virus (BBC, 2020). The media's techniques for producing consent are also seen in the way Covid-19 vaccines are delivered. While the mainstream media has revealed that their views are indisputably based on fact and science, they have also accused the masses who are against or cautious about compulsory

vaccination of ignorance and anti-science (Gazeteduvar, 2022). This process has brought about serious information pollution, panic atmosphere, false news and false information.

In all this process of media propaganda and manufacturing consent, according to the data of the Ministry of Health, the total number of cases detected by PCR testing to date was 17 million on average, while the number of deaths was 101 thousand (TÜİK, 2023). These data reveal that the mortality rate in Covid-19 is 0.5%. According to the World Health Organization data, the total number of cases worldwide was 761 million on average, while the average number of deaths was 7 million. The worldwide mortality rate is 0.9% (WHO, 2023).

Despite the efforts of the media to produce persuasion/consent, the rate of those who have never been vaccinated in the adult population in Turkey has been 9% on average according to the Ministry of Health data. In the population with Covid-19 vaccine, the rate of vaccination decreased as doses increased. While those who received the first dose of vaccine over the age of 18 in Turkey were 57 million, those who received the second dose of vaccine decreased to 53 million and those who received the third dose of vaccine decreased to 23 million. After the first dose, there was a significant decrease of 43% on average in the rate of third dose vaccination (Ministry of Health, 2023). In this process, despite the intense publicity of the media on the necessity of vaccination, the efforts of persuasion and manufacturing consent, and forced by official institutions (circulars of ministries, obligation of workplaces and schools, prohibitions, etc.), the mass that has never been vaccinated against Covid-19 is remarkable. What are the main motivations of this audience, their socio-economic status, the extent of their trust in institutions and the media are important questions. Despite intense persuasion efforts by the media in a time of emergency, it is important to identify the factors that ensure that the masses, who have never been vaccinated, are not affected by the media's production of consent. For this purpose, adhering to the quantitative (quantitative) research technique, a survey study (online) was conducted with a total of 2038 people who had never been vaccinated all over Turkey. This study reveals the main factors affecting the attitudes and behaviors of individuals as well as how the masses exhibit resistance to the persuasion techniques of the media. The basic grounds of the points where persuasion and media propaganda do not work have been identified.

Media and Manufacturing consent

The mass media, which undertake the task of connecting the public with the outside world on behalf of the people, inform the public indirectly and also create a feeling towards the events. The fact that individuals internalize and feel

the events they have not experienced and have not experienced by empathizing pushes the individual to make sense of the world and to produce imaginary fictions. (Lippmann, 1965). Now, the individual can move away from the main issues that concern him or society and be interested in an event on the other side of the world that may not be of any interest to him because of the way and intensity of the media's presentation of it and he can express this event in his daily life.

With the choices the media makes while presenting news, information and events, it ensures that the agenda of the mass media and the agenda of the public are parallel. The media decides on behalf of the public which issues and events are more important and determines in what form and intensity they will be presented. (Mcquail and Windahl, 2010, 45).

There are undoubtedly many factors that determine the content of the mass media. These factors are: the individual level, the level of media routines, the institutional level, the non-media level, and the ideological level (Irvan, 1997: 74). Undoubtedly, the ideological stance of the media they work with is as important as the individual characteristics of those working in the media in the agenda setting and persuasion of the media. Significant impact research has been conducted on how these effects are shaped. Discussions on agenda setting and the impact of the media are shaped around media power relations, media and ideological relations, individual characteristics of experts working in the media, the relationship between media and finance, and the relationship between media and the public.

Another critical approach to persuading the public of media influences is to examine the process and form in which media content is created. At the macro level, the influence of official ideology, political, economic, cultural, and financial relations is observed in the creation of news. At the micro level in the formation of the news, the ideological views of the threshold keepers, their demographic characteristics, and their effects on conscious or unconscious news are observed. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in their 1988 work "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media", while criticizing the media's relationship with power within the framework of the concept of "Manufacturing Consent", touched upon the media's financial interest relations with power, ideological connections, forms of news presentation that support official ideology, self-censorship and money-power relations. It has been stated that the media, under the pressure of the government, the official ideology, and a group of minority elites, can censor news and events that the public should know about, marginalize the opposition and marginalized groups, self-censor the news, filter, manipulate and turn the news into propaganda elements according to their own rights (Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

Chomsky, at the Institute of International Studies at UC Berkeley, has established that the term manufacturing consent, which refers to framing the issue of forms of news presentation in the media, does not belong to him, but rather derives it from Walter Lippmann, whom he regards as the leading public intellectual and media figure of the 20th century (Chomsky, Aljazeera 2017).

According to Chomsky, the media, as the central model assumes, are mechanisms for distributing propaganda in capitalist democracies. The media are actors fully integrated with the institutional actors of class war. The media, which sets the public agenda, routinely protects dominant elite interests by promoting them and undertakes the task of suppressing, highlighting, or diverting attention from specific issues and approving issues in ways that are functional to the ruling elite. As mentioned earlier, ideological rulers are most heavily focused on persuading public opinion. People have honesty and good intentions. However, the ideological constraints are so strong that alternative discussions and topics outside the agenda of the elites are not included (Cathey, 2009, 17).

The most important influence of the news media is that they set the agenda of the topic on our behalf, choose what to emphasize and ignore or suppress certain news and organize our political social thoughts on our behalf. The media may not always be able to tell us what to think, but it is strikingly successful in telling us what to think about (Parenti 1986:23, Lovaas 2008).

There are various filters in front of the media to present news, events and information to the public in an objective and impartial manner, in order of importance and content that will be of interest to the public. The first of these filters is who owns the media, as well as the form of media ownership. The fact that the media is a business and that it has become a holding and grows over time has led to the problem of continuous profitability and profit of stakeholders. The ever-growing media, which has evolved into mega-corporations and transnational corporations and structures incorporating a wide variety of media companies, has increased its control over news. These major financial structures trump independent and critical reporting, defending the interests of elites, elites, governments, and official ideologies. The interests of the power centers come into play before the interests of the people (Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

Covid-19 vaccine agenda in the media

The Covid-19 virus, which caused the coronavirus outbreak that affected the whole world, first appeared in China in December 2019. Upon the emergence of virus cases that spread all over the world in a short time due to the ease of human-to-human transmission, the World Health Organization (WHO)

declared a global epidemic in March 2020 (BBC, 2023). With the declaration of the epidemic, the most curious and talked about topics on the world agenda; What is the Covid-19 virus, how it emerged, the effects of the virus on human health, the way the disease is transmitted, the possible treatment, what will be good for the disease, what people should do in this process and whether the disease carries a risk of death. The mainstream media and social media have started to report on the Covid-19 virus and the pandemic 24/7. The agenda of the media has been almost exclusively Covid-19. While doctors, experts and officials gave information on live broadcasts, official institutions began to take extraordinary measures. When the 27-day total of the news presented in the newspapers related to Covid-19 (9 March-5 April 2020) is examined, it is determined that a total of 1308 news were published in *Sözcü*, *Sabah*, *Hürriyet*, *Türkiye* and *Cumhuriyet* newspapers. (Kılıç, 2021, 327). According to the results of the research conducted by TRT Academy in April 2020, citizens spent an average of 2.5 hours every day in front of the screen to receive information about covid-19 (TRT Academy Research Report, 2020). In the case of print media, government officials, i.e. official institutions, were mostly used as sources of information (47%). This was followed by politicians (20%) and health professionals (12%). When we look at the written media, 80% of the information and news about Covid-19 consists of institutions, politicians and experts who adhere to the official ideology. However, different opinions were not included. In the Rıza production process, an intensive flow of information was made from a single voice and a single center (Kılıç, 2021, 327).

Table 1. People in the Focus of the News Number Ratio (%)

News Feed	n	%
Government Officials	612	46,8
Foreign Politicians/Experts	264	20,2
Experts	160	12,2
Citizens	112	8,6
Artists/Athletes/Celebrities	84	6,4
Opposition / Other Political Parties	48	3,7
Economists / Business People / Tradesmen	23	1,8
Patients with Covid	5	0,4
Sum	1308	100



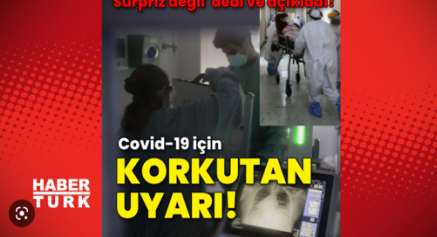



Although the media claims to present scientific information, the public tends to believe different theories and information. The public, which follows the media so often, has different opinions about the source and cause of the virus than the information in the media. This shows that although the media presents intensive information and is closely monitored, it is not found reliable. Under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Emre Erdoğan, face-to-face

interviews were conducted with a sample of 1629 people representing the adult population of Turkey in November-December 2020, and the Tübitak project titled “Investigation of Individuals’ Attitudes Towards Misinformation and the Determinants of These Attitudes for Effective Struggle with Infodemic: The Case of Covid-19” was carried out in the survey study. According to the results of this project, 56% of the public believes that the virus is a biological weapon, unlike the media. However, almost half of the public opinion (44%) states that the virus is produced to reduce the population of the world (Erdoğan, 2020). The above data show that the public follows the media closely but exhibits low percentages of trust in the media.

The role of the media during the pandemic period, briefly summarized above, has undoubtedly been the subject of debate. The media has taken ownership of the pandemic by assuming responsibility throughout the Covid-19 process. Beyond providing information, the media has produced intense content to the public about what should and should not be done, has been a pressure factor in the implementation of the decisions taken by official institutions and has played an active role in convincing the public. The media plays an important role here. The media, which accepted all the decisions and practices of the state without question during the epidemic process, took place in the state of the official ideology.

Chomsky and Herman state that the media and public opinion create a consensus with the government and the official ideology and bring them together at the same point. (Chomsky and Herman, 2002). Since the beginning of the pandemic, this sense of consensus and belonging has become even more important. However, this orientation has brought users to a conflicting communication environment about the pandemic. The adventure of Covid-19, which is full of unknowns, has misled even physicians and scientists who are experts in these subjects, and the public has become unsure of what to do from time to time. Over time, conflicting information from experts (the way the virus spreads, the process of the virus staying in the air or in objects, the benefits of the mask, the treatment protocol of the disease, the drugs that were later banned, the changing forms of treatment, the effectiveness rate in children, the reliability of the PCR test, etc.) appeared in the media and this information was used on social media and non-vaccine mass platforms.

Table 2. Some Headlines from the Media During the Pandemic

 <p>12 March 2020, Hürriyet Newspaper The next 12 months are critical</p>	 <p>14 July 2022, Hürriyet Newspaper It even spreads on the road</p>
 <p>20 September 2022, Habertürk Frightening warning for Covid-19</p>	 <p>10 July 2020, Sabah Newspaper Frightening coronavirus statement from a neurologist: Reaching the brain</p>
 <p>6 February 2020 Sabah Newspaper It mutated, he resurrected.</p>	 <p>28 November 2021 Show TV Mutation panic. The new name of the nightmare is Omicron</p>



24 July 2021 Habertürk TV

What sanctions are there for anti-vaxxers?



30 July 2021 NTV

The pandemic of the unvaccinated has begun



September 9, 2020, Fox TV

The virus spreads through music



27 January 2020 Show TV

Coronavirus panic is growing, the virus caused the Great Wall of China to be closed

For the media, the pandemic has been a boon in disguise. While the media produced the most materials during the war period, the epidemic period was evaluated as a war period for the media. News of extraordinary events, endless stories, developments that create fear, anxiety and threat, and fear of death have spread in the media. According to Chomsky, the media serves the interests of the state and other corporations, not the interests of the public. The media's screen of attack and temptation is set up to enslave the largest possible section of the population. That's when their attention can be sold to advertisers at the price of scrap. State units' profit from the war and, with detailed information, take comfort in the wake of a web of bland statements that prevent the exposure of mass resistance (Gülsoy, 2006,185). While the media has created fear about the Covid-19 outbreak, it has insisted on the need to be vaccinated.

Reports have been published that the financial support provided by governments and pharmaceutical companies is behind the media's intense coverage of Covid vaccines. In summary, the reports claimed the following: Biden administration in the United States paid approximately \$1 billion to various media outlets to promote positive coverage of COVID-19 vaccines. The claim suggests that these payments were intended to censor negative information and boost public confidence in the vaccines (Wiones, 2021). The funding for this campaign reportedly came from the U.S. Congress, earmarked

to “strengthen vaccine confidence. Also mentions accusations by the Global Times that U.S. and British news outlets engaged in propaganda to promote Pfizer vaccines and disparage Chinese vaccines (Reuters, 2021)

During the pandemic period, no experts or doctors who were concerned or questioning about the vaccine were featured in the mainstream media. On social media, many accounts have been banned/closed to prevent disinformation. The most notable of these that Twitter has banned Dr. Robert Malone, a prominent vaccine scientist and one of the inventors of mRNA technology. The ban followed Dr. Malone sharing a video expressing concerns about the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. This action has generated significant controversy and discussion, as it involves a respected figure in the field of virology and mRNA technology being restricted from the social media platform. Shortly after Elon Musk purchased Twitter, his account was reopened. Later, SpaceX and Twitter owner Elon Musk disclosed, Pfizer’s board member Dr. Scott Gottlieb’s pressure on Twitter and his request to close accounts against mRNA vaccines (NTV, 2023).



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Dr. @RWMaloneMD and Dr. @P_McCulloughMD, who both had their #Twitter accounts suspended during the pandemic, confirmed they are now able to post again.

Both McCullough and Malone have been often critical of mRNA #COVID19 vaccines for children.

[Gönderiyi çevir](#)



theepochtimes.com
mRNA Vaccine Contributor Dr. Robert Malone Back on Twitter a Year After Suspension

ÖS 8:10 · 15 Ara 2022 · 9.522 Görüntülenme



Robert W Malone, MD ✓
@RWMaloneMD

Abone ol



I'm back...

Welcome to Fifth Gen (Information) Warfare

The battleground is consensus of the swarm and your own mind.

Please share my substack from today.

open.substack.com/pub/rwmalonemd...

[Gönderiyi çevir](#)

ÖÖ 6:35 · 13 Ara 2022

For a long time in the media, it was claimed by pharmaceutical companies and some doctors that the vaccine stopped the spread of the virus. It was stated that everyone should be vaccinated for public health. The European Parliament then held a series of hearings on vaccines. At one of these sessions, Rob Roos, the Dutch representative to the European Parliament, asked senior Pfizer executive Janine Small if she knew whether the vaccine prevented transmission of the virus. Small stated that they did not make such a claim and did not investigate it. While this news was trending on social media, it was not included in the mainstream media (Sputniknews, 2021).



Purpose, Sample, Method, Scope

In the most general sense, this research aims to understand and get to know the audience who have never been vaccinated against Covid-19 even though the media influences public opinion, despite the continuous and intensive reports and directions of manufacturing consent by the media about the necessity of

being vaccinated against Covid-19. Despite the media's persuasion efforts, propaganda techniques, agenda-setting and consent manufacturing processes, the demographic, ideological characteristics of the 9% of the population who have never been vaccinated against Covid-19 in Turkey, what they are affected by, the state of trust in the media, their perspective on the pandemic and their motivations for not being vaccinated are among the questions that need to be examined. In this research, despite the necessity and necessity of vaccination in the media and despite the legal imposition of circulars, even the information that those who are not vaccinated may die, the structure of the mass who have never been vaccinated and who are not affected by the media has been tried to be examined. It is important to recognize the audience that does not engage in the interaction of the media and the production of consent and to understand their motivation for developing resistance to the media.

In this context, an online survey with the self-filling technique was applied between March-April 2020 within the scope of the Quantitative (Quantitative) Research method with 2038 people who have the ability to represent the mass of people who have never been vaccinated throughout Turkey. In the sampling determination, according to TURKSTAT population data in Turkey, the population over the age of 18 is 60 million 863 thousand, while the universe is determined as 9% of the population of Turkey based on the 9% who are not vaccinated. Based on the research population of 5 million 447 thousand people, the sample was calculated as 1968 with a confidence interval of 99% and a margin of error of ± 0.003 . Due to the intense participation in the research, the sample was completed in 2038. The research was completed with the Quota Controlled Snowball Method. The research quota is based on being over 18 years of age and not having been vaccinated at all. During the research, the answers to the following questions were sought:

What are the demographics of the unvaccinated population? (Gender, age, education, occupation, province, etc.)

What is the ideological stance of the unvaccinated masses?

What is the effect of religious belief on not getting vaccinated?

What is their general attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines in the recent period?

Apart from Covid-19 vaccines, what is their general attitude towards childhood vaccines and other vaccines?

Basically, what are the factors that bother them most about the Covid-19 vaccine that create their motivation not to get vaccinated?

What resources do they most often turn to for information about Covid-19 vaccines?

What are their levels of trust in the media and other institutions?

What are the rates at which the media is found unbiased during the pandemic?

How successful have they found institutions and the media in general during the pandemic?

Research Findings

Demographics

During the pandemic period, despite intense media propaganda, legal regulations, circulars issued by ministries, sanctions imposed on those who are not vaccinated in workplaces and schools, women constitute a 60% proportional majority in the gender distribution of the mass over the age of 18 who have never been vaccinated. It is noticeable that women are significantly higher than men in the mass without Covid-19 vaccine.

Table 3. Gender and Age

Gender		Age	
Woman	60,4%	18-24	5,7%
Male	39,6%	25-34	23,6%
Total %, N	100,0%	35-44	44,1%
	2038	45-54	20,9%
		55-64	5,0%
		65 and over	0,7%
		Total %, N	100,0%
			2038

When the age distribution is examined, a significant accumulation is observed especially in the 35-44 age group. In the mass without Covid-19 vaccine, it was determined that the middle age group constituted a proportional majority (44%). As the age progresses, the situation of not being vaccinated disappears significantly. Especially in the mass of 55 years and older, there does not seem to be a case of not being vaccinated. The proportion of young people among the unvaccinated population is 29%. The striking points in the age distribution are the data that the middle age group is predominantly in the unvaccinated mass and the proportion of those who are not vaccinated decreases as the age progresses. Compared to other age groups, a decrease in vaccination is observed in the young mass of 18-24 years and the elderly group over 55 years.

Another data measured during the research is how the unvaccinated mass is distributed according to education status. Especially in the media and social media platforms, although expressions such as anti-science, ignorant and anti-public health are used for the unvaccinated mass, according to the research data, almost 60% of the unvaccinated mass is a two-year or four-year university graduate. An educated mass is emerging. Those with a master's or doctoral

degree are 13%. It can be said that 73 out of every hundred people in the unvaccinated mass have university education or above. The high school and below graduation rate remained at 27%.

Half of the unvaccinated population, which exhibits a female-dominant, educated and middle-aged demographic, works full-time. While the rate of housewives was 19%, the rate of students remained at 6%.

Table 4. Education		Table 5. Operating status	
Have not completed primary school or any school literacy	1,3%	Works full time	54,0%
Middle and high school graduate	26,1%	Housewife	19,8%
Two-year college / Four-year university graduate	59,4%	Not working (rental income, etc.)	12,4%
Master's and PhD graduates	13,2%	Retired	7,2%
Total %, N	100,0%	Student	6,6%
	2038	Total %, N	100,0%
			2038

In the occupational distribution of the unvaccinated mass, the first place is composed of non-working housewives, students, retirees, etc. with 37%, civil servants with 12%, and professional employees such as trained lawyers, doctors, architects, teachers, pharmacists, lecturers working in other institutions with 11%. Self-employed professionals such as lawyers, doctors, architects, teachers, pharmacists, lecturers are 7%, while skilled workers are 8%. The distribution of occupations is also in parallel with the education status data. The research covers 81 provinces to reflect the whole of Turkey. In the table with the data, 70 provinces represented in low percentages are included in the "other" row. As can be seen from the data, in parallel with the population of Turkey, the unvaccinated mass; It is distributed to cities such as Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Bursa, Kocaeli.

Table 6. Profession		Table 7. Province	
Business owner (more than 30 employees)	0,5%	Istanbul	32,2%
Business owner (less than 30 employees)	4,1%	Ankara	7,5%
Manager (with more than 30 employees)	1,1%	Izmir	6,9%
Manager (less than 30 employees)	1,5%	Bursa	5,3%
A self-employed professional such as a lawyer, doctor, architect, teacher, pharmacist, lecturer	6,7%	Kocaeli	3,8%
A professional working in another institution, such as a trained lawyer, doctor, architect, teacher, pharmacist, lecturer	11,3%	Konya	2,3%
Tradesmen (Grocer, greengrocer, butcher, tailor etc.)	2,8%	Adana	2,1%

Manager, supervisor	2,1%	Myrtle	1,9%
Trained employee, expert	8,1%	Eskischir	1,7%
Civil servant	12,7%	Sakarya	1,5%
Forman, workshop supervisor, labor supervisor	1,0%	Samsun	1,4%
Skilled worker	8,1%	Diyarbakir	1,4%
Unskilled worker, agricultural worker	1,2%	Trabzon	1,3%
The farmer owns his own land	0,8%	Kayseri	1,3%
Police, soldiers, etc.	1,2%	Other	29,4%
Not working, housewife, student retired, etc.	36,8%	Total %, N	100,0%
Total %, N	100,0%		2038
	2038		

Among those who have never been vaccinated, 68 out of every hundred people are married, while 32 out of every hundred people are single. The salient point here is that those who are married are more likely to be vaccinated than singles.

Married	68,1%
Single	31,9%
Total %, N	100,0%
	2038

Ideology, Trust in Media and Institutions and Covid-19 Perspective Data

A wide range of accusations and categorization efforts have been made for the non-Covid-19 vaccinated population. One of the questions that is wondered about is the ideological stance of this mass. In the data obtained, it is observed that 41% of the audience defines themselves as conservative / religious. On the other hand, the remaining 59% of the mass is secular. The perception frequently put forward in the media that “those who are not vaccinated are the uneducated and conservative masses” does not coincide with the data revealed in this research. 23% of the unvaccinated population defines themselves as Atatürkist and 15% as Nationalist. The data show that non-vaccination is observed in every ideological thought.

Religious/Conservative	41,3%
Atatürkist	23,4%
Nationalist	15,1%
Republican	7,9%
Social Democratic	7,9%
Socialist	4,4%
Total %, N	100,0%
	2038

Another topic questioned during the research is the extent to which religious reasons have been effective in underestimating the motivation of the unvaccinated mass not to vaccinate. In the data obtained, only 20% of this mass states that they are not vaccinated because of their religious beliefs. In other words, the 77% of the population does not have religious beliefs behind the motivation not to get vaccinated.

Yes	20,7%
No	77,0%
Undecided	2,4%
Total %, N	100,0%
	2038

In the study, the accuracy of the perception of the non-Covid-19 vaccinated mass in the media that “this mass is against science and against all vaccines” was measured. In this context, the audience was asked whether they were against all vaccines, including childhood vaccines. The data obtained revealed that 50% of the population is against all vaccines. But the other 50% are undecided about or not against it. While 30% of the population is undecided on this issue, 20% is not against vaccines other than Covid-19. In the light of these data, it turns out that the statement that the entire unvaccinated population is against all vaccines will not be true. Almost all (97%) of the non-Covid-19 vaccinated population is against the Covid-19 vaccine. A striking data is the low rate of unstable people of this mass (2.5%). The data show that this mass takes a firm stance on not being vaccinated.

Table 11. What is your general attitude towards childhood vaccines and other vaccines?		Table 12. What is your general attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines recently?	
I am strongly opposed	32,9%	I am strongly opposed	86,1%
I am against	16,8%	I am against	10,9%
I'm undecided	30,2%	I'm undecided	2,5%
I'm not against	16,0%	I'm not against	0,1%
I'm definitely not against it	4,0%	I'm definitely not against it	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	Total %, N	100,0%
	2038		2038
Oppose (1+2)	49,8%	Oppose (1+2)	97,1%
I'm undecided (3)	30,2%	I'm undecided (3)	2,5%
I'm not against (4+5)	20,0%	I'm not against (4+5)	0,5%

One of the things that bothers this mass against the Covid-19 vaccine the most in this process and pressures; human rights and legal grounds (forcing people to work, not being allowed to work or school, etc.) are in the first place with almost 50%. Although this mass is suspicious due to the pressure from the media and official institutions, they are of the opinion that human rights are violated. With a rate of 24 percent, medical reasons (not trusting the vaccine, production in a short time, possible side effects, etc.) and the plans of the global system are among the issues that this mass is most uncomfortable with in the Covid-19 vaccine. The data obtained, the intense propaganda of the media and the legal obligations of the official institutions have created a backlash in this audience and created distrust against the Covid-19 vaccine.

Table 13. Basically, what bothers you most about the Covid-19 vaccine?	
Human rights and legal grounds (coercion of people, refusal to work or school, etc.)	49,7%
Medical reasons (not trusting the vaccine, production in a short time, possible side effects, etc.)	24,5%
4 Plans of the global system	24,1%
Existing prohibitions (curfew, travel restriction, etc.)	1,5%
Damage to the country's economy	0,1%
Nothing bothers me	0,0%
Total %, N	100,0%
	2038

In the ranking of information sources consulted by the unvaccinated population, some doctors (67%), internet/social media (66%) and anti-vaccine accounts on social media (61%) rank first. The striking point is that this audience follows information sources that are in parallel with their own thoughts. On the other hand, Turkish television and Turkish print media are not followed in any way. This mass expresses that they do not follow the media at all during the pandemic process because they do not trust the media and find it biased.

Table 14. Which resources have you consulted the most for information about Covid-19 vaccines?

	1 I use	2 I do not use	Total	
	%	%	%	N
Some doctors	67,1%	32,9%	100,0%	2038
Internet/social media	66,0%	34,0%	100,0%	2038
Anti-mandatory anti-vaccination accounts on social media	61,4%	38,6%	100,0%	2038
International media, press and publications	31,6%	68,4%	100,0%	2038
Websites that share health content	24,9%	75,1%	100,0%	2038
Governmental international institutions	13,2%	86,8%	100,0%	2038
Ministry of Health	10,3%	89,7%	100,0%	2038
Family / Relatives / Friends	7,6%	92,4%	100,0%	2038
Official government agencies of the Republic of Turkey	6,4%	93,6%	100,0%	2038
Turkish television	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%	2038
Turkish print media, newspapers, magazines	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%	2038

Almost all of the unvaccinated people say that the media has a biased stance (99%). The masses, where trust in the media is very low, have clearly expressed that the media has a pro-Covid-19 pro-vaccine attitude. It is observed that the media is not trusted in this regard.

Table 15. What do you think the media has taken during the pandemic?

Sided	99,1%
Equitable	0,5%
Undecided	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%
	2038

The non-Covid-19 vaccinated audience was asked how successful they found the institutions in general during the pandemic process. Almost all this audience, the print media, television, the Ministry of Health, the Turkish Medical Association, universities and the legal system have not found it successful

during the pandemic process. They found only social media to be partially successful (26%). This mass has lost confidence in the media and institutions, and they do not find the institutions successful. It is observed that the intense media propaganda carried out against them, the production of consent, the lack of coverage of different opinions in the media, the closure of social media accounts and legal coercion lie beneath this.

Table 16. How successful do you find institutions and media in general during the pandemic process?

	Poor (1+2)	Neither good nor bad (3)	Good (4+5)
	%	%	%
Television	97,6%	2,0%	0,4%
Ministry of Health	95,6%	3,3%	1,0%
Print media, newspapers/magazines	95,5%	4,1%	0,4%
Turkish Medical Association	93,7%	5,3%	1,0%
Legal System	83,8%	13,5%	2,7%
Universities	81,8%	16,2%	2,0%
Social Media	33,8%	39,5%	26,7%

Hypotheses by Gender, Education and Age

A significant difference was observed between the ideological stance of the unvaccinated population according to gender. In particular, it was observed that men were statistically significantly higher than women in the self-defined dinar/conservative mass. However, women significantly identify themselves as Atatürkists more than men. In other ideological breakdowns, there was no significant difference in gender discrimination.

Table 17. How would you most describe yourself? X Gender

	1 Female	2 Male	Total
1 Religious/Conservative	36,3%	48,9%	41,3%
2 Atatürkist	28,0%	16,3%	23,4%
3 Republicans	9,6%	5,3%	7,9%
4 Nationalist	14,1%	16,5%	15,1%
5 Socialist	4,1%	4,8%	4,4%
6 Social Democratic	7,8%	8,2%	7,9%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	1230	808	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	61,009 ^A	5	P<.001

No significant differences were observed between attitudes towards Covid-19 vaccines by gender. In the gender distribution, both sexes are against these vaccines at the same rates (97%-96%).

	1 Female	2 Male	Total
1 I am strongly opposed	86,0%	86,3%	86,1%
2 I am against	11,6%	9,9%	10,9%
3 I'm undecided	2,3%	2,7%	2,5%
4 I am not against	0,0%	0,4%	0,1%
5 Strongly not opposed	0,1%	0,7%	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	1230	808	2038
Oppose (1+2)	97,6%	96,2%	97,1%
I'm undecided (3)	2,3%	2,7%	2,5%
I'm not against (4+5)	0,1%	1,1%	0,5%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12,501 ^A	4	,014

During the research, it was measured whether there was a significant difference between the attitudes towards Covid-19 vaccines by gender. There was no statistically significant difference according to gender. Both sexes show attitudes towards the Covid-19 vaccine at the same rates.

	1 Female	2 Male	Total
1 Against all vaccines	17,5%	15,8%	16,8%
2 Only against Covid-19 vaccines	21,2%	25,6%	23,0%
3 Against mandatory vaccination	41,1%	38,9%	40,2%
4 Human rights defenders	20,2%	19,7%	20,0%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	1230	808	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5,550 ^A	3	,136

According to gender, it was tried to determine what kind of stance the Turkish media exhibited during the pandemic process. Statistically, no significant difference in gender distribution is observed. Both sexes see the Turkish media as vaccine mistaken at the same rates.

Table 20. What kind of stance do you think the Turkish media has displayed during the pandemic process? X Gender

	1 Female	2 Male	Total
1 Pro-vaccine	99,0%	99,3%	99,1%
2 Neutral	0,6%	0,5%	0,5%
3 Anti-vaccine	0,4%	0,2%	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	1230	808	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	,411 ^A	2	,814

No significant difference was observed between attitudes towards Covid-19 vaccines by education level. 97%-99% of all education levels are against getting the Covid-19 vaccine. The mass is consistent in its gender distribution.

Table 21. What is your general attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines recently? X Education level

	1 Has not completed primary school or any literate school	2 Middle and high school graduates	3 Two-year college / Four-year university degree	4 Master's and PhD graduates	Total
1 I am strongly opposed	88,5%	89,3%	85,6%	81,9%	86,1%
2 I am against	7,7%	9,0%	10,8%	15,6%	10,9%
3 I'm undecided	0,0%	1,3%	3,0%	2,6%	2,5%
4 I am not against	0,0%	0,0%	0,2%	0,0%	0,1%
5 Strongly not opposed	3,8%	0,4%	0,3%	0,0%	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	26	531	1211	270	2038
Oppose (1+2)	96,2%	98,3%	96,4%	97,4%	97,1%
I'm undecided (3)	0,0%	1,3%	3,0%	2,6%	2,5%
I'm not against (4+5)	3,8%	0,4%	0,6%	0,0%	0,5%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25,574 ^A	12	,012

When the data on how to treat Covid-19 and other vaccines according to education status are examined, it is observed that especially primary school or literate mass is more “against all vaccines” than other education groups. Another statistically significant data is that university graduates and master’s/doctoral graduates significantly show themselves as “human rights defenders” more than other education groups.

Table 22. How would you most describe yourself? X Education level

	1 Has not completed primary school or any literate school	2 Middle and high school graduates	3 Two-year college / Four-year university degree	4 Master’s and PhD graduates	Total
1 Against all vaccines	30,8%	16,9%	17,4%	12,6%	16,8%
2 Only against Covid-19 vaccines	11,5%	22,6%	22,6%	26,3%	23,0%
3 Against mandatory vaccination	53,8%	42,7%	38,9%	39,6%	40,2%
4 Human rights defenders	3,8%	17,7%	21,1%	21,5%	20,0%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	26	531	1211	270	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	17,375 ^A	9	P<.001

In the question of how the Turkish media has taken a stance in the pandemic process according to the education status, the same result was observed in all education situations and there was no statistically significant difference. All educational backgrounds find the Turkish media biased and unsafe.

Table 23. What kind of stance do you think the Turkish media has displayed during the pandemic process? X Education level

	1 Has not completed primary school or any literate school	2 Middle and high school graduates	3 Two-year college / Four-year university degree	4 Master’s and PhD graduates	Total
1-Sided	100,0%	98,9%	99,4%	98,1%	99,1%
2 Neutral	0,0%	0,4%	0,5%	1,1%	0,5%
3 Unstable	0,0%	0,8%	0,1%	0,7%	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	26	531	1211	270	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8,448 ^A	6	,207

When the ideological stance is examined according to the educational status, no statistically significant difference is observed. However, it is observed that the primary school or literate population is more religious/conservative than other masses (54%).

Table 24. How would you most describe yourself? X Education level

	1 Has not completed primary school or any literate school	2 Middle and high school graduates	3 Two-year college / Four-year university degree	4 Master's and PhD graduates	Total
1 Religious/Conservative	53,8%	39,4%	42,4%	38,9%	41,3%
2 Ataturkist	15,4%	24,5%	22,8%	24,8%	23,4%
3 Republicans	7,7%	8,1%	7,8%	8,1%	7,9%
4 Nationalist	19,2%	16,6%	14,2%	15,6%	15,1%
5 Socialist	0,0%	5,1%	4,7%	2,2%	4,4%
6 Social Democratic	3,8%	6,4%	8,2%	10,4%	7,9%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	26	531	1211	270	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14,485 ^a	15	,489

The recent attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines in the age distribution was analyzed. Statistically, especially the 65 and older age group is more hesitant to be against Covid-19 vaccines than other age groups. In addition, this age group is significantly less against Covid-19 vaccines than other age groups. During the research, it was observed that the proportion of the already high age group in the mass without Covid-19 vaccine is less. In addition, this mass, which is still not vaccinated against Covid-19, is more unstable than the other mass. As the age progresses, the proximity to vaccines increases.

Table 25. What is your general attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines recently? X Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over	Total
1 I am strongly opposed	86,5%	85,0%	86,7%	85,2%	90,1%	80,0%	86,1%
2 I am against	7,2%	10,8%	11,2%	12,2%	8,9%	0,0%	10,9%
3 I'm undecided	4,5%	3,5%	1,7%	2,3%	1,0%	13,3%	2,5%
4 I am not against	0,0%	0,2%	0,0%	0,2%	0,0%	6,7%	0,1%

5 Strongly not opposed	1,8%	0,4%	0,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	111	480	898	426	101	15	2038
Oppose (1+2)	93,7%	95,8%	98,0%	97,4%	99,0%	80,0%	97,1%
I'm undecided (3)	4,5%	3,5%	1,7%	2,3%	1,0%	13,3%	2,5%
I'm not against (4+5)	1,8%	0,6%	0,3%	0,2%	0,0%	6,7%	0,5%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	73,527 ^A	24	P<.001

In the distribution of age groups, especially the 18-24 age group statistically sees itself as more human rights defender than other age groups. However, in the age group over 65 years of age, statistically significantly, a stance is observed not against all vaccines, but against mandatory vaccinations. The mandatory vaccination of non-Covid-19 masses has created a serious reaction.

Table 26. How would you most describe yourself? X Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over	Total
1 Against all vaccines	19,8%	23,5%	16,1%	10,8%	13,9%	6,7%	16,8%
2 Only against Covid-19 vaccines	13,5%	21,3%	23,9%	24,4%	26,7%	20,0%	23,0%
3 Against mandatory vaccination	37,8%	35,8%	40,0%	46,7%	35,6%	60,0%	40,2%
4 Human rights defenders	28,8%	19,4%	19,9%	18,1%	23,8%	13,3%	20,0%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	112	481	899	428	102	16	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46,918 ^A	18	P<.001

During the research, it was observed whether there were significant differences in the biased or neutral status of the Turkish media according to age groups.

Table 27. What kind of stance do you think the Turkish media has displayed during the pandemic process? X Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over	Total
1-Sided	98,2%	98,8%	99,4%	99,5%	98,0%	93,3%	99,1%
2 Neutral	0,9%	1,0%	0,2%	0,2%	1,0%	6,7%	0,5%
3 Unstable	0,9%	0,2%	0,3%	0,2%	1,0%	0,0%	0,3%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	112	481	899	428	102	16	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18,575 ^A	12	,099

Finally, according to the age distribution, it was examined whether there was a significant difference in the ideological stance of the mass without Covid-19 vaccine. Statistically significantly, 18-34 young people identify as more religious/conservative than other age groups. Another statistically significant data is that the population aged 55 and over is more Atatürkist and more social democratic than other age groups.

Table 28. How would you most describe yourself? X Age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65 and over	Total
1 Religious/Conservative	55,0%	48,1%	40,1%	36,9%	26,7%	13,3%	41,3%
2 Ataturkist	13,5%	11,9%	25,8%	28,4%	44,6%	40,0%	23,4%
3 Republicans	8,1%	9,0%	6,1%	11,0%	4,0%	6,7%	7,9%
4 Nationalist	10,8%	16,7%	15,7%	12,9%	14,9%	20,0%	15,1%
5 Socialist	3,6%	6,9%	4,7%	2,3%	1,0%	0,0%	4,4%
6 Social Democratic	9,0%	7,5%	7,6%	8,5%	8,9%	20,0%	7,9%
Total %, N	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	112	481	899	428	102	16	2038

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	118,830 ^A	30	P<.001

Testing of Hypotheses:

Table 29. Total Hypothesis Table	Acceptance-Rejection	P
H1: Is there a significant relationship between the ideological stance of the population that is not vaccinated against Covid-19 by gender?	Acceptance	P<.001
H2: Is there a significant relationship between the positive/negative attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines of the population who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 according to gender?	Rebuff	,014
H3: Is there a significant relationship between the attitudes of the population who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19 vaccine by gender towards vaccines other than Covid-19 vaccine?	Rebuff	,136
H4: Is there a significant relationship between the non-Covid-19 vaccination according to gender and the biased/neutral view of the Turkish media?	Rebuff	,814
H5: Is there a significant relationship between the ideological stance of the non-Covid-19 vaccinated population according to education status?	Rebuff	,489
H6: Is there a significant relationship between the positive/negative attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines of the population who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 according to their education status?	Rebuff	,012
H7: Is there a significant relationship between the attitude of the population who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 vaccine other than Covid-19 vaccine according to education status?	Acceptance	P<.001
H8: Is there a significant relationship between the non-Covid-19 vaccination according to education level and the fact that the Turkish media is biased/neutral?	Rebuff	,207
H9: Is there a significant relationship between the ideological stance of the population who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 by age?	Acceptance	P<.001
H10: Is there a significant relationship between the positive/negative attitude towards Covid-19 vaccines in the population who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 according to age?	Acceptance	P<.001
H11: Is there a significant relationship between the attitude of the population who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19 vaccine by age towards vaccines other than Covid-19 vaccine?	Acceptance	P<.001
H12: Is there a significant relationship between the population that does not have the Covid-19 vaccine according to age and the fact that the Turkish media is biased/unbiased?	Rebuff	,099

Conclusion

During the pandemic period, despite the intense propaganda of the media and the manufacturing consent process, which produces the same content as the official ideology and institutions as a whole, an average of 9% of the population over the age of 18 has never been vaccinated against Covid-19. Based on the fact that the media influences, changes and transforms public opinion and sets the agenda, this study has tried to get to know the unaffected and unvaccinated audience closely. Questions such as the trust of this mass in

public institutions and organizations and the media, information sources during the pandemic period, their ideological stances, their perspectives on vaccines, the effect of their religious beliefs on not being vaccinated, their motivations not to vaccinate against Covid-19, and whether they find the media impartial or not were asked. In this context, an online survey was conducted with 2038 people in Turkey who did not have Covid-19 vaccine and who had the ability to represent the non-Covid-19 vaccine audience in Turkey by adhering to the Quantitative (Quantitative) Research method. Sample selection was calculated with a 99% confidence interval with a margin of error of ± 0.003 .

Covid-19 vaccination is attracted by women with a 60% proportional majority in the gender distribution of the mass. When the age distribution is examined, a significant accumulation is observed especially in the 35-44 age group (44%). Compared to other age groups, a decrease in vaccination is observed in the young mass of 18-24 years and the elderly group over 55 years. Many accusations have been made in the media about the mass of people who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19. Despite being categorized as anti-science, ignorant and anti-public health opponents, when the educational status of this mass is examined, an educated structure emerges. According to research data, almost 60% of the unvaccinated population is a two-year or four-year university graduate. An educated mass is emerging. Those with a master's or doctoral degree are 13%. It can be said that 73 out of every hundred people in the unvaccinated mass have university education or above. Half of the unvaccinated population, which exhibits a female-dominant, educated and middle-aged demographic, works full-time. While the rate of housewives was 19%, the rate of students remained at 6%. In the occupational distribution, unemployed, housewife, student retiree, etc. are at the top at 37%, civil servants at 13% and trained professionals such as lawyers, doctors, architects, teachers, pharmacists, lecturers working in other institutions at 11%. While 68 out of every hundred people in the population were married, those living in Istanbul were included in the research with 32%, those living in Ankara with 7% and those living in Izmir with 7%.

It is observed that 41% of the population without Covid-19 vaccine defines themselves as conservative/religious. On the other hand, the remaining 59% of the mass is secular. Another topic questioned during the research is the extent to which religious reasons have been effective in underestimating the motivation of the unvaccinated mass not to vaccinate. In the data obtained, only 20% of this mass states that they are not vaccinated because of their religious beliefs. In other words, the 77% of the population does not have religious beliefs behind the motivation not to get vaccinated. Almost all of the non-Covid-19 vaccinated population is clearly (97%) against the Covid-19 vaccine. The audience was

asked if they were against all vaccines, including childhood vaccines. The data obtained revealed that 50% of the population is against all vaccines. But the other 50% are undecided or not against it.

Covid-19 is one of the main motivations for not getting vaccinated; human rights and legal grounds (forcing people to work, not being allowed to work or school, etc.) (50%). Although this mass is suspicious due to the pressure from the media and official institutions, they are of the opinion that human rights are violated. With a rate of 24 percent, medical reasons (not trusting the vaccine, production in a short time, possible side effects, etc.) and the plans of the global system are among the issues that this mass is most uncomfortable with in the Covid-19 vaccine. The data obtained, the intense propaganda of the media and the legal obligations of the official institutions have created a backlash in this audience and created distrust against the Covid-19 vaccine. In the ranking of information sources consulted by the unvaccinated population, some doctors (67%), internet/social media (66%) and anti-vaccine accounts on social media (61%) rank first. The striking point is that this audience follows information sources that are in parallel with their own thoughts. On the other hand, Turkish television and Turkish print media are not followed in any way. This mass expresses that they do not follow the media at all during the pandemic process because they do not trust the media and find it biased. Almost all of the unvaccinated people say that the media has a biased stance (99%).

The non-Covid-19 vaccinated audience was asked how successful they found the institutions in general during the pandemic process. Almost all of this audience, the print media, television, the Ministry of Health, the Turkish Medical Association, universities and the legal system have not found it successful during the pandemic process. They found only social media to be partially successful (26%). It was observed that in the self-defined population as conservative, men were statistically significantly higher than women. However, women significantly identify themselves as Atatürkists more than men. H1:0 Agreed. No significant differences were observed between attitudes towards Covid-19 vaccines by gender. In the gender distribution, both sexes are against these vaccines at the same rates (97%-96%). H2:1 Rejection There was no statistically significant difference by gender. Both sexes show attitudes towards the Covid-19 vaccine at the same rates. H3:1 Rejection Both sexes view the Turkish media as vaccine mistaken at the same rates. There was no significant difference between the vaccination attitudes of the Turkish media according to gender. H4:1 Rejection No significant difference was observed between attitudes towards Covid-19 vaccines by educational status. 97%-99% of all education levels are against getting the Covid-19 vaccine. H5: 1 Rejection When we look at the data on how attitudes are displayed towards

Covid-19 and other vaccines according to education status, it is observed that especially primary school or literate people are more “against all vaccines” than other education groups. Another statistically significant data is that university graduates and master’s/doctoral graduates significantly show themselves as “human rights defenders” more than other education groups. H6:0 Admission In all educational situations, he finds the Turkish media biased and unsafe, and no meaningful difference has emerged. H7: 1 Rejection

When the ideological stance is examined according to the educational status, no statistically significant difference is observed. However, it is observed that the primary school or literate population is more religious/conservative than other masses (54%). H8:1 Rejection Statistically, the 65 and older age group in particular is more “undecided” about being against Covid-19 vaccines than other age groups. In addition, this age group is significantly less against Covid-19 vaccines than other age groups. As the age progresses, the proximity to vaccines increases. H9: 0 Acceptance In the distribution of age groups, especially the 18-24 age group statistically sees itself as more human rights defender than other age groups. However, in the age group over 65 years of age, statistically significantly, a stance is observed not against all vaccines, but against mandatory vaccinations. H10: 0 Admission All age groups found the Turkish media biased at almost the same rates. There was no significant difference in age distribution. H11: 1 Rejection Ideological stance data show that statistically significant 18-34 young people identify as more religious/conservative than other age groups. Another statistically significant data is that the population aged 55 and over is more Atatürkist and more social democratic than other age groups. H12: 0 Admission

In the light of all these data, a middle-aged group without Covid-19 vaccine, an educated, half-religious/conservative, half-secular mass is emerging. It is believed that there is no trust in the media and that the media has been completely biased during the pandemic process. The main motivation of this mass is not religious reasons, but medical reasons such as vaccine compulsion, breaking the law, plans of the global system and lack of trust in the vaccine. While the main source of information for this audience is some doctors and social media, they never follow television and print media clearly. This mass did not find any institution successful during the pandemic period and was not affected by official institutions.

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DEEPAKES AND SHALLOWAKES IN STRATEGIC DECEPTION CAMPAIGNS

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Introduction

Strategic communication campaigns using artificial intelligence (AI) are increasingly gaining notoriety for their use of distorted visuals and altered videos involving humans. Visual framing adds another powerful spin to the message, especially when it comes to persuading masses about complex social and political issues. AI enables the mass creation of fake synthetic videos that are used in disinformation campaigns. Online manipulation via *deepfake* technology helps promote fake political statements made by imposters or produce revenge porn that can ruin reputations and careers.

Internet users are highly vulnerable to deceptive stratagems due to the anonymous nature of online communication and the polarizing power of digital media. The proliferation of manipulative online content has been attributed to rapid development of digital technologies, mediatization of society, and declining trust in traditional institutions (Samoilenko, 2020). New digital technologies have been attributed with audience segmentation and widening ideological polarization on various social issues (Bonfadelli, 2002; Lee, 2009). AI tools are believed to make audiences vulnerable to multiple reputational risks and diminish public trust in visual information (Cheatham, Javanmardian, & Samandari, 2019; Vaccari & Chadwick, 2020).

Social networks are the main channel for spreading disinformation. Unlike traditional media, which check the authorship and origin of the content, social media algorithms benefit from disseminating provocative viral content, which is illustrated by the latest case of Facebook papers leaked by whistleblower and former employee Frances Haugen. Haugen testified before Congress about a range of troubling issues and policies at the social-media giant and filed complaints about the company putting profit over public safety (Danner, 2021). Deepfake technology is even more intimidating because there are no reliable

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tools for deepfake detection available to average users and low public awareness about them (Masood, et al., 2021). In recent years, deepfakes have become a weaponized tool of strategic deception used for power contests in politics, character assassination, fighting the opposition, and information warfare.

This chapter seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature investigating the functional use of deepfake technologies in strategic deception campaigns. Deepfakes are discussed as highly effective tools in the hands of strategic actors using them in election campaigns, coercion and intimidation efforts, and subversive operations by activist groups. The authors argue that deepfakes negatively impact public trust in political figures, social institutions, and online video materials. The chapter concludes by reflecting on new approaches to deepfake detection and legal measures against online deception.

Strategic Deception

In the field of communication studies, deception refers to deliberate manipulation of verbal and/or nonverbal messages, behavior, or image to lead a target person to a false belief or conclusion without providing a proper forewarning (Dunbar, 2009). It usually involves misrepresentation of information by leaving out true information (concealment) or presenting false information as if it were true (falsification) (Ekman, 1985). The category of what counts as deceptive communication is broad and includes various forms of indirect speech acts, strategic ambiguity, equivocal communication, and other forms of non-direct communication.

Strategic deception has been essential for human survival for many centuries (Kraut, 1980). It refers to the application of deceptive stratagems by pragmatic actors seeking to realize their goals within a particular social (media) system. The choice of deceptive tactics depends on multiple factors such as: time available to plan, consequences of being detected, chances to escape possible detection (Hopper & Bell, 1984). Thus, crafting a deceptive message requires a careful examination of the situation, personal attributes of the target, and its relational closeness with the deceiver. Disinformation campaigns via memes, graphics or video materials are commonly used for promoting alternative agendas to spreading rumors about political opponents (Powell et al. 2015). The impact of falsehoods and fabricated stories do not only lead to public confusion, and political polarization, but also contribute to distrust in traditional institutions (Gupta et al., 2013).

Pranking represents a powerful tool of strategic deception. Pranks are practical jokes played on someone for the purpose of ridiculing the target, causing them to experience embarrassment and discomfort. Pranks can be used to set media agenda and influence public perception of events and political figures and highlight certain issues as key topics of public debate (Harold,

2014). This approach appeals to young audiences who prefer soft news to learn about international and domestic affairs (Farnsworth, Baumgartner, & Morris, 2015; Farnsworth & Lichter, 2010). For example, YouTube channel Trollstation collaborates with numerous British pranksters who perform social experiments, including pranks on police officers and government employees (The Guardian, 2016).

A pair of Russian “pranksters” Kuznetsov and Stolyarov, better known as Vovan and Lexus, have a history of fooling Western politicians and celebrities, such as: singer Elton John, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Croatian prime minister, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, and other high-ranked politicians (Walker, 2016). In 2020, the pranksters called California congresswoman Maxine Waters, impersonating climate change activist Greta Thunberg and her father, Svante. In a 10-minute phone call posted to the prankster’s YouTube page, the senior Democrat praised Thunberg for “quite a big, big, big, big thunder on this issue”. The impersonators told Waters the pair were in North Carolina to discuss a threatened island called “Chongo-Chango” and promised to tell her something “confidential” about the famous moment when Thunberg crossed paths with Donald Trump at the United Nations climate summit in New York in September 2019.

Pranksters often play the role of state proxies, known for pranking high-level officials and celebrities, “particularly those who are supportive of an agenda that is not in line with their governments” (Wootson, 2017). State-affiliated pranksters look for opportunities to reinforce strategic narratives of their governments by discrediting Western policymakers. The strategic use of hoax and ridicule produces a compare-and-contrast effect by making foreign political actors appear incompetent, odd, and clueless in comparison to national state actors and diplomats who are often perceived as more serious and legitimate by internal audiences (Sukhodolov et al., 2018).

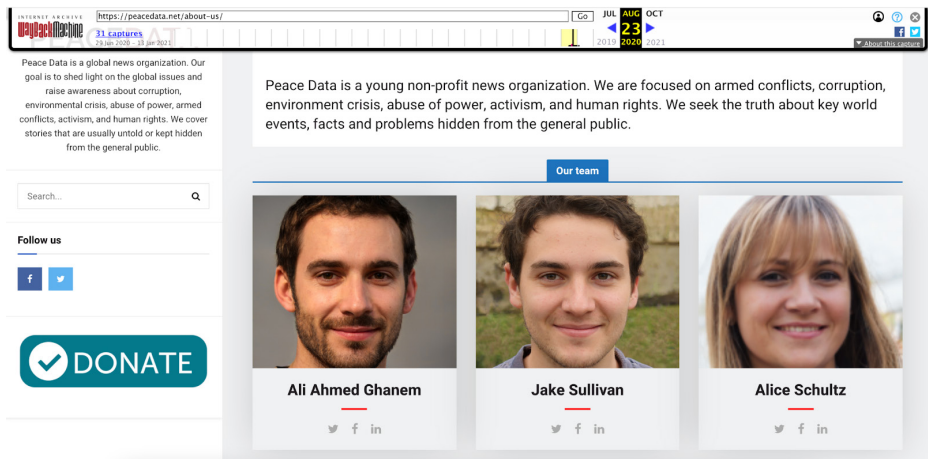
Visual Deception and Artificial Intelligence

The use of AI-generated photos has grown tremendously for various purposes including product reviews, fake social media accounts, and even fake personal profiles. Photo editing has also improved because of new AI-apps to the point that new neural filters of Photoshop 2021 enable users to change age, gaze direction, and facial expression just in a few clicks. ‘

AI-generated photos can be also used as a tool of strategic deception by generative adversarial networks (GANs). For example, a fake project PeaceData.net, a young non-profit news organization featuring non-existing team members: Ali Ahmed Ghanem, Jake Sullivan, and Alice Schultz. The images of editorial staff were GAN-generated. The project management hired novice journalists and freelance writers, “passionate about uncovering the

truth about armed conflicts, corruption, human rights violations”. Its stories are designed to criticize Biden from the left, to steer possible voters away from his campaign. The project had social media accounts and interacted extensively with its contributors.

In 2020, the FBI investigation revealed that the Peace Data project was created by the The production is linked to the Internet Research Agency (IRA), also known as “the troll factory” linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, businessman with close ties to the Russian government (Frenkel & Barnes, 2020; Shifrin, 2020).



Screenshot taken from the website peacedata.net using web.archive.org on July 5, 2021

Another IRA project included multiple Facebook groups created to influence attitudes in support of Russia’s activities in Sudan (Harding, 2020; Grossman, Bush, & DiResta, 2019). These groups contained shared political news in Arabic and reports from legitimate news sources. In May 2021, Facebook claimed the removal of the network of 30 pages, six groups, 83 accounts, and 49 Instagram accounts which all together had 440,000 followers. “Local users” circulated information within Sudanese groups and created groups that presented themselves as local. Many images were edited to avoid reverse search while others were generated by GANs. Fake profiles also ensure that targeted posts will get a considerable amount of likes and comments. In addition, using groups and pages posing as local for propaganda purposes helps create the illusion of community and spread information across numerous other networks.

GAN is not the only generator of authentic-looking images. 3D-modelling allows to create the visuals of the same person in various settings wearing different clothes. There are an increasing number of digital fashion models that pose on social networks and participate in music videos. Some have thousands and even millions of Instagram followers and brands and retailers are starting

to show interest. For example, 3D Lil Miquela, robot sci-fi droid, is a creation of Brud – a transmedia studio that makes fictional characters who live in the real world. Lil Miquela was modelled on a person and then animated over the top (CNBC, 2018).

AI-generated or manipulated media used in manipulation and disinformation operations with doppelgänger are becoming widespread.

Deepfakes and Shallowfakes

Deepfake is a new method to manipulate or generate visual and audio content with a high potential to deceive millions of online users. According to Burt and Horvitz (2020), deepfake technology is “synthesized media that are photos, videos or audio files manipulated by artificial intelligence (AI) in such a way that the fake is hard to detect”.

An example of stunning deepfakes featuring Tom Cruise’s doppelgänger demonstrates the destructive potential of deepfakes used in strategic deception campaigns. Cruise’s videos received the highest rates of credibility and trustworthiness. Their quality was so good that even another celebrity, Justin Bieber, commented on the fake videos showing an imposter playing the guitar. Bieber had no clue that he was fooled and openly admired Cruise’s skills.

Deepfake videos represent a type of AI-generated video, many of which are not fake and serve different purposes. While deepfake technology is continuing to improve, most manipulated imagery and video on the Internet still comes from traditional manual alteration and selective editing which requires no artificial intelligence (Leetaru, 2019). These so-called *shallowfakes* are usually created by amateurs using apps like ZAO and Wombo for wider distribution and circulation in online scam operations and low-quality pornography.

The massive deepfake production became possible due to several developments including: rapid advancement in artificial intelligence, computer graphics, machine learning and artificial intelligence, “deep” neural networks, and processing power. These developments allowed to seamlessly generate voice, transfer one’s facial expressions and mimics to another face, and solve the lip-sync problem with new software, such as *Face2Face*, an approach for real-time facial reenactment of a monocular target video sequence (Thies, et al., 2016).

Multiple face-swapping mobile applications like Wombo (10+ million downloads), or Reface (100+ million downloads), or ZAO allow users to make a deepfake video in a few taps. However, users are restricted from making real deepfake by using templates. They are provided with a choice: to animate a photo making the person on it sing a song (from the app’s list) or replace a face on the provided by the app recording or to the user’s pick.

Such apps provide an excellent opportunity for the creation of comic videos that have viral effects. One way of using deepfake technology is character assassination through ridiculing, defined as “a purposeful and contemptuous exaggeration or distortion in a comical context” (Samoilenko, 2016). Users can use a photo of a public person and make her/him sing a song charged with allusive meaning. When the creator is lucky, and the bricolage video captures the moment, it can quickly go viral.

As of late May 2020, Sensity, a company specializing in deepfake detection, has identified over **44,000** deepfakes. This number continues to rise rapidly as technology has become more available and user friendly (Sensity, n.d.). It really does not take much to create a deepfake.

In 2019, the project *This Person Does Not Exist* <https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/> demonstrated that neural networks can generate an endless number of authentic photos of people, animals, and objects. Two years later, image generators, such as <https://generated.photos/>, could easily generate a fact and adjust it by race, gender, age, eye and hair color, facial expressions, and other parameters. Today, DeepFaceLive, a real-time face swap for streaming or video calls, allows average user to create fake visuals with photos and recordings and to change face images in real time.

Such websites are indispensable for creating credible-looking fake accounts across the Internet. They are useful to actors with malicious intent because they replace real photos that can be recognized by the true photo owner or revealed via reverse image search. As a result, it can compromise not only one account but sometimes the whole campaign/network. There are at least four major types of deepfake producers: 1) communities of deepfake hobbyists, 2) political players such as foreign governments, and various activists, 3) other malevolent actors such as fraudsters, and 4) legitimate actors, such as television companies (Westerlund, 2019).

All the deepfakes can be classified into three categories depending on the ethics of their use, legality, and the complexity of production including the use of artificial intelligence.

Deepfake Types

White Area

This is the case when the deepfake source is known and all participants know about the arrangement. For example, a movie producer may have legal rights for using images that were provided by people voluntarily. Deepfakes become increasingly used by professional film studios. Luke Skywalker’s appearance in the series *Mandalorian* was possible because of the transfer

of Mark Hamill's face in his younger age to the Max Lloyd-Jones face, who played this role. The actors agreed to the use of technology, the audience knew they were watching a movie. The special effects of that kind are not new for the movie industry, but deepfakes made them more cost-effective. Deepfake software allows movie producers to hire amateurs and less expensive actors for main parts. Importantly, age and language proficiency skills do not matter. The use of this technology also means actors do not have to be physically involved in any filming. Some producers also start to use neural networks to improve the quality of old cartoons and videos (Kuzmin, 2021).

Video production technology has progressed to the point where it is possible to create live action images of stars that are entirely generated by computer, without the need for the actual star's participation at all. They can in effect licence their faces. Hollywood actor Bruce Willis agreed to feature in the new advertising campaign of leading Russian mobile phone company Megafon. However, the actor will not physically participate in any of the filming of the extensive planned campaign. The advertisement for Megafon will use the image of Willis from his "Die Hard" series of movies, which has been recreated using "deepfake" face generation technology based on neural network algorithms (Humpries, 2021).

Grey Area

Some video producers are transparent about their use of deepfake technology but fail to provide name and likeness release forms to people whose images they use. That was the case when a digitally created doppelgänger of Queen Elizabeth II delivered a traditional Christmas message on Channel 4 in December 2020 (BBC, 2020).

Another example is the use of deepfakes in political campaigns to win voters. A deepfake of the president of India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Manoj Tiwari, went viral on WhatsApp ahead of legislative assembly elections in Delhi (Christopher, 2020). The BJP has partnered with agency The Ideaz Factory to create deepfakes that would target voters across the over 20 different languages used in India. His original video in which the original video Tiwari speaks in English was modified by deepfake technology, so his mouth moves convincingly as he speaks in Haryanvi, criticizing his political opponents and encouraging voters to vote for the BJP. Haryanvi is the Hindi dialect spoken by the target voters for the BJP. The deepfake reached approximately 15 million people in 5,800 WhatsApp groups.

Posthumous deepfakes are controversial. There is no procedure for obtaining consent from the person who already died. In the media campaign #stillspeakingup the media agency Publicis shows the deepfake resurrection of

murdered Mexican journalist Javier Valdez that was undertaken to uncover the tragic events around the murders of journalists (Creativepool, 2021).

There is even more controversy in the usage of deepfakes in the Unfinished votes campaign (Lightfarm Studios, 2021) in the United States that used AI-generated video of the teenager Joaquin Oliver killed in a school shooting. He calls for participation in elections on the video.

Black Area

This type of deepfake videos is non-consensual. The videos are made for disinformation, disruption, or character assassination. What makes the use of deepfake video for character assassination especially dangerous is the arrival of amateur perpetrators entering the scene. Any person with a basic computer and average technical knowledge can easily create a fake video using available visual materials.

On January 2018, *Vice* published an article called “We Are Truly Fucked: Everyone Is Making AI-Generated Fake Porn Now” (Cole, 2018). According to the 2019 report by Sensity, deepfake pornography accounts for 96% of all the deepfakes. Pornographic imagery created by apps like Y result in some serious consequences for women and girls targeted by such activity (Hao, 2021). Like most pornographic content, it is mainly produced by and for a male audience, although most deepfake videos use the images of women without their approved consent (Öhman, 2020; Popova, 2020).

As the traditional compromising videos, deepfakes and shallowfakes exploit topics of sex (cheating), drug usage, inappropriate behavior, and age-related incompetency.

Deepfake pornography is a new tool of intimidation silencing journalists and civic activists, resulting in their cyberbullying and public shaming. Face swaps represent the most popular genre of pornographic fake videos. Award-winning Indian journalist Rana Ayyub became a target of character assassination campaign after she spoke on the BBC and Al Jazeera about how India was bringing shame on itself by protecting child sex abusers. The campaign started with a series of fake tweets edited to look like they were coming from her verified Twitter, saying ‘I hate India’, ‘I hate Indians’, ‘I love Pakistan.’ Then, personal details were made public and a deepfake pornographic video was released on WhatsApp. The video showed a naked woman whose face was replaced with Ayyub’s headshot. The information campaign targeting Ayub resulted in her lynch mob in India (Ayyub, 2018).

Deepfakes and shallowfakes can also be used in political battles. In the US, a series of fake news and video materials containing quotes taken out of context targeted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Sadiq, 2019). Amid his feud with Pelosi,

President Trump tweeted out a video of the House speaker that was edited to make her appear to stammer during a news conference. This shallow fake was produced with modified video speed and pace. In the edited video, Pelosi's normal pauses and stutters have been edited together to make her appear to stumble over words like "custody" and "border." In one section, the doctored video repeats a moment three extra times when Pelosi says the words "there are three things." The altered video of Nancy Pelosi shared by Trump went viral on Facebook and got two million views. This doctored video evoked some negative ageist stereotypes in the audience by making Pelosi appear drunk or senile.

For example, in April 2020, a deepfake video showing Belgium's prime minister speaking of an urgent need to tackle the economic and climate crises was distributed by Extinction Rebellion Belgium. The video was part of the strategy by the climate action group to keep the pressure high on their national leaders (Galindo, 2020).

Deepfake as Denial, Excuse, or Justification for Action

Deepfake technology has a profound effect on public trust in online media as it undermines faith in the authenticity of video information. Claiming the video to be deepfake is the way to deny recorded facts that had previously been considered irrefutable evidence. In June 2020, Winnie Heartstrong, a Republican candidate running for Congress has claimed that the video of George Floyd's murder was a hoax (Spocchia, 2020).

In October 2021, former Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili released a live video allegedly from the Georgian coastal city of Batumi and said that he was in Georgia ahead of tomorrow's municipal elections. In the video, Saakashvili, who faces a number of criminal charges in Georgia, said he has urged the public not to vote for the Georgian Dream ruling party (GD). Irakli Kobakhidze, the party's chairman, made a statement that Saakashvili was not in Batumi and called him a clown," said. Other officials claimed that video evidence of the ex-president's arrival in Georgia was a deepfake (Lomsadze, 2021). Saakashvili was arrested later in Georgia after illegally crossing border. This case demonstrates that Georgian officials underestimated the abilities of a former president to return into politics due to their bias against online video information.

In some situations, fear of deepfakes and their impact on reputation, make it impossible for the public to distinguish reality from fiction. The inference-observation confusion happens when we fail to distinguish between what we observed firsthand from what we have only assumed (Lahman, 2014). In other words, deepfakes provide a perfect opportunity to justify or deny asserted reality and jump to unwarranted conclusions without having all the facts. This

following case demonstrates how uncertainty, political instability, and lack of trust in the video materials led to justification of asserted reality and provoked violence.

Gabon's president Ali Bongo Ondimba hadn't been seen in public for months after falling ill in October 2018 while visiting Saudi Arabia. Questions about Bongo's health grew as the government provided little information, saying that he was unwell and later that he had a stroke. Some spread conspiracy theories that he was dead. And when a video address from Bongo appeared at the end of December 2018, with a New Year address some thought it was a deepfake. A week later, an military group attempted an unsuccessful coup taking over deploying armored vehicles in Gabon's capital Libreville, national radio, and state television (Cahlan, 2020).

However, the presence of deepfake technology can be used in apologetic discourse to evade responsibility in the aftermath of unfortunate events or as an excuse of one's gullibility to manipulation. In addition, reference to deepfake can be used as an image repair strategy to claim a lack of knowledge or control about manipulation (Benoit, 1995). Importantly, excuses citing causes that are unintentional, uncontrollable, and external are more effective in achieving than excuses that cite intentional, controllable, and internal causes. In April 2021, after European parliamentarians had participated in arranged video calls with a hoaxer pretending to be Leonid Volkov, chief of staff to imprisoned Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny, they claimed to have fallen victim to a sophisticated deepfake technology (Vincent, 2021).

Deepfake Detection Controversy

AI-generated images are difficult to detect. Only 35% of online videos can become a subject of detection because of their quality. Open-source images often include blemishes and distortions such as blurred background, failures in hair structure, different eye color, and even extra body parts. The human eye can detect a deepfake image without a special software. However, not all generated photos have visible flaws as demonstrated in the Peace Data case. Normally, Internet users do not scrutinize account avatar icons to find distinctive flaws. Neither do they use detection software to verify photos. The size of the video is also important. To detect a deepfake, the video should not be too long or too large.

There are a few services that can detect deepfake, suspicious video, or a doctored image. Some detection tools are free of charge, like www.deepware.ai, other, like [sensity](https://sensity.ai) are 140/month. However, none of these services are completely reliable. Tools for detection use different algorithms and approaches (heartbeats, phoneme-viseme mismatches, biological signals, cornea reflections

and others), sometimes even multiple ways of detection. That can be confusing for a user who just wants to know if this video is deepfake or not to be exposed to multiple choices of methods like DeepFake-o-meter. The results can be represented in the form of a diagram or a probability percentage that the video can be a deepfake. However, it is not clear what counts as a deepfake: 50% or 98% of probability?

The website Sensity.ai specializing in identity verification shows reliable results for the images generated by some AI generators (e.g., <https://thispersondoesnotexist.com/>) based on the open-source dataset; however, it failed to recognize images generated by paid service <https://generated.photos/> which uses its own image dataset.

The trustworthiness of detection is also questionable. For example, in March 2021, after the military coup in Myanmar, the video was posted showing the former chief minister of the Yangon region, Phyo Min Thein, making allegations against Aung San Suu Kyi, a Burmese politician and Minister. The Myanmar journalists tested the video by the deepware.ai deepfake scanner which showed + 98% probability that this video was a deepfake. However, the video has poor quality, making the detection results completely unreliable. This especially applies to situations when ways to force people say anything on camera after they had been exposed to coercion (Robinson, 2018).

Another detection approach is the blockchain-like technology of tracking video history and provenance. It is not restricted only to deepfake detection but can also help identify shallowfakes and other visual distortion. Every single change of the video is recorded from the moment it was created, allowing for tracking down the origin and manipulations. In February 2021, Microsoft and Adobe, Arm, BBC, Intel, and Truepic established the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA), aiming to create the infrastructure that will track the provenance and authenticity of the content. However, there are still some unanswered issues of anonymity and financial support of such a project, which requires a reliable infrastructure.

Conclusions and Future Research

AI technologies have created new possibilities for the implementation of disruptive and subversive strategies as part of information and psychological warfare. These advantages include the volume and speed information generation and distribution and the believability and emotional impact on various audiences among other effects (Pashentsev & Bazarkina, 2022). The theoretical framework of strategic deception provides multiple opportunities for academic scholarship in the areas that are relatively new or not yet sufficiently addressed.

New DeepFaceLive software allows actors with malicious intent not only to make deepfakes with photos and audio recordings but to manipulate facial images in real-time. These advancements may have serious consequence for politics and business in the context of coronavirus pandemic in which both political negotiations and business transactions take place online. Moreover, deepfakes can be so intimidating that even mentioning this technology in the course of deceptive activity can impact trust in online communication and cause denial and inference-observation confusion.

The further discussion the psychological, political, and cultural effects strategic deception campaigns using deepfake technology helps build a strong case for regulating the AI industry based on a new legislation system. For example, Armesto-Larson (2020) highlights that non-consensual pornography has an exterritorial character and local laws like The ENOUGH Act in the USA (the Ending Non-consensual Online User Graphic Harassment Act of 2017) do not provide sufficient legal protection.

As mentioned above, there are no reliable ways to detecting deepfakes, shallowfakes, and other types of disinformation. Therefore, there will be more discussion of new approaches to fact-checking and critical thinking methodologies similar to the one outlined by Cook, Ellerton and Kinkead (2018), used to assess the validity of online misinformation. Importantly, “critical thinking depends upon knowledge of a subject and actively pursu[ing] deeper understanding through inquiry and research” (Jacobson et al. 2018, p. 27). In addition, new critical logic frameworks provide media consumers with a set of critical questions, which enable them to evaluate new visual sources and enhance their self-efficacy when facing new misinformation. One important strength of this approach is that it extends beyond the typical skills taught to convey media literacy, such as assessing source credibility.

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THE IMPACT OF HYBRID MEDIA ON VOTING BEHAVIOR: TURKEY IN THE POLARIZED PLURALIST SYSTEM

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Introduction

For many years, thinkers and scholars have manifested debates on access to information. The relevant subject has been associated with democracy, electoral behavior, populism, and political communication. Because distinctive tools and actors emerge as sources of information, citizens need to determine their positions within the complex social world, especially in critical moments, such as elections are touchstone reasons. The production of media shapes perceptions depending on messages given by both traditional and digital media. Media coverage influences viewpoints on particular information through commentary journalism or news reporting.

Similarly, media usage demonstrates the level of exposure and to what extent individuals internalize or eliminate information. With the advance of communication, political actors establish linkage in the use of media, containing newspapers, television, and social media accounts as a method of reaching electorates. Although the media is not a necessary tool to facilitate visibility and emerge popularity, its efficient impact should not be ignored. Accordingly, media remains a “mutual contact” arena between political messages and voters.

Moreover, the media arena facilitates tailoring visibility for political actors in terms of increasing electoral support, but also citizens benefit from the content. This condition is not separate from the structural explanations. Consequently, the article scrutinizes the polarized pluralist media system and its influence on voting choices. The scholars Hallin and Mancini (2004) have differentiated three media models: democratic corporatist system, liberal system, and polarized pluralist system. Turkey is not included in their study; however, the article discusses why the country should belong to this model, examining how the

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hybrid media becomes salient in affecting voting behaviors. The media usage and indicators of a polarized pluralist system, such as a high level of political parallelism and state control, illustrate more partisan voting and enhanced preferences on issue voting. To understand, we elaborate on the survey findings of TurkuazLab (Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey)³, conducted through face-to-face interviews. The survey includes 4006 respondents representing the electoral population in urban and rural areas with 29 provinces. Although the discussion does not exclude historical background, it mainly focuses on the AK Party period.

Firstly, we seek to explain three media systems and how each model differs, relying on variables: professional journalism, newspaper/media industry, political parallelism, and the state's role. Considering these factors, the article indicates that Turkey represents the polarized pluralist model. Secondly, a general overview of the relationship between media and voting behavior is necessary to present its impact. Lastly, we discuss the Turkish case through the features of its media structure and the survey findings.

What Do We Understand with the Media Systems?

In our socialization process, media is one of the agencies that shape our opinions, perceptions, values, and behaviors. This process relies on the mechanism of accessing information. Since media coverage manifests knowledge on particular individuals, events, and issues that construct facts (Garrett et al. 2019), it is the tool that gives meaning to the developments of the agenda and complexities in the social world (Hopmann et al. 2010). Accordingly, politics is not separated from the media; on the contrary, both the traditional and social media are major structures that allow to produce and receive messages. Its functions, such as framing, setting the agenda, and priming (Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Nelson et al. 1997), determine which subjects/issues are more important, the news content, what and how we discuss, and salient issues. Similarly, political actors and organizations instrumentalize the media to contact their voters and send messages to the masses in various contexts. Significantly, the mediatization of politics generates discursive opportunities making political figures and their narratives visible (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). Hence, political actors who desire to make their political parties and messages more visible act with communication professionals in the new era (Kriesi 2014). Though media institutions and journalists are the significant factors in determining newsworthy coverage (Helfer and Van Aelst 2016), structural relevance is inevitable. From this perspective, we need to scrutinize

3 We conducted the survey as a part of our Project, titled "Strategies and Tools for Mitigating Polarization in Turkey". The partnership relies on the cooperation between Istanbul Bilgi University Center for Migration Research and the German Marshall Fund of the United States through financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). In this sense, we included our own data to explain indicators.

different media models which designate and reflect contextual and structural features. Because structural opportunities and limitations of sharing narratives and receiving messages simultaneously.

Hallin and Mancini (2004, 2013) distinguish three media typologies representing eighteen North American and West European countries: the liberal model, the democratic corporatist model, and the polarized pluralist model. The proposal of scholars is not the first attempt at typologies of media. Still, they underlined that media systems are not homogeneous, and different institutions or media segments may differ depending on their formation (Hallin 2016). According to their study, the identification of three models derives from four variables: the newspaper industry/media market, political parallelism, journalistic professionalism, and the role of the state. The presence and degree of features present a landscape for media conditions in the production of content and internalization of the information through distinct practices.

The first dimension is the media market, which refers to the existence of commercial press and the number of circulations. Although some countries have better economic development, higher levels of literacy, and television-newspapers are primary sources of information, the newspaper industry is experiencing a crisis (Brüggemann et al. 2016; Blach-Ørsten et al. 2012). The expansion of digital tools and internet—based functions facilitates to reach easier and faster; this negatively influenced the market's future (Kairmi and Walter 2015; Newman 2019). This can be seen through examples; for instance, in the United States, the transition to digital news was directed to attract digital subscribers in order to mitigate the challenges of the newspaper industry; however, this is not an ordinary outcome with respect to most of the local newspapers (Pickard 2019; Matsa and Worden 2022). The analysis of the Pew Research Center indicates the change between 2019 and 2020 print circulation, which was down by 12% in the United States.⁴ Both internal conditions and external crises, such as a pandemic or economic crisis, strengthen the experiences of the newspaper industry. Even though the low level of the newspaper industry is a common reality among countries, the newspaper industry indicates how different structures experience changes in time.

The second factor comprehends the issues of media autonomy, institutionalization, ethical understanding, and information for the public. This dimension enhances advantages for objective news production and ethical journalism. In other words, professionalism criteria follow basic norms and principles of impartiality and independence, whereas journalists produce information for the public (Hallin and Mancini 2004, p. 34-37). According to Hallin and Mancini, media can be an intervention tool in times of crisis;

4 Please see details: <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/local-newspapers/>, accessed 18 March 2023.

in this case, particular opinions and interpretations become part of messages. Consequently, the understanding of public information and objective journalism paved the way to send specific arguments to the audience/reader (Erdoğan and Erçetin 2019). We also should note that the lack of professional journalism or distrust in professional news coverage may display unfavorable conditions in perceiving the confidence of the source (Humprecht et al., 2020). Hallin (2020) advocates that the change in media systems, especially with pressure on the industry and difficulties separating news and entertainment, influenced journalistic professionalism (p.5780). Furthermore, sensational content and instrumentalization of political actors attacking the media overwhelmingly harm professional journalism; states or political actors who make leverage for their interests can lead to limited professionalism (Cho and Wang 2021). Constraining professionalism is more dominant on social media since popularity or clicking, including information disorders, are new requirements Humprecht et al. 2020).

There is an inevitable role of media which is being a watchdog to serve public information (Hanitzsch 2011), but its nature with politics also involves the third dimension, political parallelism. Political parallelism depends on how and to what extent media contents reflect certain opinions and values in media content. It is directly associated with the visibility of political parties and representatives with their messages and arguments. Political parallelism is divided into two approaches. Firstly, internal pluralism is the absence of any linkage between political parties and movements and the media; this illustrates the presence of different voices and opinions. Internal pluralism emerges more plural structure, including differences. Secondly, external pluralism plays a key role in terms of biased coverage; it includes a direct connection with specific political organizations and their representatives. Thus, the feature of external pluralism provides a tie with political parties echoing them in the media channels and platforms. In the structure of external pluralism, the media reflects a single voice while constructing homogeneity and preventing the audience/readers from encountering differences. The political parallelism dimension allows us to investigate whether there are neutral approaches or advocacy practices. According to Guðmundsson (2021), media content, direct organizational connections, the partisanship of media consumers, and journalistic activities are determining factors between external and internal pluralism (p.55). In systems where external pluralism is dominant, both governments and opposition have a direct impact on news organizations (Jungherr et al. 2019).

The last dimension is the role of the state, which points to state intervention and enables incumbents more opportunities. If the government is able to control the media through media regulations, pressure, media ownership,

ensorship, legal punishments, financial limitations, and priorities, the ruling party and its alliances benefit from visibility. In this case, there are examples from different regions. Hugo Chavez used his “Alo Presidente” television show every Sunday, which took six hours (Carroll 2013). During the show, Chavez was listening grievances and discontent of citizens while looking for simple solutions. In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra was receiving questions about his personal life with the television program called “Backstage Show: The Prime Minister”, moreover, the PM instrumentalized the weekly radio program to meet with the people (Moffitt 2015, 2016). The usage of media sources creates opportunities for political actors to transfer their messages and exhibit performances. This is more suitable for political leaders who use a discursive performance through “the leader of the people” image in establishing close ties. In this sense, controlling the media institutions make some voices more privileged and visible. As we see the dimension, state intervention provides fruitful ground for political actors and organizations with access to media institutions. On the one hand, media incentives, the limitation of media, the prohibition of publication or broadcasting, censorship, pressure and arrestment towards journalists that inherently compose the structure and news production. Brüggeman et al. (2014) confirm the last dimension integrating media subsidies and ownership to describe the “inclusiveness of the media industry”. All these factors demonstrate to us how messages and political performances appear through different media structures.

Digital media also dominate the media structure; therefore, the perspective of hybrid media should be understood. Hybrid media is an interdependent interaction between traditional and new media (Chadwick et al. 2016; Suiter et al. 2018). New media has originated an alternative sphere to get information and news; especially younger generation follows news through digital platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook (Newman et al. 2016). Social media is attractive to politicians irrespectively of political organizations and parties (Blach-Ørsten et al. 2017). A hybrid system tailors the conditions for political actors who seek to conserve their discourse and struggle against media institutions that play a “gatekeeper” role (Bos et al. 2010; Rooduijn 2014). Social media emerges as a new area in which models eliminate the voice of leaders; thus, polarizing language and scandalous statements are more visible. Since social media channels do not have limitations over time and place (Hameleers 2018), citizens receive messages permanently. From this perspective, social media forms commonality among different media structures. Digital media platforms lead to “bottom-up” mobilization and make politicians visible in the eyes of the masses if those actors prefer a more personalized style and active usage (Gerbaudo 2018). According to the results of the four variables mentioned above, actors

who cannot take enough visibility in the traditional media can reach the masses through digital media channels and maintain their “performance/style”.

The Role of Media in Voting Behavior: A Change in the Media Systems?

On February 6, 2023, an earthquake of 7.8 hit the Southern region of Turkey, affecting ten cities, Adana, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye, and Şanlıurfa.⁵ Television channels focused on the numbers, search and rescue coordination, and debates regarding the devastating circumstances. This is also a context approaching the elections of 2023; one of the representatives of the opposition’s alliance among six political parties announced that she left the coalition. In contrast, Turkish citizens were receiving news or using the media to have a voice in the earthquake region. But the media content is interrupted by the coverage of the “Table of Six”, while people in the area are trying to access to basic needs such as shelter and food.

As a result, we can see how the media is a powerful tool to make a subject salient or downplay the issue. It illustrates new constructions through particular symbols within narratives and appeals. Television constitutes visual content prioritizing personality and actor-based performances (Pinkleton et al. 1998; Garzia et al. 2020, p.240) that enables to influence voters’ choices regarding political information (Prior 2006). In a similar sense, interpretative journalism in newspapers tailors an interaction between context and information, inspired by circumstances that in turn shape the emotions and perceptions of the reader (Erçetin and Erdoğan 2021). The visibility of political leaders and their narratives induce popularity in electoral choices (Karvonen 2010). We live in an age where politics and media cement each other that acts to direct the public instead of informing. The revelations about the misuse of Facebook’s 87 million users’ personal data by a company called Cambridge Analytica is still a subject of discussion. There are debates emphasizing that Cambridge Analytica was influential in the electoral success of US President Donald Trump (Ward 2018). Strömback and Aalberg (2008) explain this with conditions of news production: “*News media tend to favor some stories and frames over others. Furthermore, they might favor one party and disfavor another. This might be due to structural biases*” (p.95).

Media coverage appeals to the needs and demands of citizens, providing awareness about political candidates (Weaver and Drew 1993) as a result of transferring politicians’ relevant offers, statements, and actions (Ladd 2010). This is the intense field that enlightens ordinary citizens about the articulation of frames or issues which bypass less popular subjects. As an information source,

5 Please see details: <https://www.supporttolife.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/230221-stl-sitrep6.pdf>, accessed 20 March 2023.

media engages with expert opinions, commentary narratives, news agendas, and advertisements that connect citizens and the social world. Not differently, electorates make assessments through given information from media coverage (Zaller 1992). In this way, both voters and candidates overwhelmingly need news coverage. Electorates learn about political positions, characteristics and political offers of candidates and political candidates gain access to a potential audience to convince them (Eberl et al. 2017). As citizens have increasing level or number of uncertainty, they are more likely to get information from the media (Strömback and Kaid 2009); in turn, the visibility of positions or messages are determining. More visibility of actors consolidates electoral support (Oegema and Kleinnijenhuis 2000). Similarly, we can state that news coverage originates sources and causes to make evaluations in perceptions. At the same time, the negative portrayal of an event or actor instigates voters' discontent, which results in decreasing level of trust in politics and unwillingness to be part of it (Esser and Matthes 2013); positive portrayal crystalizes inherent viewpoints and predispositions.

According to Gunther (1998), individuals believe that news coverage has the potential to influence others' opinions and behaviors. In this sense, media content is a prominent instrument in shaping approaches and influencing voting choices (Chia and Chang 2015). Voters are likely to get information from the media and have more access or adaptation to specific issues that become more salient in electoral periods (Iyengar and Simon 2000). Especially individuals who have a tendency to consume news more are closer to changing their position during a presidential electoral period (Bartel 1993). De Vreese and Boomgard (2006) advocate that exposure to politics-based news coverage affects political knowledge and voting choices compared to the news with less political content. Finkel (1993) states that information about candidates strengthens preferences during electoral campaigns, but new information also depicts undecided voters and uncertainties (Arceneaux 2005). Undecided voters and less-informed voters are more critical regarding news coverage; because they tend to receive and adopt new information (Geers et al. 2017). Accordingly, the relationship between persuasion in voting and media content with a political information is inevitable. While the impact of news media on political preferences becomes apparent, the usage of media is central to examine electoral behaviors.

A polarized pluralist media system involves higher political parallelism and bypasses journalistic principles; thus, more scandalous and polarizing statements reach voters and strengthen their political affiliations. The linkage between more partisan voting choices and political parallelism can be traced to echo chambers (Iyengar and Hahn 2009). Individuals prefer to read news and interpretations or follow social media users, confirming their predispositions

and ideologies, known as selective exposure (Bennett and Iyengar 2008). This preference constructs echo chambers that allow individuals to hear only similar voices with them, suppressing the opportunity to encounter differences (Sunstein 2001, 2007; Stroud 2008). In other words, readers or audiences avoid news with a dissonant opinion (Ksiazek et al. 2019). As a result of distance from “other” viewpoints, individuals are oriented to be closer to asunder camps in the political spectrum (Levendusky 2013). Following television channels or newspapers, which reflect individuals’ political opinions, contributes to adopting polarized preferences. Citizens exposed to biased media might be politically active, influencing others; therefore, the impact of polarized voting can be more common (Levendusky and Malhatro 2013). The lack of contact with differences designates the most confident and single political and moral reality/truth that engenders to denigrate people with “others” opinions (Iyengar and Hahn 2009). Following similarities rather than differences reinforce voters’ existing perceptions, judgments, and belief systems because the media tools which establish boundaries legitimize those opinions and deepen information. In a similar sense, voters who are not likely to open to alternative sources of information maintaining biased coverage, the content fosters their voting preferences and these voters become less likely to change candidates/organizations in elections (Çarkoğlu and Yıldırım 2023).

Biased visibility of media creates a division between “us” and “them” or “friends” and “foes” increasing the trust towards political parties and actors, which people feel closers whereas decreasing the level of confidence against rivalries. Because the information source mirrors which are dangerous and trustworthy. We can argue that polarized pluralist media systems or biased media make individuals closer to their voting choices and originate a more polarized environment in elections, while camps canalize the distance with given information (Prior 2007). Especially in certain situations, like more visibility of party leaders or personalized coverage supporting them, it increases vote determinant (Takens et al. 2015). The construction of “evil” and good” image in partisan media consolidates the support for the leader due to positive portrayal. On the other hand, “other” political actors are identified with a negative image and demonized, connecting with negative issues and scapegoating that ensures distance. The presence of inter-group differentiation becomes more salient in polarized pluralist media, where members of “other” blocks and their being induce the perception of a threat, and “our” members enhance the feeling of “home” (Bauman 2001).

Since the democratic corporatist model adjusts objective and ethical journalism, the mass media eliminates racist or offensive discourse that emerges more limitations for radical political parties and their messages for

discursive visibility. This professionalism seeks to alleviate the news content in the case of concerns of a particular crowd (Herkman 2015) that may prevent the visibility of radicalism and orient electorates to their own positions. Strömback and Lueango (2008, in Cho and Wang 2021) compare Spain and Sweden, defining the former as a polarized pluralist model and Sweden as a democratic corporatist model. Scholars find that Sweden has more attachment to journalistic professionalization and restricted state intervention; consequently, Swedish election news coverage, simply a democratic corporatist model, is less dependent on political actors giving visibility to all. As a result of professionalization, media structures have aimed to protect their autonomy towards the impact of commercialization; however, the dissemination of information is replaced by information and entertainment (Esser 2013, p.171). Thus, political candidates and parties that instrumentalize dramatic, storytelling, and aggressive narrative can take attention from the media accessing the audience. According to van der Pas et al. (2011), Geert Wilders in the Netherlands had no media broadcasting due to anti-migrant and Islamophobia. Meeus (2017) indicates a change regarding to the Dutch media and its portrayal of Wilders during the 2017 elections. Controversial statements and their quotations by Wilders have been increased because of clicking numbers and ratings.⁶ Thus, in democratic corporatist models, radical and populist candidates have opportunities in terms of media visibility that attract voters with radical viewpoints or undecided.

The liberal media system relieves issue-based and objective coverage that enables covering discourses of political organizations and figures with the relevant subject (Hallin and Mancini 2004); in this sense, it is more possible to encounter voices and viewpoints of differences in the issue-based ground. We can give two recent examples. Although the United Kingdom embodies professionalism, prioritizing issue-based coverage included anti-migrant narratives in the tabloid newspapers, Daily Mail, and Sun during the Brexit campaign; the coverages have framed xenophobic discourse addressing “taking Britain back” (Freedman 2018). Additionally, former US President Donald Trump and his electoral speeches, which resonated with the perceived threat and produced fear over migrants, were prominent in newspapers since the media aimed to inform the public about the issue of migration (Boag 2018; Béland 2020). However, the liberal model offers both supportive and critical content; it means voters can internalize the candidate whose position is closer to the issue. Accordingly, news in the liberal media system is more influential for issue-based elections or referendums. In this system, voters have opportunities to choose political parties if they are convinced that candidates express and make the issue visible more. For this, electorates must have alternatives regarding

6 Please see details: <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-geert-wilders-effect-dutch-politics-mark-rutte-elections/>, accessed 25 March 2023.

news coverage; in this sense, they can evaluate political actors' positions and messages with priorities (Dalager 1996). The spatial theory reminds us that political candidates determine their positions on issues appealing to the median voter (Downs 1957). Theoretically, it is expected with issue ownership; individuals vote for a candidate or organization when they assess them as the most salient and credible actors to own and deal with the issue (Geers and Bos 2017, p.346). Hence, both the characteristics of professionalism and priorities in the liberal media systems embitter the salience of issues that makes issue-based choices prominent. Depending on the reflections, voters tend to prefer candidates whose position is in harmony.

Considering three media systems, candidates in power have more advantages to receiving electoral support with the features of external pluralism of political parallelism and state control. An undue amount of visibility shapes the voter's perceptions, whereas citizens demand to get an idea about candidates (Eberl et al. 2017); biased content may display salient judgments. Polarized pluralist media systems construct more polarized and homogeneous voting choices among different blocks leading to partisanship and echo chambers. Strategic and horse-racing coverages limit options in order to analyze and follow existing political alternatives. Media systems dominated by professionalism manifest choices that cause issue-based voting rather than strategic political interests. Voters are less dependent on political campaigns in the existence of professionalism and objective journalism because of less level of partisanship and interpretative journalism. At this point, independent media structures assign the agenda concerning issues.

Digital media platforms and social media users contribute to individual-based opinions and preferences in two ways. Interaction with like-minded and following users who share similarities increases polarization and surface partisan voting in echo chambers (Sunstein 2007). Social media usage is not separable from the context, especially in the polarized environment; therefore, individuals' new media preferences are affected (Tucker et al. 2018; Nordbrandt 2021; Arora et al.2022). The second way relies on the understanding of mitigating polarization in preferences because, in social media, individuals are able to encounter differences rather than solely echo chambers (Barbera 2014). One message, like, or retweet can reach others by spreading opinions or information. Yarchi et al. (2021) emphasize that homogeneous interactions may occur initially, but those interactions gradually decrease polarization toward the out-group. Mattoni and Ceccobelli (2018) used the concept of "grassroots participation," where citizens actively transfer their demands, politicize media and communication and produce news coverage. Scholars advocate that citizens have recording and be a witness instead of becoming part of the media industry

that create the news production. Using the news media, citizens improve the content of information receiving and sharing by the representation of political spectrums. Yamamoto and Morey (2019) focus on incidental news exposure, a type of getting information. For instance, individuals may search a piece of information without a specific interest that brings exposure to information, or people may have a purpose in searching for a particular topic and they can be exposed to another issue (p.2-3). with the rise of the importance of social media, the authors underline that incidental news exposure is becoming more common through our friend lists' posts that make information visible in the timeline. From this perspective, the amount of information appeals to voters on social media. Especially the issue of information disorders expands more easily (Vosoughi et al. 2018); this is more important for electorates when the issue appeals to their emotions and viewpoints, making it possible to adapt the information without confirming it.

Turkey in Polarized Pluralist System and the Impact of Voting Choices

In other studies that we scrutinize media systems (Erdoğan and Erçetin; Erdoğan Erçetin 2023), we argue that Turkey is not included in Hallin and Mancini's typologies; however, the features are consistent with the polarized pluralist model. Thus, we seek to demonstrate how Turkey fits the model and relates to voting behaviors. Turkey involves political parallelism; in other words, media groups have always been affiliated with political parties. The Turkish media is overwhelmingly divided mainly between secular and conservative groups (Çarkoğlu and Andı 2021, p.574). If we look at the last period of the AKP rule, polarization representing voices and issues of particular political positions within newspapers illustrate external pluralism. Newspapers internalize strategies to act or narrate in favor of their political alliances. For instance, Panayırıcı et al. (2016) explain that Turkey's 17 December corruption probe has been framed in various ways. According to their study, the pro-government and more conservative newspaper did not articulate a corruption frame; on the other hand, the secular opposition newspaper *Sözcü* used the corruption frame more significantly. According to Erçetin and Erdoğan (2021), pro-government newspapers, *Sabah*, *Star*, and *Akşam* have framed the "we-ness" through the identification with the "yes block" that supports the government's offers in the constitutional referendum of 2017. In contrast to the "we-ness", the "no block" was articulated with "others", such as the opposition groups, mirroring the government's narratives through the constructed division between "the yes block" of "stability, power, safe, and democratic future" and "the no block" of "terrorism, separatism, and insecurity". After the referendum, the "yes block" won the majority, and these newspapers used certain headlines reflecting the camp: "the revolution of the people" (*Sabah*), "the victory of the

people” (Star), “the people seized power” (Akşam). Similarly, Yıldırım et al. (2021) investigated newspapers such as Cumhuriyet, Akşam, Hürriyet, Milliyet, Habertürk, Posta, Sabah, Sözcü, Star, Takvim, Türkiye, Vakit, Vatan, Yeni Şafak and Zaman in electoral campaigns, occurred between 2002 and 2015. According to the study, newspapers representing the conservative segment display a more critical approach toward the opposition and are more likely to confirm the government. Although the camp that newspapers represent varies in different years, in the elections of 2015, Star, Sabah, Akşam, Takvim, Türkiye, Vakit and Yeni Şafak papers are labeled in this categorization. Following these studies, it is evident that different ideological divisions have mirrors among newspapers; Cumhuriyet newspaper represents a more secular and social democrat segment; Sözcü newspaper is symbolic among more nationalist groups; Yeni Akit newspaper is more dominant for the Islamist population; and Sabah or Star newspapers represent the right-wing electorates. Media camps, with their alliances, send messages to the electorates, reinforcing political preferences if voters are less likely to follow different sources.

According to Hallin and Mancini, polarized pluralist media systems involve more dominant state control. In the last ten years of Turkey, business people with closer ties with the government have bought media outlets with the contribution of public banks. Media organizations in the opposition or independents exist despite their low number, experiencing financial difficulties and challenges due to judicial regulations. One of the economic challenges derives from priorities in advertisements; pro-government newspapers can receive more budget, whereas the opposition is not able to benefit from the share of advertisements in order to originate an income (Tunç 2015). In 2020, Turkuvaz Media, known with ties with the government, is the largest group, having benefited from ads by public banks; on the other hand, FOX TV, Halk TV, KRT, and Tele-1 television channel could not receive the advertisement.⁷ State intervention in the Turkish context also comprehends the closure of media outlets and the arrestment of journalists. According to Media Ownership Monitor, the appointment of the general directorate office in the largest news agency, Anadolu Agency (AA); imprisonments of opposition journalists about membership in terror organizations or supporting terrorism; and the closure of news agencies by decree laws generate a high level of pressure on journalists. After the coup attempt occurred in 2016, 5 news agencies, 16 television channels, and 22 radio stations ended broadcasting (Yeşil 2018; p.250-251). The Press Advertisement Institution, which distributes official advertisements in newspapers, imposed penalties on those who were not close to the government for various reasons. While the Radio and Television Supreme Council imposed high fines on television channels, programs, and broadcasting were also suspended. The

7 For details: Media Ownership Monitor, <https://turkey.mom-rsf.org/tr/medya/tv/>. Accessed on 7 October 2022.

polarized pluralist media structure contributes to more partisan voting making the ruling party more visible and prioritized.

Since visibility impacts party choices in relation to information exposure (Hopman et al. 2010, p.390), the dimension state control should be linked with it. Especially undecided voters are more dependent on news content (Chaffee and Rimal 1996); thus, controlling the media in Turkey is a determining factor directing individuals to incumbents more if the portrayal is supportive and positive. During the referendum campaign (between 1 and 20 March 2017), the government had 301,5 hours, whereas the main opposition party became visible for 45,5 hours, as the Radio and Television Supreme Council data indicates.⁸ In this sense, non-proportional usage of national television channels makes the candidate of incumbents more advantageous in sending messages and policy proposals. Moreover, both the ruling party's supporters and undecided voters can be exposed to available content with respect to concerns and questions. For the latest development, we can include a detail. During the recent earthquake, the Department for Communication framed the ongoing situation with a definition: "the disaster of the century" that enables articulating unfavorable existential conditions along with a "disaster" instead of investigating the government's capacity to provide needs. Headlines of pro-government newspapers transferred a similar manifestation: "the Disaster of the Century" (Sabah newspaper), "the Disaster of the Century" (Akşam newspaper), and "Like the End of the World" (Milliyet Newspaper). However, more left-wing newspapers used headlines such as "We Were Drowned in Pain" (Evrensel newspaper) or "We Are in Dent" (Birgün newspaper). Statements that can be visible explain causes, conditions, and actions through news coverage that strongly influence positions. Partisan voters often engage with specific information sources selecting intentionally that reinforce existing beliefs instead of receiving new information about developments.

For the relationship between visibility and state control, Turkey's another instrument draws a line with media ownership. With the growing level of commercialization, the business sector has given attention to the media since 1980s (Bulut and Karlıdağ 2016). On the one hand, Turkey's political and media climate has originated a more biased approach via ownership; this became more salient in the AK Party government. In 2008, the Çalık Holding bought Turkuvaz Group, including Sabah newspaper and ATV, through credits from public banks. The group remained within the body of Çalık until 2013; then, it was sold to Kalyon construction, known as the construction sector.⁹ To support the idea of an organizational bond, we should note that the son-in-law's

8 For details: https://bianet.org/system/uploads/1/files/attachments/000/001/902/original/DIB_REF.DEG._RAPORU_-GIRIS_DAH%C4%B0L-_redakte_edilmi%C5%9F-SON.pdf?1493387302. Accessed on 28 March 2023.

9 <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/sabah-ve-atv-kalyona-satildi-25407253> accessed on 15 March 2019.

brother of president Erdoğan runs the company. In addition to the controlling media, the former owner of the Star Media Group, Ethem Sancak, should be noted; Sancak was part of the party's major decision and executive board before selling the Star Newspaper.¹⁰ Then, he sold Es Medya, which contains Star, Akşam, Güneş newspapers and 24 TV and 360 channels to Hasan Yeşildağ, who is the friend of the president from the prison (Erdoğan and Erçetin 2019). The ownership provides more visibility for the government making electorate support more possible through the new public arena, the media.

Data and Findings

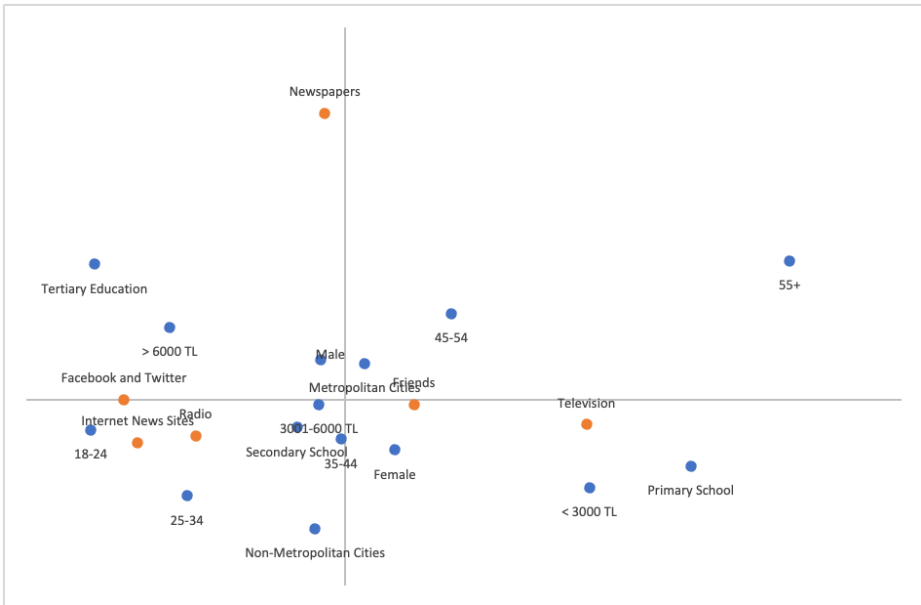
Our analyses presented below are based on a survey conducted in November-December 2020 under the pandemic conditions. The survey was a part of a larger project which targets developing Strategies and Tools for Mitigating Polarization in Turkey, aka TurkuazLab -more detailed information is available at www.turkuazlab.org-. Survey dataset composed of 4006 participants, with a sample representing the adult population in Turkey. The detailed findings of the project and technical details are available on the project website.¹¹

Media Usage

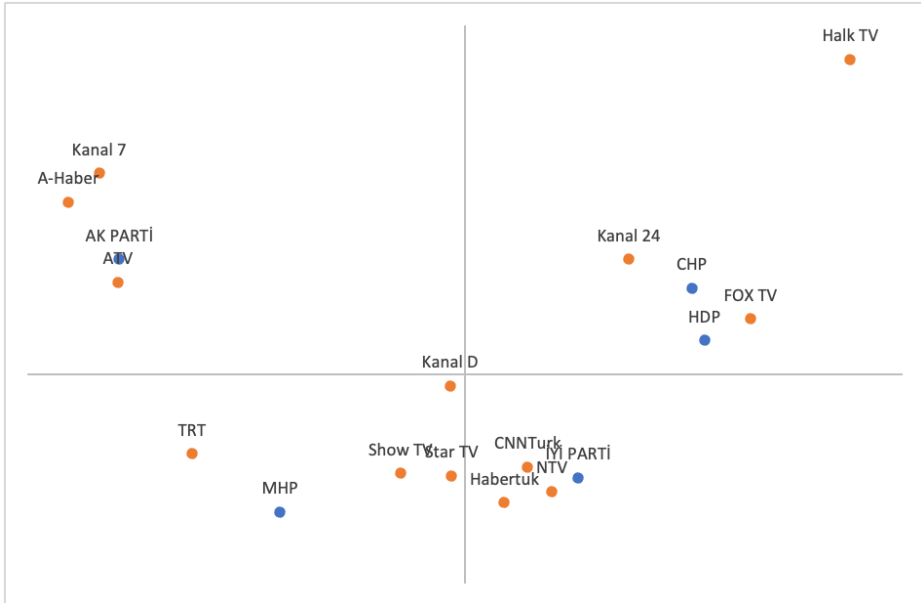
Our findings show that television is still the most preferred information channel to receive political news, with a percentage of 70%. Friends are following television as an information channel showing the importance of direct and close relationships in forming political opinions (58%). Internet news sites come third with a slight difference (58%), and they are followed by social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter with a percentage of 38%. Relatively low percentages of newspapers (18%) and radio (11%) indicate the declining popularity of conventional media channels.

10 <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/ak-parti-mkykda-dikkat-ceken-isimler> accessed on 15 March 2019.

11 Please see: <https://www.turkuazlab.org/en/home/>.

Figure 1. Demographics and Media Preferences (Correspondence Map)

The above presented correspondence map shows the relationship between demographic variables and the most preferred information channels. As illustrated above, the conventional-unconventional divide is represented by demographic and socioeconomic differences. The new media, Facebook and Twitter, and Internet News Sites are preferred by the relatively younger generations, more educated and wealthier citizens. Meanwhile, television seems to be the information channel for the elderly, the poorer and less educated segments of society. The same map shows that friends are located toward the center of the map, indicating their importance for almost every demographic and socioeconomic segment. A surprising finding is the relatively closer position of radio to the younger, wealthier, and more educated participants; it may be an indicator of the increased importance of radio among the new generations.

Figure 2. Partisan Identities and the Most Preferred TV Channel (Correspondence Map)

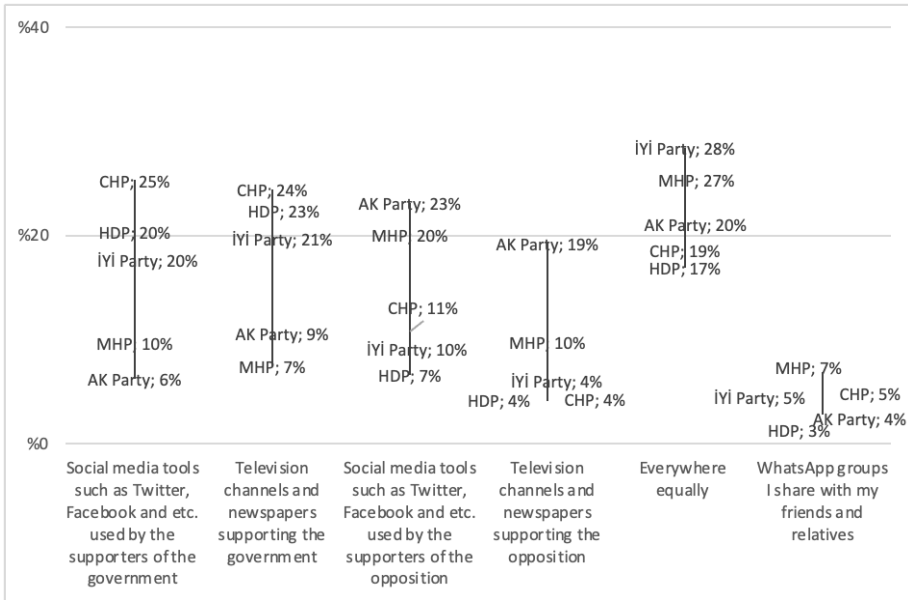
Polarization of the media system is observable in the above correspondence map presenting television channel preferences of different party constituencies. This map shows that the AK Party supporters' most preferred television channels are ATV, A-Haber, and Kanal 7, three highly politicized television channels. TRT, the state television channel, is attractive to MHP supporters. Meanwhile, the flagship television channels of the opposition, FOX TV and Halk TV are popular among the supporters of the CHP and the HDP. The same map shows that the mainstream television channels are located at the center, such as Show TV, Star TV, and Kanal D. In contrast, relatively more popular news channels, such as Haberturk, CNNTurk, and NTV are located towards to the opposition side.

Figure 3. Partisan Identities and Perceptions about the Impartiality of Information Sources (Correspondence Map)



Polarization of the media system is echoed by not only the news source preferences of partisans but also their perceptions about the media of the “other” camp. Above presented correspondence map shows the polarization in the perceptions of the impartiality of news sources. According to this map, the supporters of the AK Party see A-Haber, Sabah, and TRT1 as the most impartial news outlets, whereas for the CHP voters Sözcü and Cumhuriyet, two major outlets presenting unbiased news. For the constituency of HDP, FOX TV and Halk TV are perceived as impartial outlets. The lack of agreement on the impartiality of news outlets may be considered how societal polarization became widespread.

Figure 4. Exposure to the Fake News and Party Preferences



In our survey, we asked participants, “do you come across with fake news?” and 60% responded positively. As a follow-up question, we asked them in which news outlet they most frequently faced with that kind of news. As the results above show, each party base thinks the “other” camp spreads fake news. According to the CHP supporters, the primary source of the fake news is the social media used by the supporters of the government and television channels and newspapers supporting the government. The HDP and İYİ Party bases also agree with these opinions. On the other hand, the supporters of the AK Party and the MHP state that the supporters of the opposition are spreading fake news through social media, and the conventional media supporting the opposition also contributes to the contamination. A surprising finding presented above is the overall skeptic position of two nationalist parties’ supporters, the MHP and the İYİ Party towards each camp.

Table 1. Determinants of Media Usage, Media Preference, and Beliefs about the Impartiality of News Outlets (OLS Results, b CoefficientS)

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
		Conventional Media Usage	Unconventional Media Usage	Pro-government Media Usage	Pro-opposition Media Usage	Impartiality Pro Government	Impartiality Pro Opposition
		b/t	b/t	b/t	b/t	b/t	b/t
Gender	Male	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
	Female	-0.189*** (-5.14)	-0.227*** (-6.75)	0.074* (2.15)	0.039 (1.13)	-0.093* (-2.11)	-0.011 (-0.27)
Age	18-24	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
	25-34	0.071 (1.04)	-0.051 (-0.92)	-0.063 (-1.00)	-0.041 (-0.68)	0.021 (0.30)	-0.046 (-0.68)
	35-44	0.178** (2.60)	-0.189*** (-3.33)	-0.195** (-3.03)	-0.049 (-0.81)	0.042 (0.58)	0.019 (0.27)
	45-54	0.310*** (4.48)	-0.249*** (-4.16)	-0.289*** (-4.49)	-0.003 (-0.05)	0.054 (0.71)	0.136 (1.84)
	55+	0.381*** (5.47)	-0.757*** (-11.83)	-0.143* (-2.16)	0.040 (0.60)	-0.119 (-1.46)	0.011 (0.14)
Education	Primary School	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
	Secondary School	0.054 (1.34)	0.383*** (8.55)	-0.119** (-3.09)	0.096* (2.30)	0.088 (1.63)	-0.068 (-1.29)
	Tertiary Education	-0.006 (-0.10)	0.576*** (10.65)	-0.248*** (-4.31)	0.171** (3.03)	0.072 (1.05)	0.098 (1.59)
	Metropolitan	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Settlement	Non-metropolitan	-0.099 (-1.84)	0.083 (1.85)	0.181*** (3.70)	-0.057 (-1.14)	0.136* (2.43)	0.101 (1.68)
	Urban	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Kurdish Speaking	Rural	0.167* (1.98)	-0.050 (-0.72)	0.013 (0.18)	0.002 (0.03)	-0.454*** (-4.35)	-0.555*** (-5.23)
	Yes	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
Party Preference	No	0.139* (1.98)	0.160** (2.14)	0.036 (0.59)	-0.064 (-1.00)	0.104 (1.63)	0.182* (2.48)
	AK Party	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)	0.000 (.)
	CHP	-0.094* (-2.14)	0.255*** (6.59)	-0.958*** (-22.50)	0.957*** (22.24)	-0.634*** (-10.47)	0.386*** (6.85)
	HDP	-0.336*** (-4.57)	0.062 (0.81)	-0.578*** (-7.16)	0.991*** (13.49)	-0.484*** (-4.85)	0.656*** (6.95)
	MHP	-0.218*** (-3.75)	0.054 (1.05)	-0.100* (-2.23)	0.138** (2.65)	-0.060 (-1.10)	0.107 (1.58)
	İYİ Party	-0.141 (-1.82)	0.197** (2.89)	-0.430*** (-5.69)	0.701*** (9.29)	-0.390*** (-4.07)	0.315*** (4.03)
	Other	0.049 (0.34)	0.014 (0.11)	-0.487*** (-4.27)	0.602*** (6.24)	-0.180 (-1.21)	0.457*** (4.27)
	Constant	-0.092 (-1.05)	-0.164* (-2.10)	0.561*** (7.01)	-0.424*** (-5.09)	0.162 (1.59)	-0.384*** (-3.72)
Observations		3342	3342	3342	3342	2104	2104
Adjusted R ²		0.047	0.193	0.284	0.282	0.197	0.220

Standard errors in parentheses* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The above figure presents the results of a series of regression analyses where demographic, socioeconomic, and political variables are used as independent variables. We also included the media usage patterns of participants as

explanatory variables. Operationalization and descriptives of variables in the models are presented below.

The first column presents the regression analysis results in which conventional media usage is used as the dependent variable. Not surprisingly, there is a gender gap in participants' conventional media usage frequency. Female participants' frequency is lower than their male counterparts. The same column also indicates the presence of a generation gap; older cohorts' frequencies of conventional media usage are higher than younger cohorts. Education and living in metropolitan or non-metropolitan areas don't have significant effects, whereas participants living in rural areas frequently use conventional media outlets compared to urban citizens. Moreover, the table shows that Kurdish-speaking participants use conventional media less frequently. This enables an important debate, as we discussed in the theoretical framework, voters have more tendency in accessing information about issues from media. Language influences the preference and opportunities to get information and the media content shapes voting behavior. In this sense, the usage of conventional media by Kurdish-speaking participants demonstrates polarized limitations and how the unconventional media becomes prominent. Thus, sociodemographic factors play a key role for the usage of media and the existence of non-diversity and divisiveness in conventional media lead to unconventional media strengthening individuals' viewpoints due to chambers.

When we focus on the relationship between the political party preference of participants and their frequency of using conventional media, we observe that the supporters of the CHP, HDP, and MHP have lower frequencies of usage, even after controlling for other demographic and socioeconomic variables. These findings also indicate a partisan gap in the usage frequency of conventional media outlets. In the second column, we present the regression analysis results in which unconventional media usage is the dependent variable. Similar to the conventional media usage frequency, there is a gender gap. Female participants' frequency of using unconventional media outlets is relatively lower. The generation gap exists in the opposite direction, and younger cohorts use unconventional media outlets more frequently than older ones. Moreover, as the level of education increases, participants' frequency also increases. The place of residents doesn't significantly affect this variable, and Kurdish-speaking participants' frequency is relatively lower than other participants.

According to this table, the CHP and İYİ Party supporters have higher frequencies of using unconventional media outlets than the AK Party supporters. These findings indicate significant gender and generational gaps and the importance of education and language as its determinants. Furthermore, the table presents a partisan gap between the government and opposition

supporters. The third column shows the results of a new model in which the frequency of pro-government media usage of participants. Female participants prefer these media outlets more frequently, whereas as age increases, this frequency decreases. The relationship between the level of education and pro-government media usage is also negative. More educated participants don't prefer to use these outlets. The frequency of usage of pro-government media outlets is higher in non-metropolitan areas.

The effect of partisan preference is not surprising. The AK Party supporters have significantly higher frequencies to use the pro-government media outlets, even compared to the MHP supporters showing the differences within the People's Alliance. Other parties' supporters don't prefer to use these outlets. An interesting finding is a negative relationship between conventional and pro-government media usage. One could expect a positive relationship; however, the table shows the opposite sign, as participants' frequency of using conventional media outlets and their frequency of using pro-government media decline.

When we used the pro-opposition media usage of the participants as the dependent variable, we observed a different picture. Gender and generation gaps disappear in this model, whereas more educated participants prefer pro-opposition media outlets, even after controlling for other variables. As additional variables in the model don't have significant effects, the partisanship variable has the expected outcome. The supporters of all opposition parties and the MHP have higher frequencies of using the pro-opposition media than the AK Party supporters. This finding indicates both hyper-politicization of media preferences and the diversity within the People's Alliance.

Similar to the previous model, conventional media usage has a negative effect on pro-opposition media usage frequencies. This situation shows that participants more frequently using conventional media tend to get information from relatively unbiased news outlets. On the other hand, the effect of unconventional media usage frequency is positive and significant.

The fifth column presents the determinants of impartiality perceptions of pro-government media outlets. Female participants have lower scores on this dimension, but the only demographic and socioeconomic variable having a significant effect is the place of residence. Participants living in rural areas have lower levels of impartiality perceptions. However, the politicization of the issue is observable, the AK Party supporters have higher perceptions of the impartiality of pro-government media outlets, and other parties' constituencies have the opposite views.

As conventional media usage increases, beliefs about the impartiality of pro-government media outlets decreases. Meanwhile, as expected, the relationship

between pro-government media usage and belief about the impartiality of pro-government media outlets is positive. Similarly, the frequency of pro-opposition media usage has a negative effect on these perceptions. The final column presents a similar picture in which perceptions about the impartiality of pro-opposition media outlets are employed as the dependent variable. Demographic and socioeconomic variables don't significantly affect this variable, except for those living in rural areas. This situation indicates how other variables about media usage suppress the effects of these variables. The partisan gap is observable. The CHP, the HDP, and the İYİ Party supporters have higher scores on this dimension than the AK Party supporters. The MHP supporters also don't have significantly higher scores.

Conventional media usage has a negative effect, whereas unconventional media usage has no significant effect. On the other hand, pro-opposition media usage has a positive impact on the beliefs on the impartiality of pro-opposition media outlets.

Table 2. Results of Mediation Analyses

	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect Through Pro-Government Media Preference	Indirect Effect Through Pro-Opposition Media Preference
Impartiality Pro Government				
AK Party - Base				
CHP	-0.85	-0.62	-0.17	-0.06
HDP	-0.71	-0.53	-0.11	-0.06
MHP				0.00
İYİ Party	-0.46	-0.33	-0.08	-0.05
Other	-0.23	-0.11	-0.07	-0.05
Impartiality Pro Opposition				
AK Party- Base				
CHP	0.75	0.41	0.06	0.28
HDP	0.83	0.53	0.04	0.27
MHP	0.16	0.11	0.00	0.04
İYİ Party	0.58	0.34	0.03	0.21
Other	0.76	0.53	0.02	0.20

- Gender, age, education, place of residence, Kurdish-speaking, conventional and unconventional media usage are control variables.

Above table presents the results of mediation analyses in which perceptions about the impartiality of pro-government and pro-opposition media outlets, in which gender, age, education, place of residence, Kurdish-speaking,

conventional and unconventional media usage are used as covariates. The objective of the mediation analysis is to determine whether the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable is mediated by the mediator variable, which can help to explain the underlying mechanisms of the relationship.

The table shows that the partisan divide substantially affects the perceptions of impartiality. Most of the negative effects of partisanship on the impartiality perception of pro-government media outlets come from the direct effect for almost every party base. However, the media preferences of participants also have a significant impact, for example, -0.23 of the total effect (-0.85) of the CHP partisanship comes through the media preferences of them. The picture is almost the same for other party bases and the perceptions of the impartiality of pro-opposition media. These results can be simply interpreted as the media preferences of individuals are affected by their media preferences and their media preferences affect their perceptions about the impartiality of them. People pick their media according to their political preferences and there are judging them according to their preferences.

Concluding Remarks

In this study, we aimed to indicate and discuss the importance of media systems in voting choices. We also argue that different media systems exhibit different level of opportunities and limitations in terms of visibility of political candidates and media usage. Following the typology of Hallin and Mancini (2004), Turkey is positioned as an example of the polarized pluralist model through external pluralism of political parallelism, salient role of the state, low level of circulation or newspaper industry, and the absence of professional journalism. To examine the linkage between media usage and voting preferences, we made analysis elaborating with the survey results by TurkuazLab. According to the findings, television is the most common tool in order to receive political information that also indicates the low percentage for newspaper usage and increasing level of digital media. From this perspective, sociodemographic factors emphasize the usage of new media with younger, more educated, and wealthier respondents. Elderly, poorer, and less educated individuals prefer television to access information. As expectedly, findings underline that respondents receive information from sources that strengthen their viewpoints. Non-diversity and divisiveness appear in television channels and news reporting; additionally, assessment of their information sources determine the “camps”. Respondents believe that television channels of newspapers which they follow are unbiased, while “others” become source of “fake news” and “biased” content. These assessments give an idea about voting choices; if respondents have more trust in their information source, they

can adjust the news content as “truth” and “credible,” shaping perceptions and directing them. Preferences for media coverage affect political and economic perceptions that can direct individuals toward a specific voting choice (Mutz 1992). Because news reports or commentary information originate assessments for electorates, making clarifications on complicated hot topics.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates the gender gap, while female respondents are lower in media usage; also, educational status play a role; as the educational level increase, the usage increases. One of difference is related to the opposition and ruling party supporters in the usage of conventional media. As we discussed Turkey’s media structure, the pro-government coverage with the visibility of incumbents are higher; thus, the usage of conventional media supports the explanation, if there is no high level of politicization in media preferences. Gender, language, voting preferences, partisanship, and living areas have meaningfully association with media usage. All these outcomes indicate a significant relationship between media usage and voting behavior. The Turkish media structure displays parallelism and state intervention that generate more visibility and closer ties with the electorates. On the one hand, different political party supporters prefer their “media arenas” if they confirm their existing viewpoints and evaluate “more credible” that allows to more partisan voting.

There are certain necessities in order to improve more democratic media system in Turkey. Rather than a homogeneous media ownership, more diverse institutions should be relevant to reflect a plural coverage. This is one of main instruments to decrease biased news coverage, eliminating differences. In addition, media intervention through censorship, imprisonment, and financial tools should be investigated considering the rule of law. Objective journalism entails freedom of press without top-down pressure that can mitigate partisan voices and increase professional news. Last but not least, extensity of information disorders which consolidate exclusionary voices and partisanship requires media literacy and the usage of fact-checking platforms.

Appendix: Operationalization of Variables

In our analyses, we conducted several multivariate analyses to operationalize our variables of interest. Media Usage: Factor analysis provided us with two dimensions of media usage. The first factor relates to unconventional media such as Internet news sites, smartphones, Facebook, and Twitter, which explains 36% of the total variation. The second dimension is correlated with the usage of conventional media such as newspapers, television, and radio, and it explains 19% of the total variation.

Table 3. Dimensions of Media Usage (Factor Analysis Results, Varimax Rotation)

	1	2
Newspaper	0,080	0,705
Television	0,018	0,657
Radio	0,199	0,583
Internet News Sites	0,840	0,076
Smartphone	0,873	0,030
Friends	0,654	0,260
Facebook & Twitter	0,772	0,119
Explained Variance	36,26	19,39
	Unconventional Media	Conventional Media

Media Preferences: We used their most preferred television channels and newspaper answers to understand participants' media preferences. Multiple correspondence analysis produced two dimensions. The first one is related to the television channels supporting the government, such as ATV, STAR, and some mainstream channels, such as Show TV or Kanal D. This dimension has an internal validity of 0.66. The second dimension relates to pro-opposition television channels and newspapers such as Fox TV, Halk TV, and Sözcü. This dimension has a Cronbach Alpha of 0.49. **Perceptions about Media Impartiality:** We conducted another factor analysis to discover dimensions of perceptions about the impartiality of different media sources. This analysis produced two dimensions explaining 67% of the total variation. The first dimension is correlated with perceptions of impartiality of pro-government media outlets such as Sabah, Hürriyet, A Haber, TRT1, and CNN Türk, and it explains 35% of the total variation. The second dimension explaining 33% of the total variation is correlated with the impartiality perceptions of pro-opposition news outlets, such as Cumhuriyet, Fox TV, and Halk TV.

Table 4. Dimensions of Perceptions about the Impartiality of News Outlets (Factor Analysis Results, Varimax Rotation)

	1	2
Hürriyet	0,78	0,21
Karar	0,57	0,58
Yeniçağ	0,57	0,57
Sözcü	0,14	0,86
Sabah	0,82	0,14
Cumhuriyet	0,26	0,81
Fox TV	0,00	0,85

A Haber	0,79	0,10
TRT 1	0,85	-0,04
Halk TV	0,12	0,84
CNN Türk	0,69	0,23
Explained Variance	35,2	32,7

Other independent variables employed in our analyses are gender, age, level of education, place of residence, ability to speak the Kurdish language, and party preferences. Descriptive statistics of all variables we used in the analyses are presented below:

Table 5 . Descriptives of Variables Used in the Models

		Count	Column N %	Mean	Standard Error of Mean
Gender	Male	2.089	52,10%		
	Female	1.917	47,90%		
Age	18-24	602	15,00%		
	25-34	994	24,80%		
	35-44	934	23,30%		
	45-54	708	17,70%		
	55+	768	19,20%		
Level of Education	Primary School	1.217	30,50%		
	Secondary School	1.972	49,40%		
	Tertiary Education	805	20,20%		
Kurdish Language	Yes	762	19,00%		
	No	3.244	81,00%		
Settlement	Urban	3.768	94,10%		
	Rural	238	5,90%		
Metropolitan	Non-Metropolitan	3.110	77,60%		
	Metropolitan	896	22,40%		
Party	AK Party	1.345	37,90%		
	CHP	887	25,00%		
	HDP	359	10,10%		
	MHP	454	12,80%		
	İYİ Party	345	9,70%		
	Other	160	4,50%		

Conventional Media Usage	4.006		0,00	0,02
Unconventional Media Usage	4.006		0,00	0,02
Pro-Government Media Preference	4.006		0,09	0,02
Pro-Opposition Media Preference	4.006		0,09	0,02
Impartiality-Pro Opposition	4.006		0,00	0,02
Impartiality-Pro Government	4.006		0,00	0,02

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STRATEGIC USE OF COMMUNICATION TO PROMOTE CANCER PREVENTION AND CONTROL: APPLYING PERSUASION AND SOCIAL MARKETING IN HEALTH COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

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Abstract

This chapter describes how strategic health communication can be used as a critically important process for supporting cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and survivorship that is essential for addressing cancer in society. Cancer is a serious health problem around the globe. Despite major scientific gains in important new knowledge about cancer risks, biological processes, prevention practices, and advanced treatments, current epidemiological evidence shows that cancer accounts for unacceptably high levels of death and disability world-wide as a leading cause of mortality. Yet, cancer communication can often be very complex, covering complicated biological and psychological process that can be difficult to explain. Communication campaigns that encourage adoption of evidence-based cancer control activities to reduce cancer morbidity and mortality are often not as persuasive as they could be. Cancer prevention and control guidelines are often unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and challenging for people to perform (such as adopting new dietary and exercise practices, taking powerful medications and invasive treatments that often have unsavory side effects, and engaging in awkward and sometimes painful screening practices). Further, there is often the specter of significant social stigma surrounding cancer across many cultures that can promote shame, worry, and fear that can discourage open disclosure about cancer symptoms and risks, as well as lead to reluctance in seeking cancer care. Cancer communication efforts must go beyond just providing people with relevant, accurate, and timely health information, to also persuasively encouraging adoption of cancer prevention and control activities by motivating people who are at risk for cancer (or are currently confronting cancer) to accept evidence-based recommendations, integrate these recommendations into their lives, and work cooperatively with

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cancer care providers. Strategic health communication that follows established principles from the study of persuasion and social marketing can build needed awareness about cancer risks and responses, promote trust, cooperation, and personal engagement, as well as encourage adoption of informed cancer decision-making to enhance health outcomes.

Introduction

This review and policy chapter describes how strategic health communication can be used as a critically important process for supporting cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and survivorship that is essential for addressing the deadly problem of cancer incidence, morbidity, and mortality in modern society. The chapter examines the significant challenges to persuasively communicating relevant health information to those who confront cancer, both to cancer patients and their health care providers who need to use relevant cancer information to guide the important health decisions they must make concerning how to minimize cancer risks, how to detect and diagnose cancers that arise, to determine the best cancer treatments that should be pursued, and to determine how to adapt to the myriad, often unpleasant, effects of cancer and cancer treatment. Cancer communication is a rapidly growing and relevant area of study and application that has generated important research findings to guide strategic dissemination of accurate, timely, and usable cancer prevention, treatment, and survivorship information (Finney Rutten, Hesse, Moser, & Kreps, 2011; Kreps, 2023; Kreps & Massimilla, 2002; Sparks & Kreps, 2017). Strategic cancer communication is especially important to provide needed information, support, and direction for members of the most vulnerable populations, those who suffer from serious cancer inequities, such as members of poor, immigrant, elderly, and marginalized populations, to suggest the best strategies for effectively communicating messages about cancer prevention and control to members of these at-risk populations. The chapter describes how strategic communication can employ the social marketing principles of audience segmentation, audience analysis, persuasive message design, feedback, and reinforcement to provide meaningful and actionable cancer information and support to help reduce the burdens of cancer in society.

Communication Challenges to Achieving Cancer Prevention and Control

Cancer is one of the most dangerous diseases among the many serious health risks confronting modern society. In addition to cancer, dangerous health risks include heart disease, infectious diseases (such as COVID-19, influenza, and HIV/AIDS), non-communicable diseases (such as diabetes, and stroke), as well as debilitating mental health and chronic health issues (Cao et al, 2021; CDC, 2022; Ahmad & Anderson, 2021). Despite major scientific advances

in knowledge about cancer risks, biology, prevention, and treatment, cancer continues to be a major cause of mortality around the globe (Cao et al, 2021; CDC, 2022; Ahmad & Anderson, 2021). Worse, poor outcomes from many cancers appear to be increasing in the U.S. and worldwide, especially for the most vulnerable populations, at a most challenging time now when we face daunting health promotion challenges such as widespread health misinformation, flagging levels of trust in science across society, and active public resistance to following important public health recommendations to follow evidence-based guidelines for vaccination, screening, and lifestyle factors (Cao et al, 2021;. CDC, 2022; Kreps, 2022; Yang, Yu, Pan, & Kreps, 2022). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that by 2030 cancer will overtake heart disease as the leading cause of death in the United States, killing more than 640,000 people each year (CDC, 2022). Effective health communication is needed to help members of the public, especially those who are at greatest risk from cancer, to recognize the seriousness and salience of cancer health threats, engage in recommended actions to minimize the likelihood of contracting cancers, and to respond effectively when they do encounter any forms of cancer (Kreps, 2022; Yang, Yu, Pan, & Kreps, 2022; Kreps, 2012; Kreps & Sivaram, 2008; Kreps, 2003).

A major factor leading to societal problems with cancer has been the continuing failure to adequately disseminate, translate, and implement advanced cancer knowledge to help guide informed decisions about cancer prevention and control (Yip et al, 2008; Khan, Chambers, & Neta, 2021). This is a health communication and application issue that has been abetted by significant challenges to communicating relevant cancer prevention and control information to those confronting cancer (including health care consumers, providers, and policymakers) due both to the complexities of clearly explaining complex cancer information and the intricacies of communicating effectively about important health issues, especially when attempting to interact meaningfully with diverse and vulnerable populations (Yang, Yu, Pan, & Kreps, 2022, Khan, Chambers, & Neta, 2021. Cree et al, 2021). There is a dire need to implement the most effective communication practices and policies concerning serious cancer risks and incidence for different audiences, such as designing the best communication strategies for promoting early detection of cancers, developing accurate cancer diagnoses and sharing these diagnoses meaningfully, motivating adherence with important cancer prevention and control recommendations, implementing the best available cancer treatment strategies, and helping consumers live comfortably with (and sometimes die with dignity from) cancers (Finney-Rutten, Hesse, Moser, & Kreps, 2011; Kreps & Chapelsky Masimilla, 2019).

The Demand for Relevant and Motivating Cancer Information

Relevant health information is a tremendously valuable, but largely unrecognized, resource for helping guide both health care consumer and provider responses to cancer by increasing understanding about a host of complicated, but relevant, cancer issues (Kreps & Sivaram, 2008, O’Hair, Kreps, & Sparks, 2007). Cancer prevention and care processes are often complex, especially for laypeople, and are frequently misunderstood, often leading to serious missteps concerning cancer prevention and control (Kreps, 2022a). Effective dissemination of relevant and motivating cancer-related information can provide needed guidance for helping health care consumers and providers effectively address many difficult cancer issues that cut across the continuum of cancer care, including enhancing responses to important cancer prevention, detection, diagnosis, treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care issues (Kreps 2017c; 2012b; 2012c). For example, relevant health information can guide effective cancer prevention by increasing consumer awareness about and encouraging them to engage in relevant lifestyle behaviors (involving personal actions concerning dietary practices, exercise routines, participating in screening and vaccination services, following safer sexual practices, and avoiding carcinogens) to help them avoid dangerous cancer risks (DeJesus, Rodrique, Rahmani, & Balmou, 2021; Kreps, 2012b; 2012c; Kreps & Bonaguro, 2007).

Provision of timely, accurate, and personally motivating information can promote early recognition of emerging cancer symptoms, which is valuable to both health care consumers and providers for enabling rapid implementation of responsive treatments before emerging cancers begin to spread (metastasize) across the body (when cancers become more difficult to treat effectively). For example, relevant information concerning cancer symptoms and incidence that can be derived from patient interviews/reports, physical examinations, and lab-tests can also provide useful clues for enhancing cancer diagnosis that guide responsive decisions about the best courses of cancer treatment. Health care providers should also be seeking ongoing feedback from their cancer patients and actively gathering/analyzing physical surveillance data from their cancer patients to provide relevant information updates during cancer treatment to monitor changes in condition and about patient responses to medications and medical procedures. This kind of ongoing treatment surveillance information can guide evaluations about how well treatments are working over-time and to determine whether there are any problematic side effects from treatment. This kind of relevant cancer information can guide important decisions about making needed refinements to treatment regimens, as well as to help guide important

decisions about whether to introduce new strategies for mitigating any physical changes related to cancers or undesirable side effects from treatments.

It is important to recognize that every health issue has both physical and symbolic dimensions, especially concerning cancer that has deep symbolic resonance for many people (Fife, 1994; Kreps, 1988; Kreps & Canzona, 2015). The best cancer care involves communicating meaningfully about both the physical and symbolic dimensions of cancer. Communicating effectively about the physical aspects of cancer demands attention to sharing accurate and timely content-related scientific health information, such as sharing detailed information about the results of lab tests, diagnoses, and treatment strategies, to guide cancer decision making. In addition, responding effectively to the symbolic dimensions of cancer demands greater attention to sharing relevant relational information concerning emotions, concerns, stress, fatalism, and the need for social support. Content (data-related) information is needed to help increase understanding about the physical aspects of cancer by providing insights about complicated cancer science and treatment data concerning biological, chemical, and pharmacological issues. (Content issues have long been the primary focus of cancer care communication) (Fisher et al, 2021; Kreps, 1988; Kreps & Canzona, 2015). However, there are also tremendous demands for providing needed relational information to help address emotional issues concerning powerful feelings (such as fear, anxiety, worry, shame, and anger) that can often emerge when coping with cancer and cancer treatments (Kreps & Canzona, 2015; O’Hair, Sparks, 2007). Responsive and sensitive relational information can provide needed support, empathy, encouragement, and solidarity for helping to address cancer-related stress, worry, and depression (Fisher et al, 2021; Kreps, 1988). Supportive information can also help increase cooperation and commitment to confronting cancer (Guan, Han, Shah, & Gustafson, 2021; Seiler & Jenewein, 2019). The content and relational dimensions of cancer are deeply intertwined, and the strategic use of appropriately clear and sensitive communication is needed to provide relevant information and support to help address the powerful symbolic dimensions of cancer.

Disseminating and seeking health information are important aspects of effective cancer communication that demand high levels of communication strategy and competence (Kreps, 2007; 2005; 2002; Link et al, 2022). Relevant cancer information can be provided by many different sources, including by health care experts, family members, health advocates, peer support group members, as well as from a variety of different health information resources (health education materials, news articles, online resources, and from other media) (Kreps, 2022a; 2017a; Link et al, 2022; Oh, Kreps, Jun, & Ramsey, 2011). It is important for health care providers and consumers to identify

good, reliable, and up-to-date sources for seeking relevant health information. However, care must be taken to make sure the materials recommended are easy for consumers to understand and apply to their lives. In addition to just referring patients to health information sources, it may be necessary for health care providers to discuss complicated cancer information with patients to enhance their comprehension of the material, especially when communicating with vulnerable health care consumers who may have health literacy challenges (Kreps, 2017a; Kreps, Gustafson, Salovey, et al, 2007; Mayer et al, 2007; Oh et al, 2015).

It is crucially important to effectively communicate clear, accurate, and motivating information to vulnerable populations about cancer risks, cancer prevention, and cancer care due to both the serious public health threats that cancers pose for these individuals and due to the misinformation and resulting confusion concerning the causes, strategies for early detection, and best treatments for cancers that often leads to late cancer diagnoses and treatments, as well as suboptimal cancer outcomes (Kreps, 2017b; 2012b; 2003; Kreps & Chapelsky Massimilla, 2010; Kreps & Sivaram, 2008; O’Hair, Kreps, & Sparks, 2007). Cancer is a particularly complex and dangerous set of diseases that present in many different ways, are often difficult to detect, and demand unique, intensive, and timely medical interventions. Even the debilitating physical and psychological effects of cancer treatments can threaten health and well-being.^{19,36} Unfortunately, current efforts to educate the public about the complexities of cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and control are often insufficient to help consumers make informed decisions about their best health care choices (Kreps, 2002, Link et al, 2022; Oh, Kreps, Jun, & Ramsey, 2011). Strategic health communication is needed to provide consumers with the information and support needed to reduce cancer threats and improve cancer-related health outcomes (Kreps, 2012b; Kreps & Sivaram, 2008). (Strategic communication refers to the planned application of key evaluation and social marketing principles in health communication efforts, such as conducting in-depth audience analyses to learn more about and to segment target audiences, adapting persuasive message design and delivery to the unique characteristics and orientations of targeted groups, and introducing culturally-sensitive interventions for reinforcing the adoption of health behaviors by targeted audiences) (Kreps, 2012b; 2012c; 2008; Kreps & Snyder, 2009) .

Attention to the Communication Needs of Vulnerable Populations

The need for effective strategic communication about health risks and benefits is particularly acute, yet also tremendously complex, for reaching the most vulnerable health care consumer populations who are at great risk to suffer significantly higher levels of cancer-related morbidity and mortality than

other segments of the general population (Kreps, 2012b; Kreps & Sivaram, 2008). These vulnerable groups of people, typically the poorest, lowest educated, and most disenfranchised members of modern society, are heir to serious disparities in cancer-related health outcomes, resulting in alarming levels of morbidity and mortality, especially in comparison to the rest of the public. Vulnerable populations regularly encounter serious challenges to accessing and making sense of relevant health information, often abetted by health literacy difficulties that make it difficult for them to understand complex medical information, cultural barriers and economic limitations that make it difficult to access and negotiate modern health care systems, as well as a host of challenging social determinants (such as reduced social status, lower education levels, environmental barriers, employment issues, and limited social support networks) that make it difficult to get the best cancer care. (Kreps, 2005; 2007). These at-risk consumers are often confused and misinformed about the causes of cancers, prevention of cancers, strategies for early detection of cancers, and the optimal treatments for cancers which leads to serious errors, omissions, and resultant health problems (Kreps, 2002). They also may feel intimidated by health care professionals and the modern health care system, so they may need health care provider support and encouragement to share and seek relevant cancer-related information (Kreps, 2017a; Link et al, 2022; Oh, Kreps, Jun, & Ramsey, 2011).

Members of vulnerable population, who often suffer significant health disparities, are in especially high need of relevant, accurate, and timely health information about cancer prevention and control that is presented to them in sensitive, caring, and meaningful ways that they can easily understand and use the information (Kreps, 2017a; Kreps, Gustafson, Salovey, et al, 2007; Mayer et al, 2007; Oh et al, 2015). Members of these vulnerable groups often include elderly, immigrant, socioeconomically deprived, and minority health care consumers who may need special support and advocacy for effectively accessing and using relevant health information (Freeman, 2004; Kreps, 2021a). Furthermore, many vulnerable immigrant consumers in the US are non-native English speakers and encounter serious language barriers and health literacy challenges that necessitate adaptive, culturally sensitive communication strategies to provide them with needed health information (Kreps, 2006b; Kreps & Kunimoto, 1994; Mayer et al, 2007; Oh et al, 2015). In addition, consumers with serious and chronic medical conditions, as well as individuals who confront physical and mental disabilities, are often particularly vulnerable to health risks and have unique communication needs that have to be adequately addressed to provide them with the relevant health information they need to preserve their health (Kreps, 2017b; Kreps & Sparks, 2008).

This article examines strategic communication strategies for developing culturally sensitive communication programs that can provide vulnerable consumer populations with the relevant health information they need to effectively evaluate cancer-related health risks, make informed health care decisions, and engage in health behaviors that will enable them to reduce cancer incidence and improve cancer outcomes. A large body of research literature illustrates that culturally sensitive health communication intervention programs are likely to be effective at reaching and influencing vulnerable populations because these programs are designed to be relevant, interesting, and easily understood by target audiences (Beach, 2019; Betancourt et al, 2003; Kreps, 2017b; 2012b; Kreps, Gustafson, Salovey, et al, 2007; Kreps & Sparks, 2008; Kreuter & McClure, 2004; Surbone, 2008) Consumers' unique cultural backgrounds and orientations have powerful influences on their communication practices that must be carefully accounted for in strategic health communication efforts (Kreps, 2006a). It is critically important to identify and examine the relevant cultural issues that are likely to influence the ways consumers, particularly members of vulnerable populations, respond to communication about cancer risks, prevention, detection, and control (Kreps, 2017b; Kreps & Neuhauser, 2015). Several of the key cultural variables that influence health communication outcomes include the unique health beliefs, values, norms, and expectations that different consumers bring to health situations (Kreps, 2017b). It is also important to assess consumers' culturally based language skills and orientations, their health literacy levels, their motivations to seek health information, and their unique media use patterns (Kreps & O'Hair, 1995; Street, Makoul, Arora, & Epstein, 2009). Examination of these key cultural factors provides relevant information for determining how to best design and deliver key messages for effectively communicating complex health information to diverse populations (Beach, 2019; Kreps 2006a; 2017b; Kreps & Sparks, 2003; Kreuter & McClure, 2004). Culturally sensitive health communication is essential to providing vulnerable consumers with relevant information about cancer risks, prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivorship (Beach, 2019).

Communication and Health Outcomes

Meaningful cancer communication not only can help build strong cooperative health care relationships, but it can also dramatically enhance the quality of health care decision-making and improve the outcomes of care. A large body of research illustrates that effective communication has improved a variety of health outcomes, such as reducing morbidity and mortality, decreasing pain and suffering, increasing adherence with treatment recommendations, promoting shared understanding, and enhancing confidence in care (Bowen & Miller,

2009; deLooper et al, 2022; Stewart, 1995). In particular, research has shown a strong relationship between collaborative clinician-patient communication as a major factor in promoting cancer prevention and control because exchanging relevant cancer information enables and encourages patients and health care providers to actively work together cooperatively to make collaborative health decisions that can improve cancer outcomes (Chumbler et al, 2007; Krist et al, 2016; Kreps, 2016; Kreps & Chapelsky Massimilla, 2010). Sharing relevant health information can also improve interprofessional cooperation between members of health care teams (including cancer patients and familial caregivers who should be considered as central links within health care teams) by utilizing the unique expertise and experiences of health care team members to exchange insights concerning complex health care issues, promoting coordination of care, and encouraging collaborative decision-making (Kreps, 1988; 1996b; Kreps, Villagran et al, 2011).

Strategic Health Communication

Health communication messages must be carefully designed and delivered to be effective, following key principles and guidance from modern persuasion theories and social marketing principles (Kreps, 1996b; 2002; 2012c). The critical factor in strategic message design is adapting health messages to meet the unique needs and communication orientations of specific audiences (Kreps, 2012c; Kreps & Kunimoto, 1994). This means that effective health communication efforts should adopt a consumer orientation to encoding messages that will resonate well with specific audiences.⁶² Careful audience analysis is essential to identifying the salient consumer characteristics for guiding message design (Alpert, Kris, Aycock, & Kreps, 2017). Messages should be designed to appeal to key beliefs, attitudes, and values of targeted audience members, using familiar and accepted language, images, and examples to illustrate key points. It is wise to pre-test sample health communication messages with representatives of key audiences before implementing health communication intervention programs (Kreps & O'Hair, 1995). Formative evaluation data gathered through message pre-testing is essential to refining health messages (Gallant, Irizarry, & Kreps, 2007). This is a form of user centered design, where health messages are shaped and refined by representatives of the actual audiences targeted in health communication programs (Kreps & Neuhauser, 2013; Maibach, Kreps, & Bonaguro, 1993; Neuhauser & Kreps 2014). Pre-testing is also a strategy for increasing audience participation in health communication efforts, which can increase not only the cultural sensitivity of communication, but can also enhance audience receptivity and cooperation with health promotion efforts.⁵⁹ Involving consumers, their family members, key members of their social networks, and community representatives can increase the support and social

encouragement for paying attention to, accepting, and utilizing health education messages (Maibach, Kreps, & Bonaguro, 1993).

To be most effective it is wise to plan multiple message strategies for reaching and influencing vulnerable audiences with health information, utilizing the communication principles of redundancy and reinforcement to enhance message exposure and impact (Kreps, 2012d). Multiple messages can help to capture audience attention, reinforce message content, and illustrate key health education concepts. The use of personalization, vivid imagery, and narratives in health communication messaging can also reinforce message content, especially with audiences who may have limited health literacy and problems with numeracy that make it difficult for them to understand complex, statistical, and other numerically based messages (Kreps, 2012d). For example, the use of narratives and visual illustrations that are familiar and appealing to different audiences can often enhance attention to health promotion messages and increase the influence of these messages (Kreps, 2012d).

A powerful strategic communication approach to designing health messages that often meets the unique needs of individuals is the use of tailored communication systems, where relevant background information about an individual (such as use of their names, their occupations, or other groups/organizations that they are affiliated with) to, inform customized use of messages for that individual (Kreps, 2008; 2012c). Typically, tailored communication systems inform message design by employ interactive computer systems that gather relevant background information from consumers on key communication variables through questions posed to these individuals, including questions eliciting information about individual demographic, psychographic, and health belief=behavior information. Once key background information is gathered from the individual, the information is used to select specific messages stored in a library of messages that match the unique background features of users. In this way, information about the individual health risks and orientations of a specific consumer. For example, a computer-generated tailored information system can automatically adjust health messages to match demographic, personal, and health factors for an elderly, Japanese, female health care consumer with a history of breast cancer and diabetes (Kreps, 2012d; 2021b). As the consumer continues to interact with the tailored health information system, providing the system with additional background information, the computer program is able to continually refine information responses to this consumer to match his or her unique personal characteristics and interests.

In addition to developing strategic messages that match the cultural orientations of at-risk consumers, it is critically important to determine the most effective communication channels for reaching targeted populations of

consumers. The best communication channels to utilize are those that are close, familiar, and easily accessible for targeted audience members (Kreps, 2021b). For example, the use of indigenous media, such as community newspapers, local radio stations, and cable television programs targeted at specific populations, have been shown to be effective media channels for disseminating health information and influencing health behaviors (Kreps, 2017a; Oh, Kreps, Jun, & Ramsey, 2011). It is important to employ communication channels that are easy for members of the intended audience to use. It would be a serious error to develop an online health education website for consumers who do not have access to computers and are not sophisticated computer users. Communication channels that are dramatic and memorable can have strong influences on audience attention and interpretation of health messages (Kreps, 2012d). Health educators should consider using communication channels that can be accessed over time, channels that can retain important information for later review, and even interactive channels that enable consumers to ask questions and receive clarifications about complex health information (Gallant, Irizarry, & Kreps, 2007; Kreps, 2012d; Kreps, 2021d).

It is important to decide what the best sources are for delivering key messages about potential cancer risks, prevention strategies, opportunities for early detection, and optimal treatment modalities (Kreps, 2012d; Oh, Kreps, Jun, & Ramsey, 2011). It is crucial to identify the most credible sources of health information for members of the intended audiences (Kreps, 2022a; 2012d). Decisions need to be made about whether it is best to utilize familiar sources of information, expert sources, or perhaps peer communication may be most influential with different audiences. Just as with the use of strategic messages, it is a good idea to pre-test different information sources and different communication channels with target audiences (Kreps, 2012d).

Evaluating Communication Interventions

A critical juncture in communicating cancer risk, prevention, detection, and treatment information to vulnerable audiences is evaluating how well different communication strategies work to educate targeted audiences about important health issues (Kreps & Neuhauser, 2015). It is important to assess how well consumers really understand the risks and benefits that are being communicated and what difference communication programs are making in promoting informed consumer decision-making. A first step is to establish clear baseline measures of consumer understanding before introducing new health education programs. These baseline measures can be used as a starting point for tracking the influences of communication efforts (Kreps & Neuhauser, 2015). Feedback mechanisms, such as consumer surveys, focus groups, hotlines, helpdesks, and comment cards, should be introduced as integral parts of communication

interventions for tracking and evaluating consumer understanding of health messages. The data gathered through these feedback mechanisms can be used to refine health communication programs and track progress in health education.

There are three primary levels for evaluating cancer communication programs: formative evaluation, process evaluation, and summative evaluation that are used at different points in the development and implementation of communication programs (Kreps & Neuhauser, 2015). Formative evaluation is used to plan cancer communication efforts, such as health education program materials, and campaigns. It involves conducting both needs analysis to determine what is known about specific health issues facing different populations and audience analysis to examine the unique beliefs, concerns, information levels, and communication characteristics of different populations. Surveys, interviews, analysis of documents, and use of past research and records are often used for conducting formative evaluation research. Process evaluation involves testing audience reactions to different communication strategies and messages to see how well they are understood and how influential they are. Process evaluation data are essential in guiding design and refinement of communication programs. Surveys, interviews, and message testing experiments are often used to collect process evaluation data. Summative evaluation is used to determine how well communication programs and strategies are achieving intended health goals, such as increasing audience understanding, improving adherence with health recommendations, reducing morbidity and mortality, as well as tracking the cost/benefit levels of communication programs.⁴⁹ Pre-post intervention field experiments, surveys, tracking archival data, and observational research are often used for summative evaluation efforts. Evaluation data are essential in developing and implementing effective strategic cancer communication programs.

Concluding Thoughts About Communicating to Promote Cancer Prevention and Control

To accrue the substantial potential benefits of meaningful cancer communication, health care policymakers, providers, and consumers must take the process of communication seriously. Too often they think of communication as a simple process that they engage in on a daily basis without too much thought. However, health communication problems are typically extremely complex and fragile, involving many different factors. Major health issues, such as responding to pandemics and promoting cancer prevention and control, are extremely complicated and highly equivocal problems that demand in-depth planning, strategy, and skill to achieve desired health outcome (Kreps, 2021b; 2009). The use of routine communication practices are likely to violate the systems principle of requisite variety that holds that effective responses to

complex problems demand that the ways we address these difficult problems must match the information complexity of the problems (Kreps, 2021b; 2009; Kreps, Viswanath, & Harris, 2002). To be effective, health communication must be evidence-based, rigorous, and strategic, operating from a big science perspective (Sparks & Kreps, 2017). This was the approach taken by the National Cancer Institute (NIH) when it identified cancer communication as an area of extraordinary research opportunity in the early 2000's (under the leadership of former NCI Director, Richard Klausner, and Director of the NCI Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, Barbara Rimer), to build an innovative large-scale multi-pronged program of cancer communication research and intervention programs, including the Health Information National Trends Survey, the Centers of Excellence in Cancer Communication Research, and Multimedia Technology and Health Communication, to advance cancer communication research and intervention for promoting cancer prevention and control (Hesse, 2021; Kreps, 2003a; Kreps, et al, 2018; Sparks & Kreps, 2017).

Significant investments in cancer communication are needed to guide development of policies and best practices that support strategic communication of relevant cancer information to promote cancer prevention and control (Hesse, 2021; Kreps, 2003a). Building upon the review of cancer communication issues provided in this chapter, the following specific recommendations are proposed to support strategic use of cancer communication to promote cancer prevention and control:

- Cancer communication programs and practices should be designed to build widespread public awareness about relevant cancer risks, as well as the best current prevention and detection strategies, treatment modalities, and interventions to promote successful survivorship. These information programs can provide needed health information to increase public understanding about the current state of knowledge about cancer to fill serious gaps in knowledge and misunderstandings about cancer.
- Cancer communication efforts should also be persuasive, with a focus on motivating adoption of recommended actions to prevent and control cancer. These actions should include adopting lifestyle changes concerning diet, exercise, screening, vaccination, safer sexual practices, and avoiding carcinogens.
- While cancer communication efforts are relevant for everyone, care must be taken to focus on addressing the communication needs of the most vulnerable populations, those who are at greatest risk for poor health outcomes from cancers due to issues such as genetic predispositions for cancers, those who are cancer survivors who have a high risk for recurrence, dangerous lifestyle factors, pre-existing health conditions,

exposure to carcinogens, as well as cancer risks related age, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation

- Investments need to be made in using formative evaluation research to guide cancer communication efforts. For example, audience analysis and needs analysis evidence, is needed to guide the design of cancer communication efforts for specific audiences and cancer risk situations. Formative research can identify health information needs, gaps, and misinformation issues that should be addressed. This research can guide decisions about effective message strategies, communication channels, and information sources to use with different audiences. For example, formative evaluation data can guide the use of messages that are targeted and tailored for specific groups, use familiar communication channels, and utilize trusted sources to deliver relevant cancer information. Formative research is also a good way to assess how health issues have been addressed in the past to identify strategies that have worked and might be incorporated into new programs, as well as to identify any slack resources and/or community partners to collaborate with on cancer communication programs (Kreps & Neuhauser 2015).
- The best cancer communication programs are designed for specific audiences so they can address the unique information needs, concerns, communication orientations, and competencies, and needs of segmented audiences, especially those who are at highest risk from cancer. One size does not fit all when it comes to communication. The best communication efforts adapt the unique characteristics of different audiences.
- Process evaluation efforts are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of communication programs and refine them when needed. For example, message testing and usability testing can help identify problems with communication efforts that can lead to information gaps and misunderstandings. The process evaluation efforts can also identify user-generated strategies for improving communication efforts for specific groups and to adapt to changing situations. On an individual level, health care providers can use the teach-back method to evaluate how well patients understand the health information and recommendations that were provided (Kreps & Neuhauser 2015; Kreps & O’Hair, 1995).
- It is also critically important for health communicators to adopt culturally sensitive communication practices to reach and influence vulnerable populations. Community participative communication interventions are a valuable strategy for integrating consumers’ perspectives into health education efforts and building community commitment to health

communication interventions (Minkler, 2010; Minker & Wallerstein, 2011). Public health promotion policies can be established to guide effective cancer communication programs, materials, and media.

- It is important for health promoters to consider using multiple relevant communication channels and media for health communication interventions, so audience members are exposed to important health messages in a variety of different ways. This can increase reinforcement, recall, and influence of messages with audience members through redundancy and repeated exposure.
- It is important to involve and empower consumers in cancer communication efforts through community-based participative research, user-centered design, and active collaborations with consumers and their advocates (Kreps, 2021a; Kreps, Chen, and Chan, 2011; Maibach & Parrott, 1995; Maibach, Kreps, & Bonaguro, 1993).
- Developing inter-organizational partnerships to support intervention efforts can help address the complex sub-specialties and multi-organizational delivery of cancer care to promote coordination and continuity of care across the continuum of cancer care (Kreps, 2017c; Kreps & Sivaram, 2008).
- Providing appropriate training and support for both consumers and providers to promote effective cancer communication can enhance effective sharing of relevant health information and help address both content and relational cancer care issues (Kreps, 2002, 1988).
- Designing culturally appropriate messages and materials for communication

Efforts can enhance understanding of and cooperation with cancer prevention and control efforts (Beach, 2019; Kreps & Kunimoto, 1994; Kreuter & McClure, 2004; Surbone, 2008).

- Conducting strategic media planning to match communication strategies (such as designing compelling messages, identifying credible information sources, and employing the most effective media channels) to the cultural orientations and communication predispositions of targeted vulnerable audiences (Kreps & Sivaram, 2008).
- Designing relevant, interesting, and compelling health promotion messages, storylines, and images for use in campaigns that will capture audience attention, generate the greatest message exposure, and have powerful influences on targeted vulnerable populations (Kreps & Neuhauser, 2013).

- Delivering campaign messages via strategic multiple channels of communication (such as print, radio, television, online, and interpersonally) that are familiar, attractive, and easy for target audience members to use can enhance access to relevant cancer information (Kreps & Sivaram, 2008).
- Building redundancy into communication campaigns to reinforce key messages over time by utilizing different, yet complementary, delivery channels and messages and improve understanding, retention, and use of cancer information for promoting cancer prevention and control (Nambisan et al, 2019).
- Focusing on the family and the community for delivering and reinforcing messages can use informal communication networks for supporting the formal efforts to deliver cancer prevention and care (Maibach, Kreps, & Bonaguro, 1993).
- Providing consumers with preferred choices and options for promoting their health can enhance adoption of cancer prevention and control recommendations by adapting these guidelines to the real lives, experiences, and cultures of individual consumers (Kreps, 2012a; 2006b).

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TITLE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MIRROR NEURONS AND CONSUMER PERSUASION

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Abstract

This paper delves into the profound implications of mirror neurons in the context of consumer persuasion. Originating from discoveries in neuroscience research, mirror neurons have offered critical insights into the neural processes governing human cognition and behavior. They reveal a remarkable neural link between the observation of actions and the capacity for empathy, imitation, and vicarious experiences. In the realm of marketing, mirror neurons emerge as a potent instrument for eliciting emotional engagement and persuasion among consumers. When strategically harnessed in advertising campaigns, these neural mechanisms facilitate the connection between the advertisement and the audience, therefore between the consumer and narratives, products, or services.

“It’s me” effect, which can be a tool for mirror neuron activation, can be very effective in persuasion. Consumers tend to be more receptive to recommendations and endorsements originating from those they identify with, underscoring the potency of word-of-mouth marketing and peer recommendations. In addition to its interpersonal influence, the paper emphasizes the applicability of mirror neurons in complex decision-making processes. In situations characterized by an abundance of variables, individuals frequently resort to heuristic approaches, with the “it’s me” effect serving as a notable cognitive shortcut. This heuristic enables individuals to adopt decisions made by cognate peers, streamlining choices and reducing cognitive demands. In summary, this research underscores the pivotal role of mirror neurons in bridging human cognitive processes with the dynamics of consumer persuasion. As marketing professionals continue to harness the potential of these neural mechanisms, the future of advertising is poised not only to capture attention but also to form emotional bond. A comprehensive understanding of the profound impact of mirror neurons on consumer behavior represents an invaluable asset for the development of effective marketing strategies within the evolving landscape of consumer persuasion.

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Keywords: Mirror neurons, consumer persuasion, advertising, cognitive processes, decision-making, empathy, imitation, word-of-mouth marketing, celebrity campaigns.

Introduction

First you see the chocolate melting between the wafer layers. Gradually, it flows in ripples and overflows the edges with a dark fluid as it comes over the other wafer layer. The rectangular wafer dives in and out of the chocolate stream. After that, you hear the wafer crunching with an earth-shaking sound. As the woman, ecstatic with the sweet, fluid and crunchy flavor between her lips, rustles the wafer in her mouth, you drool and even swallow in front of the television. What's going on? Why do you drool when you're sitting in your pajamas in front of a digital screen because the person on the screen is eating a wafer?

It's what happens when you learn to talk as a baby! Your mirror neurons are working. Mirror neurons cause the brain of the person watching, reading or listening to activate in a similar way to the person doing the movement (Di Pellegrino et al., 1992). Mirror neurons are the neurons that, in response to a stimulus, simulate the effect of that stimulus in the brain and cause the person to feel as if they are performing that action. The discovery of mirror neurons, like the discovery of champagne (Champagne, n.d.), (The Daily Meal, 2018) or Viagra (Sildenafil, n.d.), was an accident when the goal was to do something completely different.

One day in the early 1990s, Dr. Rizzolatti, a professor of Neurophysiology at the University of Parma, Italy, began his shift in the laboratory where he had been experimenting with macaque monkeys for some time. They were using EEG brain imaging to study the activation of the monkeys' motor cortex. Watching what was going on in the monkeys' brains as they performed various activities (performing a task, looking at food, holding food, etc.), the team watched the experiment, unaware that they were going to shake the world of brain science that day (Go Cognitive, n.d.). One of the monkeys (let's call him Apel) decided not to just look at the peanut but to hold it. As expected, his motor cortex was activated during this action. But the researchers saw that other areas of the monkey's brain were also activated. To their surprise, the researchers followed a second monkey, Mirro, who sat in place and did nothing but watch Apel. The areas of the frontal and premotor cortex that lit up in Apel's brain when he reached for a peanut also lit up in Mirro, even though he was sitting still. Rizzolatti and his team were surprised to discover that when Apel ate a banana, Mirro's brain also lit up, as if he was eating a banana himself. The serendipitously discovered "mirror neurons" differ from other motor neurons in that they fire not only when a motor movement is performed, but also when

the corresponding movement is observed in another human or another monkey (Gallese et al., 1996). Through such a neural mapping system, the observer during the action is placed in the same “internal” state as when he or she is actively carrying out that action (Rizzolatti et al., 2014).

The discovery that watching and performing an action can activate the same parts of the brain, not only in monkeys but also in humans, is what Vilayanur Ramachandran, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Berkeley, describes as “the biggest breakthrough of the last decade, the Big Bang of humanity’s development of mental and cultural abilities” (Edge, 2000). Thanks to these neurons, we have the ability to imitate, to understand the other person’s intentions and thus learn from each other, and language is processed in the brain (Azar., 2005). Mirror neurons make us salivate when the other person eats a lemon, even if we don’t. Thanks to them, when we are watching a movie under a blanket in our cozy home, we jump out of our seats as if the killer who suddenly appears on the screen is right next to us. Thanks to mirror neurons, we can empathize, feel sorry for our friend’s sadness, rejoice with their joy and solve social dynamics much more easily.

Good thing we have mirror neurons! But what does that have to do with marketing? The impact of any marketing stimulus is directly related to how well it connects with the target audience. One of the easiest ways to connect with the target audience is to trigger their mirror neurons. In other words, to make them live and feel what you show them. Customers who can imagine themselves in that environment are more likely to identify with the story, product or service.

The person who imagines himself in the environment in the advertisement starts to simulate what he will experience in his brain through mirror neurons. This causes them to feel emotionally close to that environment and what the experience. The mind that initiated this whole process wants to continue this situation in real life. When a viewer sees a drop of honey floating on television, he or she feels it flowing into his or her mouth. (Figure 1) Similarly, the mind triggered by the flowing chocolate in the wafer commercial feels as if it is disintegrating in viewer’s own mouth when the actor crunches the wafer between her teeth. In this way, triggering an experience in the mind makes it easier to trigger it in real life. When the consumer, who watched the wafer commercial in her pajamas the night before, sees the packaging in the commercial in the supermarket the next day, the sensation of this experience quickly comes to life in her mind and she reaches out for the product in order to reach her aim.



Figure 1 (ThinkNeuro Research): Rising emotional bond curve with strained honey

Mirror Neurons and “It’s Me” Effect

The expression mirror neuron, of course, comes from “mirroring movement”, that is, reflecting. But the choice of the word mirror is much more meaningful. Who do we most often see in the mirror? Of course, ourselves. Therefore, for everyone, themselves are the easiest person to mirror. And who is the second easiest person? Of course, it is the person they most resemble, the person they find closest to them. As you can imagine, this resemblance does not necessarily have to be physical. A friend who thinks similarly to you, who has made similar decisions to you, who lives a life parallel to yours is also a similar person.

The phenomenon known as the Charmelion Effect, which describes the unconscious imitation of the behavior of others in one’s social environment, tells us that people like people who are similar to themselves more, listen to them without prejudice and therefore find them more convincing (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). This is what we call the “it’s me” effect. This is one of the reasons why WoM - Word of Mouth marketing - is so effective. Apart from the feeling of trust, the advice of a friend you feel close to is more credible than the advice of someone more distant, because that person is “like you”. Because he or she is like you, he or she has made the closest decision you can make. We are more inclined to take the decisions made by people we find close to us, people we identify with, to repeat the choices they make, to be convinced by their words.

In Turkey, especially in Istanbul, private school fees are expensive. On the other hand, no parent would easily agree to a more modest education for their child, who they want to see as their ideal self, who will perpetuate their species, who will do what they have not done, who will exceed expectations. On one hand, loans from banks, reduced vacation budgets, reduced restaurant visits, on the other hand, the future of their child, the most important equipment for success; his education.... Which option do we lean towards, how do we make our decision, what convinces us and how?

The answer to persuasion is hidden in the mirror again. People who are similar to each other are more likely to become friends. (Because if one cannot see oneself in the mirror, one wants to see a similar person.) We think that once this similarity is achieved in certain areas, it is likely to be achieved in other areas as well. For this reason, your similar friend, because of your similarity, assumes that you have made the closest to the decision he will make and wants to listen to how you made his decision instead of him and your reasons.

This is actually a kind of cognitive shortcut. When faced with decisions that have more variables than the mind can calculate, we create a way out through “it’s me” effect. The brain’s primary task is not to choose between private schools, nor to keep track of wafer brands, nor to memorize song lyrics. The basic task of the brain is to survive. The brain, which is focused on survival and is also lazy; when it sees that its counterpart has made a choice and continues to survive, it says “I don’t need to think too much, I can continue to live by doing the same” and walks away.

One of the most interesting commercials on the “it’s me” effect is, of course, the Cola Turca commercial. In the commercial of Cola Turca, the Turkish version of the American drink cola, shot in New York, it shows how foreigners who drink Cola Turca become Turkified, that is, they become “one of us”. Increases in the emotional bond curve are observed during the movements of foreign actors referring to our culture. As can be seen in Figure 2, there is a sharp increase in the emotional bond curve in the scene where the actor does not make Chevy Chase pay the bill by saying “it’s on me”. We see a sharp jump in the emotional bond curve where the family members who drink Cola Turca at the dinner table start singing Turkish Youth Anthem.

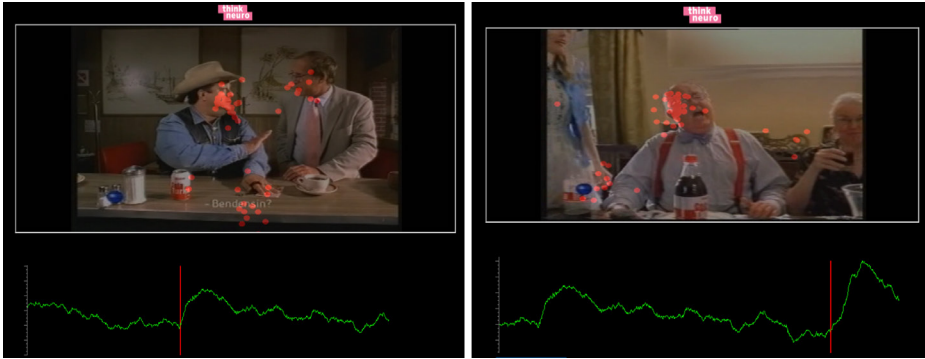


Figure 2 (ThinkNeuro Reserach): Turkish actor saying, “It’s on me” and not stopping Chevy Chase from paying the bill (left); drinking Cola Turca at the table and chanting Turkish Youth Anthem. The emotional bond curves rise sharply with the “it’s me” effect.

Marketing and Everyday Examples

It is also possible to explain “it’s me” effect with empirical data. In a study conducted by Thinkneuro laboratories examining the process of selling phones through GSM operators’ websites, participants experienced the process of buying phones from two different operator brands’ websites (Girişken et al., 2014).

During this experience, participants were wearing an EEG device on their heads and their gaze was tracked with Eye Tracking devices. Throughout the experience, where the users looked was recorded by the eye tracking device and what they felt was recorded on the basis of “emotional bond” data obtained by brain imaging techniques. These recordings were synchronized during the experience. In the light of the brain waves generated as a result of the measurements, in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant based on their own experiences. In these interviews, which were conducted with a special technique called Neuroscore-Based In-depth interviews, the reasons for the drops and rises in brain waves, which elements on the website triggered emotional changes, the underlying motivations were questioned.

The aim of this research was to make the website design more suitable for cognitive flow, to reveal unconsciously effective and ineffective points in the designs of different operators and finally to present an optimization plan. In addition to the findings, which we won’t go into details right now and which cannot be revealed by A/B tests or different UX tests; the mirror neurons also came up in a very interesting way.

At the time of the research, one of the operators had an application on its website where you could experience the features of the selected phone. The application worked as follows: You select the phone you want to use virtually

to see its features, and a hand uses the phone for you based on your directions with the mouse. What a great idea! So the customer experiences the phone “as if they were using it themselves” through the computer screen. It’s the perfect app for firing mirror neurons! But you know, sometimes good ideas are wasted with bad applications.

In Figure 3, you can see a measurement of where the participant is looking (via the heat map) and what they are feeling at that moment (the green brainwave at the bottom of the image - more specifically, the emotional bond curve) while experiencing the application in question. As you can see from the heatmap, the participant’s eye shifts to the hand holding the phone and at this moment there is a sharp drop in brainwaves.

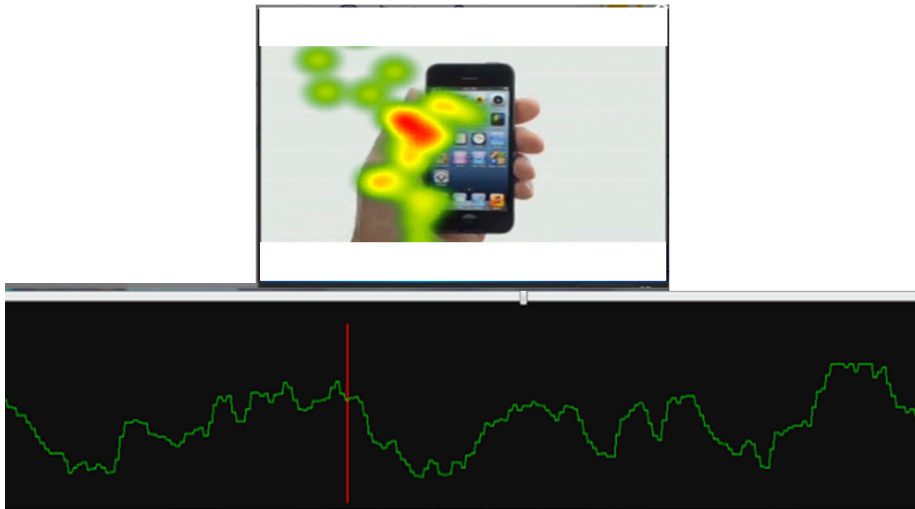


Figure 3 (ThinkNeuro Research): The emotional bond curve decreases with left-handed use in the application that allows you to use the phone you choose on the website in the way you want and see its features.

This application, whose main purpose is to make people feel as if they are using the phone themselves, has a negative effect precisely because of a display that is contrary to this purpose. Approximately 90% of people are right-handed (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020). Therefore, the cell phone is a device that the person holds in their right hand. In the real life experience of using the phone, the person constantly sees their right hand in the peripheral focus. While this is the habitual experience, the brain, which unconsciously realizes that the phone is held with the left hand in the application on the website, immediately reacts negatively to this situation. The application, which causes an internal reaction of ‘this does not reflect me, this is not one of me’, fails to achieve success.

The right hand left hand issue has been studied before by Elder and Krishna (Elder & Krishna, 2012). (Figure 4)



Figure 4: (from Elder- Krishna article): For the majority of the right-handed population, the image that more closely reflects the experience of eating dessert in their own lives is, of course, the image with the fork on the right side.

Which of the apple tarts above do you think increased purchase intention by 20%? The one on the right, of course! The apple tart on the right triggers mirror neurons much more effectively by depicting the image that active right-handed people are used to seeing in real life, creating the feeling that they can reach out and eat the tart with much less effort. The person whose mirror neurons are triggered wants to complete the simulation that has started in their brain and their willingness to buy increases in parallel. After finding the left hand effect in phone use, we decided to repeat the right hand-left hand experiment of Elder and Krishna mentioned above with neuro methods. For this purpose, we asked our graphic designer to design visuals in which different foods are held in the right and left hand. We measured these visuals with both eye tracking and fNIRS with participants who actively used their right hand. Thus, we were able to see where the participants focused on the visuals, as well as to determine which visual was more effective in the brain.

In Figure 5, you can see the outputs of the eye tracking data of the images where the hamburger of the fictitious brand is held in the right and left hand.

Both images have a similar state of being seen. So which one do you think is more effective in the unconscious of participants who actively use their right hand?

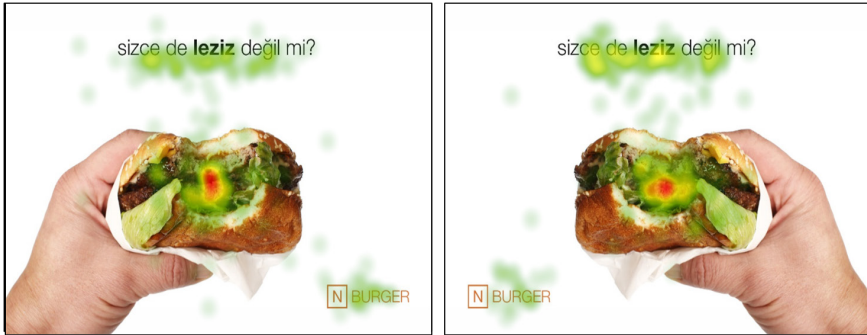


Figure 5 (ThinkNeuro Research): Heat maps obtained by eye tracking analysis of identical images in which a hamburger is held in the right hand in one and the left hand in the other

For those readers who said right, my answer is unfortunately: NO! But don't worry. Because we were also surprised when we analyzed the data and found out that the left side was more effective. We reanalyzed the data in case there was a mistake, but the result did not change. It was normal that it didn't change, because right-handed people hold the hamburger with their left hand. They continue to use their active right hand for active tasks such as dipping fries in ketchup or reaching for Coke.

Then, with an anthropological approach, we went to all the fast food restaurants in the neighborhood and observed people consuming hamburgers, fries and drinks. Indeed, as can be seen in the sample photographs below, customers regardless of age, gender, etc., were holding the hamburger in their left hand and using their right hand like a sword to attack the fries, ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard; they were soda, cola (Figure 6).





Figure 6 (ThinkNeuro Visual): A few of the hundreds of images showing active right-handed fast food lovers holding the hamburger with their left hand and devoting their right hand to intense activity.

This is one of the examples that shows us how powerful “mirroring” dynamic is. There is only one dynamic in life that breaks all the rules. And that is life itself! Although, as you can see in Figure 7, the right and left handedness rule is in line with Elder and Krishna’s findings in neuro measurements, it is real life experiences that are always in play. Visuals, ads, advertisements that are in line with real-life experiences are more effective. As we saw in the hamburger example, it is the ability of the visual to reflect the real-life experience that triggers mirror neurons. When it comes to a food that is eaten with an accompaniment, such as a hamburger, and when it comes to another food, such as a cookie, the system works in the way we have learned, and the cookie held with the right hand is also more effective in the brain than the one held with the left hand. (Figure 7)



Figure 7 (ThinkNeuro Reserach): People who actively use their right hand in real-life react more positively to the image of a cookie held in the right hand when measured with brain imaging. The image represents heat maps obtained by eye-tracking analysis of identical images, one with the cookie in the right hand and the other with the cookie in the left hand.

This dynamic can be observed not only in restaurants and websites, but in all kinds of communication where the left hand is actively used. In TV commercials, brain data decreases in scenes where the product is held with the left hand. Usually, the director tells the actor to hold the product with the left hand for the brand name to be read more easily. However, in such a situation, reading the brand name on the product is at the expense of destroying the mirroring, and this can be monitored moment by moment in brain waves. In fact, by ignoring the principle of mirroring, the ad unintentionally undermines persuasiveness.

Another example is the Haribo commercial, where the emotional bond curve starts to decline as the actor reaches for the gummy bear with his left hand. (Figure 8)



Figure 8: (ThinkNeuro Research): Emotional bond curve decreasing as the player's left hand reaches for the gummy bear.

To take it even further, it is possible to say that there are master directors who use this knowledge in accordance with the perception they want to create. In the 2019 film “Joker” directed by Todd Phillips, the character played by Joaquin Phoenix uses his right hand for most of the movie. However, in the scenes where he shoots Wall Street employees on the train and writes jokes about mental illness in his notebook, he switches to his left hand. These scenes are critical in signaling Arthur’s transformation into the Joker. It can be said that his use of his left hand in these scenes symbolizes his detachment from his previous self and his adoption of a new identity.

Use of Mirror Neurons in E-commerce or Real Life Settings

In neuro web measurement studies conducted with e-commerce companies, brain waves and eye tracking are measured as participants navigate the site. In such studies, measurements are made and suggestions are presented on many issues ranging from how the page layout should be for better site navigation; from how the products are displayed to the ease of flow of the purchase page. In the e-commerce applications of the textile sector, how the product is displayed is of critical importance. Which angle to shoot from, how different color options should be displayed, how prices, discounts and campaigns will be presented are the main factors affecting sales. Mirror neuron concept is also effective in persuasion processes in e-commerce sites.

Anyone who has read this chapter so far can guess that the use of real people rather than inanimate mannequins in the presentation of clothes increases the impact. Even though the real mannequin in the website is a beauty, users can more easily project their own body through the mannequin’s body. Looking at the qualitative neuroscore-based in-depth interviews conducted during this process, it is possible to see phrases like: “Yes, this mannequin is definitely thinner than me. I look at the way these jeans look on her, the jeans fit her waist perfectly, but I have a different waist/hip ratio, so I can clearly understand that if I buy this product, I will have to narrow it at the waist”. What is even more important is that the user, whose mirror neurons are more active because they see a real person in front of them, finds it much easier to imagine the products on themselves, and the desire to buy to continue this simulation increases. Let’s imagine that there are two similarly designed fictitious websites, one that shows clothes on people and one that does not show clothes on people. (Figure 9) In the measurement, the visual with people increases the emotional bond, while the visual without people decreases the emotional bond. (Figure 10)

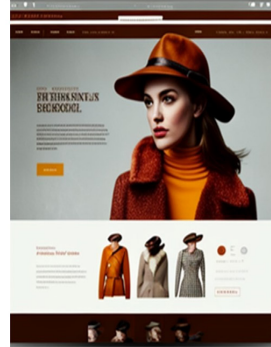
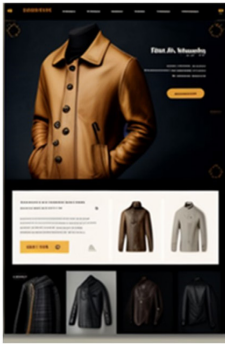


Figure 9 (ThinkNeuro Visual Midjourney): Images using human and not using human that are designed for research

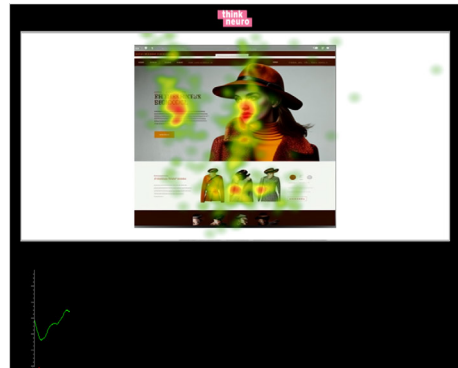


Figure 10 (ThinkNeuro Research) In similarly designed websites, an image with a person increases the emotional bond, while an image without a person and an empty outfit decreases the emotional bond.

Taking the issue even further, Walmart allows its customers to virtually see the clothes on themselves. In the “Be Your Own Model” project, they enable customers to better visualize how the clothes will look on them by using their own photos with machine learning.

A UK study uses visuals to encourage people to drink water to reduce binge drinking in bars. Posters of a man drinking a glass of water are hung behind bars and free water bottles are placed in front of them. The water bottles used in combination with the visuals increased water consumption by 300% compared to the control. In another experiment for the same customer, the use of only written messages without visuals (i.e. a situation in which mirror neurons could not be activated) was unsuccessful (Kearon, Ewing & Wood, 2017). (Figure 11)



Figure 11: (Midjourney): - Representative. The visual showing a person drinking water is more effective than the non-visual alternative in triggering mirror neurons and motivating water drinking behavior.

Crackers crunching in the mouth, the crackling sound of a campfire, a beautiful woman vaguely touching a red car as she passes by, a man inhaling the smell of coffee, the thin steam rising from the bread, the pizza with the cheese stretching out... Not just hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling and tasting these things; even as you read this, mirror neurons are activated in your brain. Mirror neurons fire not only when the action is performed, but also when the action is seen to be performed (Di Pellegrino et al., 1992). These mirror neurons can respond both to the image of the action and to a sound associated with that action, such as a peanut shell cracking or someone crying (Kohler et al., 2002). In this way the external world is represented and internalized by our brain.

Emotion Transfer Among Senses

The activation of mirror neurons is not only through visuals. In fact, it is better if they are not activated only through visuals. The more senses that are activated, the exponentially greater the effect. Activating the senses creates unconscious triggers that characterize the consumer's perceptions of abstract concepts related to the product (Krishna, 2012). In other words, if you can convey the feeling of the product to the other person not only visually, but also audibly, even tactilely, you will see that the effect of communication increases like a speed graph rising with increasing acceleration.

For example, the sound of crunching not only expresses a feeling of freshness, but also changes the eating experience as an internal stimulus through the vibration it creates. Moreover, according to both neuro-data and

literature, peripheral sounds (e.g. the “chiming” when you win gold in computer games) can be much more effective than external sounds. In fact, in the case of prominent sounds, there is activation not only in the auditory brain regions but also in the visual brain regions of those who hear the sound (McDonald et al., 2013). So the senses trigger each other.

The sizzling sound of crispy potatoes cooking in hot oil; the crisp of a chip in the mouth that crunches and crumbles and the glowing, popping crackle of a fire in a campsite reminiscent of the warmth and tranquility have different crackly/crispy feelings. The combination of visual and sound draws us more strongly into the emotion being conveyed, which in turn triggers different senses in our brain, allowing us to simulate the situation faster and more powerfully. As mentioned, in communication, the more senses you can activate about what the experience of using a product will be like, the greater the impact.

When you show steam rising from hot bread on the screen, you are conveying tactile and gustatory messages as well as visual ones. Instead of perceiving this steam as a cloud of fog hovering over the bread, our brain perceives it as a sign of the bread’s warmth (touch) and freshness (taste). Thus, the bread is evaluated not only on its appearance and the sound of crunching when eaten, but also on the perception that it will feel warm to the touch and fresh in the mouth. The brain quickly puts together and completes the rest of this simulation on its own, and suddenly you start craving for bread fresh out of the oven with clotted cream and honey spread on it. (Figure 12)



Figure 12 (Midjourney): A steaming loaf of bread is not just dough with a wisp of mist on it. It is a fresh, warm home.=)

One of the most important elements of persuasion in marketing systematics is the “mouth-watering effect”. As can be seen in Figure 13, the vapors rising from the hamburger made with meatballs fresh off the grill, the melting cheddar on it, successfully realize the flavor call and increase both emotional bond and attention.

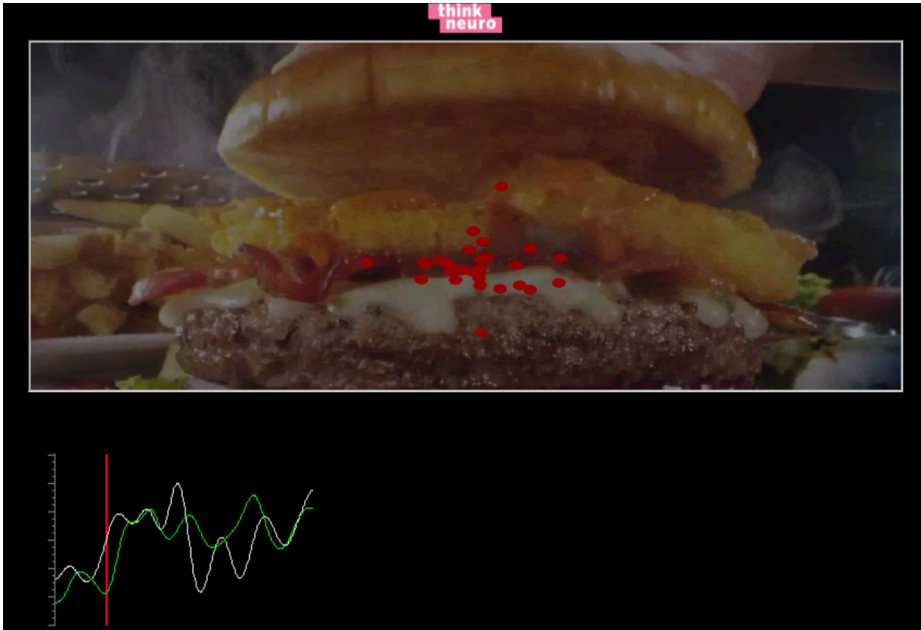


Figure 13 (ThinkNeuro Research): The vapors rising from the meatballs coming off the grill, the emotional bond and attention curves rising with the melting cheddar.

Using one sense to describe/feel a different feeling through identifications in the brain is not only found in marketing, but also in literature, cinema and all kinds of fiction. There is an opinion in some art circles that “a painting should be viewed in the light in which it was painted”. Like looking at a painting made in candlelight in candlelight, and a painting made in daylight in daylight...In different light, the painting also becomes different. The shadows and lights become different and the painting takes on a different feel. The aim is to better internalize the painter’s feelings in this way, to better understand the desired feeling with its pigment and tones.

In his book *Paper House*, the writer Carlos Maria Dominguez talks about reading authors with certain composers (Domínguez, 2005). He describes reading Goethe to Wagner opera or Baudelaire to Debussy. He mentions that hearing music at a low volume creates a melody that envelops the sentences, that the right pairing creates a pleasant harmony that enhances the reading experience, and that it is “as fundamental as the sense of sight”.

The point of all these examples, of course, is to illustrate how appealing to multiple senses enriches the experience. If it suits your taste, at least if you play classical music to your guests at a dinner where you are serving wine, they will think that the wine tastes more subtle and refined than it normally does (North, 2012). So you can turn a low-budget meal into a feast by using perceptual transitions between the senses.

Heinz, which has 80% of the European market and 60% of the American market, took advantage of the release of the first Shrek movie in theaters in 2000 to launch the green ketchup brand “Heinz EZ Squirt’s” (Fast Company, 2011). This development, which suddenly boosted sales, was greeted with joy and enthusiasm by Heinz executives. (Figure 14)



Figure 14: Green and purple ketchup from Heinz after the Shrek wave

Seeing that business was going well, the executives immediately put orange, purple, cyan and pink ketchup on the shelves. These colors signified not only the color of the packaging but also the color of the product (Mental Floss, 2014). However, things did not go as hoped and the products left the shelves in January 2006. What went wrong here? The product was aimed more at children and its packaging was more in line with their ergonomics. With its narrow head, it provided a flow suitable for drawing shapes, increasing children’s fun. Every brand that markets to children knows that marketing to children means marketing to their parents as well. Only a product that “the child will want and the parent will not say no” can hold on to the market.

When green products first came out, Shrek was taking the big screen by storm, winning the love of not only children but also parents. But there was

something else that was even more important, which made it possible for the products to enter the kitchen. Even though the products were a bit “weird”, parents who knew that there were green tomatoes in the world (Heinz stated that spinach gave the product its green color) and they did not put up a wall against green ketchup.

On the other hand, Heinz took this “acceptance” a bit too far and when it introduced colors such as cyan, purple and pink, the consumer put a “stop” to the brand. The new colored products, which gave the impression that they contained artificial coloring, were not in demand, and the demand for the green product also decreased. It seems that, once the Shrek hype faded, children preferred to see on their plates what they are more likely to see in real life. They preferred ketchup made from red Earth tomatoes over “a liquid made from blue space sauces”.

Packaging That Trigger Mirror Neurons

One of the main objectives, especially in food packaging, is that the packaging functions as a billboard, whether on the shelf, at home or when using the product (eating it, adding it to food, standing on the counter...etc). The packaging serves as the face of the product. For this reason, the packaging of food products is designed to stand out on the shelf, to differentiate from competitors (of course, as we saw in the example above, this differentiation has some limits).

For mirror neurons to be triggered effectively, the execution should reflect real life as much as possible. Images, advertisements, photos, sounds that are close to real life provide a faster triggering and it is easier for the mind to continue the story that has been started. This is why the illustration technique, which has recently become popular especially in the design of food packaging, does not work as intended.

Packaging research often analyzes the visuals on the packaging. The difference between these images showing the product (e.g. wafer, cake, pasta) and what the product is made of (spicy, cheesy, tomato chips) and the difference between these images being a drawing and being real has been repeatedly tested in controlled experiments. The analysis shows that the closer these visuals on the packaging are to real life, the more effectively they trigger mirror neurons and make the mouth water. Thus, the consumer feels the taste of the product on his/her palate even before opening the package. Evolutionary psychology also supports these findings. Having been tested by hunger for centuries, it is still essential for humans to feel that food is easily accessible. Besides survival, access to food also activates the dopaminergic (pleasure/motivation) system. In parallel, neuro research shows that the more realistic the presentation of food

on the packaging, the greater the desire to try the product and the greater the feeling of freshness.

Celebrities vs “It’s Me” Effect

One of the main goals in communication is to activate mirror neurons, and if the issue of activating mirror neurons is created by “it’s me” effect, then where do celebrities stand in this equation? Which celebrity is one of us? How many of us live next door to Taylor Swift? When we are walking down the street how many people come up to us and asking: “I’m a fan, can we take a selfie?”

If you are not one of these people, celebrities are not part of your daily life. Magazine programs that talk about celebrities have names like “star life”, Christmas programs with ambitious casts are advertised as a “parade of stars” and Ajda Pekkan (famous Turkish singer) has four albums called Superstar (Super Star, 1977; Super Star 2, 1979; Superstar ‘83, 1983; Superstar 4, 1987) In short, celebrities are stars. Like the Greek gods, they live in the sky, while we, the mortal unfamous, live on earth. They are made of light and we are made of flesh and blood.

Viewers have a hard time believing that celebrities use these products in real life. It is hard to imagine the famous singer scrubbing the stove in her own home to remove “dried grease”. In the world of advertising, there have been many ineffective brand alliances to capitalize on celebrity starlight. We don’t mean collaborations that ended because the brands terminated the contract due to some scandal in the celebrity’s life, or because the celebrity didn’t keep his or her word. Take the collaboration between Charlize Theron and Raymond Weil. The brand must not have liked the fact that Theron broke her promise that she would “wear a Raymond Weil watch every time she appeared in public” by wearing a Dior watch at an event she attended (BuzzFeed News, 2013).

We’re talking about “inappropriate” collaborations. Those where there is a mismatch between the brand and the celebrity. Campaigns that damage the feelings of sincerity of the audience who do not believe that the celebrity will use that brand, or campaigns where the perception of the celebrity and the perception of the brand do not match.

The partnership between Rihanna and Nivea is an example of this. Stefan Heidenreich, CEO of Beiersdorf, the company to which the famous cosmetics brand belongs, made it clear that he did not understand why the brand collaborated with Rihanna for its 100th anniversary. Heidenreich, who argued that the campaign should never have been published and said, “Nivea is a company that stands for trust, family and reliability.” Heidenreich found Rihanna too “raunchy” for the brand and ended the partnership (The Hollywood Reporter, 2012), (The Mirror, 2012).

Another example is the collaboration of Helena Bonham Carter, the embodiment of Tim Burton gothicism, who plays Bellatrix Lestrange, the cruelest death eater in Harry Potter, with the British cosmetics brand Yardley. Consumers did not believe that the actress, who was often photographed “in her most natural state” on the streets of London in her daily life, and who gave life to characters that could be called scary in her acting career, had a special sensitivity to cosmetics. Indeed, Carter herself later announced that she “never wears makeup and doesn’t understand why the brand chose her” (Insider, 2012). (Figure 15)



Figure 15: (from the site: <https://nl.pinterest.com/pin/528821181231661829/> : Consumers who couldn’t imagine Helena Bonham Carter, who in her daily life “goes out in her most comfortable state” and gives life to creepy characters in movies, representing a cosmetics brand.

Figure 15 – (Alternative image for Figure 15, if the previous one is not usable because of copyright) made by Midjourney.

In short, just because a person is a celebrity, does not mean that he or she will be compatible with the brand or will drive sales or will increase market share. This doesn’t mean celebrities should be banned from the marketing campaigns. However, there is a set of rules for using celebrities. First of all, it should be noted that celebrities attract attention but have a hard time creating a “it’s me” effect. To put it another way, they fail to create an emotional connection. We

reveal this situation with attention and emotional bond scores in hundreds of ads featuring celebrities and in research conducted by brain imaging method in ThinkNeuro laboratories. Not only with scores, but also when we look at the brain wave curves at the moment the celebrity appears in the ad, similar situations are observed. (Figure 16)



Figure 16 (ThinkNeuro Research): The emotional bond curve (green), which drops sharply with the appearance of Arda Turan (Turkish football player) in the Opet commercial, and the attention curve (white), which continues to increase.

On the other hand, celebrities can contribute to the brand beyond attracting attention in cases such as:

The expertise effect: It can be effective to feature David Beckham in a Nike ad, of course, because it is in line with his area of expertise, or to feature Brad Pitt in a commercial for a luxury watch brand instead of a Pringles ad. It will make more sense to the audience. We are talking about a train of thought that goes like: “Mehmet Öz has been doing programs on healthy living for years, he is already a doctor. It might be meaningful to choose the one he recommends among the many options on the multivitamin shelf, because he is an expert and he is famous for it”. On the other hand, a guitarist singer may know how to touch hearts with his beautiful songs, but his name won’t come to mind when a finance product is being promoted. It might be wiser to cast him in a commercial for a guitar or a festival than in a commercial for a cryptocurrency market portal.

Aristotle's rhetoric, explains the subject well. This framework, which is accepted as the basis of persuasive speeches, can be briefly summarized as who says it (ethos), how it creates a feeling (pathos) and what is said (logos). In marketing, which is the art of persuasion, it is not difficult to understand that it is the emotion being created (pathos) that will lead to action and the information (logos) is the post-rationalization element. However, if the motivation to perform this art of persuasion with celebrity is involved, one has to be careful about the person (ethos).

Ethos, which is also the origin of the word ethics and means "character" in Greek, refers to the credibility or authority a speaker has, based on his or her experience and reputation. A study conducted in 2011 using MRI devices proves the accuracy of this argument put forward by Aristotle in the 4th century BC. According to the study, while listening to a charismatic speaker, the frontal network in the brain is deactivated and we are much less likely to be critical of the speaker. Therefore, the question of which celebrity the brand will collaborate with, is more important than one might think.

Here are some principles of how celebrity brand partnerships can work:

- **Inspiration:** We are expected to think that the celebrities we see in the ad earn more than the average person. Therefore, their use of lower middle segment or "smart choice" brands in their daily lives may not be convincing to the viewer (there are exceptions, of course). When we see them using more luxurious brands, we may be inspired. Maybe we can't imagine the famous presenter/model going to a discount supermarket, but we can picture them using a Dyson hair dryer. The star soccer player may not wear cheap textile brands, but it is possible that he buys gas for his Ferrari from Opet.
- **The common denominator of celebrity and brand:** Utilizing the common denominator of celebrity and brand is also an effective method. Celebrities' hair is subjected to a lot of processing, their colors change from act to act, they are constantly blow-dried and heat-treated and their hair really suffers a lot. The red shade of Meryem Uzerli's hair, who plays the Sultan Hürrem in the Magnificent Suleyman TV series, has left its mark on an era (and is also on the series). Her hair color became very fashionable among women while the series was airing. The Elidor ad, which shows the actress on set with her hair done and explains how she protects her hair from damage, successfully combined the brand's value proposition with the celebrity's real-life problem.

It is a fact that Tarkan (Turkish singer) is a "cool" celebrity. (According to the research we conducted, he is one of the celebrities most identified with the adjective "cool") CocaCola has positioned itself to be "cool" as a brand and

naturally, Tarkan & CocaCola collaboration work very well.

In short, the audience needs to believe that the brand has/can have a place in the celebrity's life. They need to find a sincere relationship between celebrity and the brand.

The Turkish Airlines commercial with Messi and Kobe Bryant was an ad that brought together not one but two giants. By showing the celebrities, who fly a lot due to their professions, in business class rather than economy class, as would be expected of them in real life, the brand set a good example of the right use of celebrities. Although there is a slight dip in the emotional bond when Messi is first seen in the ad, the curve quickly recovers and then continues to rise when Kobe Brant is seen without any interruption. As generally found in celebrity use, attention increases in scenes where celebrities appear. (Figure 17)

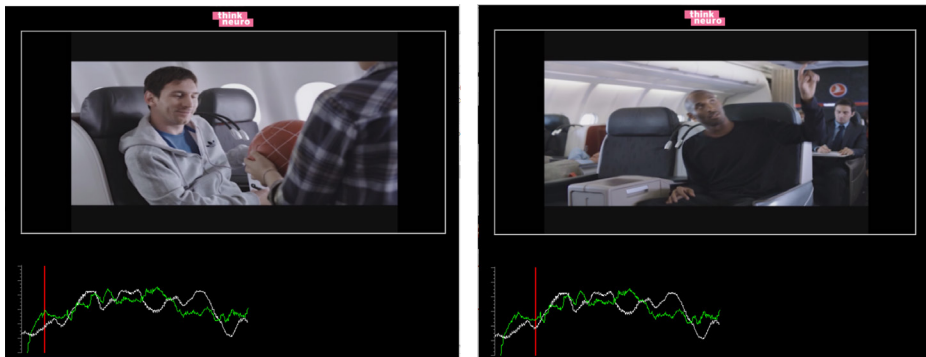


Figure 17 (ThinkNeuro Research): : When the celebrities are shown in a setting where viewers can imagine them in real life, the negative emotional bond can disappear. There is a slight dip in the emotional bond curve (green) when Messi is shown, but the curve recovers quickly and then continues rising when Kobe Brant is shown. The attention curve is also on the rise (white).

Mirror neurons open magical doors to understanding human beings and how people understand each other. The central branch of empathy, the basis of learning, mirror neurons are also the precious key to being a social creature. These neurons, which answer the mind-body problem, which is deeply examined in philosophy, through neuroscience; are one of the deepest gaps between artificial intelligence and the human mind according to our opinion.

We live with a hardware that is influenced by our best friend, the image of a man drinking water at a bar, packaging, models on a website, celebrities, even apps that put the phone in the wrong hand. This amazing mechanism that allows us to feel a gesture made by someone else in our body by seeing or even hearing it, has a dark side that we need to be very careful about: It makes us experience the gesture of the other person without distinguishing whether it is good or bad. They can help us learn the good and the beautiful, but they can also help us

internalize the bad and the cruel. They can cause us to unconsciously imitate negative behaviors and attitudes as well as positive ones, and help spread destructive attitudes, opinions and prejudices. It is therefore imperative to be careful about who we are exposed to in our social environment, in the media and even in our families. Otherwise, we may find ourselves “in a selfish and ungrateful world that denies love, in the corner, afraid of life..” as Nilüfer sings in her famous song. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, the person we see in the mirror the most, is ourselves. We think the adventure of getting to know a person is most precious when it is also the adventure of getting to know thyself. The stepmother in Snow White, while looking in the mirror and constantly asking if there was someone more beautiful than she is, was actually looking for external approval. However, if she had used the mirror to really look into herself, to see herself, to recognize herself, the story would have been completely different.

Conclusion

In summary, the discovery and exploration of mirror neurons have significantly advanced our understanding of neural processes underpinning human cognition and behavior. Mirror neurons reveal a profound neural linkage between the observation of actions and the ability for empathy, imitation, and vicarious experiences.

In the context of marketing, mirror neurons constitute a powerful tool for engendering emotional engagement and persuasion among consumers. When judiciously applied in advertising, these neurons facilitate consumers to emotionally invest in narratives, products, or services. This emotional engagement often translates into actions, compelling individuals to actively seek out the featured products or services.

Furthermore, the “it’s me” effect, predicated on the natural inclination to trust and align with individuals perceived as akin to oneself, reinforces the persuasive efficacy of mirror neurons in marketing. Consumers tend to be more receptive to recommendations and endorsements from those they identify with, rendering word-of-mouth marketing and peer recommendations especially influential.

Mirror neurons constitute a potent interface between human cognitive processes and consumer persuasion dynamics. As marketing professionals continue to leverage the potential of these neural mechanisms, future advertising endeavors hold promise for not only capturing attention but to create emotional connection. A comprehensive understanding of the profound impact of mirror neurons on consumer behavior represents a valuable asset for the formulation of successful marketing strategies within the ever-evolving landscape of consumer persuasion.

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DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND MANIPULATION IN THE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The subject of this contribution is a reflection on the nature of digital communication with a focus on manipulation in the online environment. The text presents the possibilities of digital communication in the current online environment, followed by nine selected specifics that characterize manipulation in the online environment. After sketching the theoretical starting points, the article continues by presenting its own research, the aim of which is to (1) present the transfer of ten manipulative techniques from traditional media to online media (i.e., New media practices) and (2) identify fifteen of the most common manipulative techniques that determine the character of digital media. In the context of the discussion, we present selected negative consequences of media manipulation in the digital environment and several possible reasons why manipulation occurs in the digital environment. The author draws on fifteen years of interest and study of digital media and the issue of mass media manipulation in the digital media environment.

Keywords: Digital communication, media, online environment, manipulation, manipulative techniques in the media.

Introduction

We understand the term “media” (from the Latin medium - mediator) as tools that mediate communication, while the term “mass media” is a subset of media and is closely tied to specific media such as print, radio or television. Despite this difference, the professional literature rarely distinguishes between the terms “media” and “mass media” and equally rarely distinguishes between the terms “media communication” and “mass media communication”. In general, the term “media communication” is used to refer to social communication involving different types of media; therefore, it also implicitly applies to communication through mass media.

Mass media communication is communication in which the mass media (hereinafter referred to as “the media”) participate. The term “mass communication” was created at the end of the 1930s, when the obvious influence of the mass media of the time (i.e., print media and radio) was not only observed, but also accepted (McLuhan, 2000). Mass media communication is a process in which a mass or professional communicator uses various types of mass media with the aim of informing quickly, over a long distance and permanently, in order to influence the largest possible audience (Jirák & Köpplová, 2009, p. 24).

Globalization has significantly influenced the nature of mass communication. It brought a global media system, which soon became a commercial system. This is evidenced by the exports of feature movies, television programs, books, music carriers, etc., which flooded the world markets with goods and services during the 20th century. Only the national media systems - press, radio and television - remained in the ownership and control of domestic entrepreneurs. Another change was the development of global commercial television, which reached the general public and, on the other hand, caused a decline in the importance and interest of public broadcasting, which until then had played a key role in national media systems. These were two parallel phenomena that were happening all over Europe.

McChesney connects the global commercial media system with the market mindset of the media. Among other things, for example, information began to be perceived as a commodity and media activity as a business with the aim of generating profit. Finally, the consequence of the market (commercial) thinking of the media was the division of the media into serious media (media intended for elites and the upper middle class of the population) and tabloid media (McChesney, cited in McChesney, Wood & Foster, 1998). At the end of the 20th century, the global media system was supplemented by the Internet, which created an environment for “democratic media communication”. In today’s online environment, another specific group of media has become social media and within them, for example, disinformation media.

In the Internet environment, they are related to manipulative campaigns that are pre-planned, effective and at the same time reaching a wide audience. Manipulation on the Internet represents a certain way of influencing an individual or a group, or even an entire community, with the aim of changing their opinions and attitudes without them realizing it. Media manipulation chooses ways and methods, as a result of which the manipulated person is convinced that he has made his own decision, i.e., he is convinced that it is a decision of his own free will. The aim of such manipulation is to mislead people. It tends to be more difficult to detect because it often represents a formal truth,

although its content is actually a lie (Zasępa & Hłowiecki, 2003; Ftorek, 2017; Moravčíková, 2022). The core of media manipulation is therefore a danger that deserves our attention. Especially because the increase in false or manipulative contents is directly related to the current distrust of a large part of the population towards facts, expert information and scientific authorities and, conversely, the inclination of an increasingly large audience towards conspirativism (Pipes, 1997; Uscinski et al., 2020), which is accompanied by a rapid increase in the number of conspiracy websites (European Commission, n.d.; van Bavel, 2020; Hood, 2021). In addition, experts generally warn against the low media literacy of the recipients (Chovančáková, 2020; TASR, 2019), against the incomplete understanding of the educational potential of digital technologies (Polievková, 2022), warn against the weak ability of people's critical thinking (Adams & Hamm, 2000 ; Králik & Máhrík, 2019), from the bad habits of the recipients due to the use of media (Izrael, cited in Izrael et al., 2019), from so-called cognitive biases, as a consequence of distorted thinking (Ruisel, 2015), etc. As a result of these trends, the current developed countries are experiencing an era in which media manipulation and its manifestations are perceived as a global threat (Webb et al., 2016).

The subject of this contribution is the presentation of selected specifics of manipulation in the online environment and subsequently the identification of the most common manipulative techniques in selected online media. The author draws on fifteen years of interest and study of digital media and the issue of mass media manipulation in the digital media environment.

Options of Digital Communication In The Online Environment

The variable possibilities associated with digital media were discussed by M. Lister et al. (2003), T. Zasępa and P. Olekšák (2006), W.R. Neuman (1991), W. Schweibenz and F. Thissen (2003) and other media theorists already at the beginning of the 21st century. To this day, these and other scholars explore the diverse contexts (including manipulation) that arise from these fundamental properties of digital media:

Digitization

Digitization represents a significant shift in the process of media development. In digital media, all data is converted into numbers, which is in contrast to analog media, which is characterized by storing data exclusively in another analog, physical form. The possibilities and comfort of digital processing thus significantly outweigh analog processing.

Virtuality

It does not represent a new term (it was used at least as early as the 18th century), but it acquires a new meaning in connection with digital media. It

represents the opposite of reality; each thing has its real and virtual form (for example, we know the social game of chess not only in physical reality, but also in its digital form on the Internet). Thanks to software design and graphics, virtuality brings new experiences into the human physical world: new (virtual) images, new simulations, new ways of communication and interaction, new spaces and tools used in these spaces, etc. (Lister et al., 2003).

Interactivity

Interactivity represents a shift from the days when the personal computer was a tool with a static and one-way web, i.e., showed the user its content but did not allow any other activities. Thanks to interactivity, there is: (1) Interconnection of digital media; (2) to the website's communication with users of these media (the website displays a list of products and the user selects, evaluates, states his wishes, which the web server accepts and further processes requests; the user is an active creator of media content, individual use of digital media, etc.) and (3) communication between users occurs (Lister et al., 2003).

In short, the interactivity of digital media is accompanied by the understanding of the user primarily as a consumer (chooses products and contents), who has the ability to change media contents (individually evaluates, engages with existing and creates new contents) and thus stimulates further communication. According to Jiráček and Kopplová, interactivity also gives the user the feeling that he is a partner of the media that he not only uses, but also reacts and adapts to his needs and interests (Jiráček & Kopplová, 2009). This is also why digital media are a symbol of the definitive retreat of a homogenous audience at the expense of an active audience that consists of many individuals.

The distraction of the media system

This phrase is closely related to the term "media decentralization"; in the broadest sense, they are synonyms. The dispersion of the media system brings (1) a shift not only in the relationship between the user and the medium, but also (2) a shift in the field of media production; we see not only an increase in the number of different types of digital media (from serious, through tabloids to misinformation), but also a growing individualism in the use of these media. Finally, the decentralization of the media brings a third shift, visible in (3) the consumption of media texts. While recent decades have seen a trend of users towards tabloids (Lister et al., 2003); the rise of tabloid practices accompanies sensationalism and infotainment in both serious media and news media, although they are not equally typical of all news media (Esser, 1999; Franklin et al., 2005; Curran & Seaton, 1997). Currently, we also see audience interest in "constructing and reproducing social reality" (Burton & Jiráček, 2001, p. 257) as offered by disinformation media. The increase in interest in the contents of

disinformation media is confirmed by many experts (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2018; Levy, 2022), which is becoming credible to an increasing number of recipients (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Zhou & Zafarani, 2022).

Hypertextuality

Since its inception, the function of websites has been focused on displaying and immediately searching for information. To clarify the meaning of this word, the prefix “hype” (from the Greek above, outside, behind) is essential, i.e., hypertext is a link that points to another text and thus connects the original text with other texts. The invention of hypertext is considered one of the key discoveries of the world wide web; hypertext is already fourth in the ranking of “100 Ideas that changed the web”, while, for example, the Internet is in tenth place and the web browser is only in twenty-second place (Boulton, 2014).

In addition, in connection with the hypertextuality of the web and web contents, we can also talk about “multimedia” as another, today increasingly important, feature of digital media (although experts at the beginning of the 21st century did not consider it among the top 5 features of digital media). By the term “multimedia” we mean the interconnectedness of channels, which allows the web to appeal to several human sensory organs at the same time. The web therefore uses text, images, sound or, for example, video sequences and engages several human senses at once, which, in addition to the benefit and richness of perceptions, also has its negative side. Experts draw attention to it, talking about the distracted attention of users, which arises as a result of the overload of human senses and leads, for example, to misinterpretation of information (Schweibenz & Thissen, 2003). In addition to other negatives, the usefulness of the website and its offer for the user also decreases.

Selected Specific as Part of Manipulation In The Online Space

In the online environment, we can talk about the specifics of manipulation, which, due to its nature, takes place primarily in the online environment.

Lost in cyberspace

In connection with the aforementioned properties of digital media, we also want to mention a phenomenon related to human existence in the digital environment. The term “lost in hyperspace” has been added to the media vocabulary, which refers to a state where a user of digital media loses track of the web pages he is visiting and begins to move confusedly in the virtual environment. It can be said that it is lost in the offer of diverse online contents and in the large number of possible choices (Schweibenz & Thissen, 2003, p. 25). This, of course, also helps the “Trojan horse” of online media - online media manipulation.

Manipulations using digital media technology

Experts agree that the era of the influence of traditional media, such as print, television or radio, is definitively ending, and the forms of manipulation from the times of the “old media”, which came mainly from state and business structures, are similarly receding (Levitskaya & Fedorov, 2020; Flintham et al., 2018; Word Association of New Publishers, 2022). Current technological improvements in digital media have created a media environment in which the disinformation scene can only thrive (Arias-Maldonado, 2020).

Infodemic online environment

Today, no one doubts that the intelligent technology of digital media has enabled but also multiplied the manipulative consequences that, within the mass public debate, participate in the spread of rumors, connect like-minded people (we are talking about the so-called information bubbles) and create an “infodemic environment”, i.e., an environment that is more than ever characterized by a pandemic of misinformation (infodemic).

Individual users

In addition, the possibilities of media manipulation in digital media can be expanded because their masterminds are not only online media, but also individual users. They are carriers of individual predispositions (including media (lack of) literacy or critical (lack of) reflection of diverse digital contents) (Marshall, 2004; Reifová et al., 2004; Meyrowitz, 2006).

Active audience

Based on the individual predispositions of the users, the activity of the users also develops. The so-called active online audience therefore expands not only the manipulative possibilities of online media but also the effects of online manipulation. Considering the dominant activities of users in the Internet environment, at least three types of active audience can be distinguished. These are made up of users, which we divide based on their main activities in the online space:

a) *Active “amplifier” of online content:* A user whose main goal is to spread online content. He does not create new posts or valuable content, but spreads information about other people or events that he finds interesting. In the online environment, this type of user is a spreader of biased information or even conspiracies.

b) *Active online content creator:* A user whose main goal is to spread and comment on online content. He also likes to use other online options on the Internet, such as voting, tagging other users or inviting them to participate in discussions, etc. In this way, it extends not only the reach of its own messages, but also the participation of other users in online activities.

c) *Active creator of knowingly false and conspiratorial content*: A user whose main goal is the conscious (more rarely unconscious) spreading of false and conspicuously problematic content. We refer to this type of users as “conspirators” because their activities consciously contribute to public uncertainty, to the polarization of society, to the infodemic (i.e., information pandemic) or to potential political, cultural, social or economic conflicts and changes.

Disputed collective intelligence

The use of digital media in personal and professional communication is increasing. The impact of digital media is also growing in importance, including the dangers we face in the digital space; for example, we can talk about the dangers that are directly related to the fragmentation of online resources, the high level of sensationalism and tabularization of media contents, the blurring of the differences between authentic and inauthentic behavior in the online space, the loss of user privacy, etc. Building “online collective intelligence” is also a significant danger. In the online space, the source of this risk is the active audience, which is the creator of freely available educational content. Online collective intelligence is “built” by, for example, Wikipedia, which can also be understood as a well-organized, joint initiative that can be a partial contribution to knowledge. On the other hand, however, it is still true that its influence in forming public opinion is questionable or at least debatable. The quality of information is always a serious problem. This is also why online collective intelligence is also a potential source of massive mistakes.

The manipulative potential of online discussions

Another important space that encourages audience activity is created by online discussions. However, as Radičová points out, the possibilities of online discussions do not “automatically bring interactivity in communication or an improvement in the quality of unguided discussion.” Practice confirms that the same debate participants are mostly active in online discussions, while others passively read posts or turn to political representatives in one direction. According to Radičová, this is also the reason why online debates have a manipulative character. They are the space of a selected group of people, whose opinions are mostly sharply defined, and therefore they are not only manipulative, but also rarely constructive, i.e., they rarely lead to conclusions and an agreement between the discussing parties (Radičová, cited in Kasarda, 2018).

Online propaganda

Propaganda is most often perceived and generally defined as media manipulation aimed at achieving social control (especially in the context of

politics). It represents a deliberate activity, the intention of which is to subjugate someone. The term was created in the first half of 17th century, when it served as a term for “spreading faith” (so-called *propaganda fide*). The concept of “propaganda” penetrated into politics in totalitarian regimes (through ideas promoted by the ruling elite and interest groups at the time); then it acquired a definitively negative meaning (Ftorek, 2017).

Moravčíková distinguishes the following most common tools of propaganda: Black-and-white depiction of reality, selective selection of information and facts, non-disclosure of essential information, use of well-known experts or popular personalities to persuade or attract potential voters, attempts to demonize the enemy and idealize one’s own system, use of a double standard when dealing with friends and enemies, “*us and them*” rhetoric, spreading misinformation and rumors, conducting media campaigns, presenting half-truths and assumptions as facts, turning a blind eye to inconvenient information, deliberate attempts to mislead and deceive others, obfuscation and ambiguity in key statements, simplification of otherwise complex issues, using quotes taken out of context, labelling, using easy-to-remember slogans and symbols, stereotyping, trying to arouse emotions, using history to inflame negative passions, resenting unfounded assumptions, control and censorship media, exerting pressure on the public, creating idols and taboo topics, presenting a narrow circle of “experts” who comment on individual problems, ignorance of different opinions, deliberate mixing and twisting of the course of events, etc. Propaganda uses all these tools separately and as a combination of several tools at once (Moravčíková, 2022, p. 25-26).

News with a propaganda character can be defined as news of a “news” nature (primarily in the context of political events), which are created with the aim of influencing the opinions or perception of the public. Fake news with the character of propaganda is usually based on biased and manipulative facts, often supplemented by the opinions and comments of the authors of the articles. Texts support a certain political party, ideology, or perspective, and their primary goal is to bring a public figure, organization, or government to a directed audience perception and action (Tandoc et al., 2018).

In connection with propaganda, Hłowiecki also draws attention to the fact that there is such a thing as the “causal function of the word”. The author is convinced that a word can have just as powerful an effect as a deed (and it is therefore possible to influence an individual through words). Hłowiecki claims that it is precisely the effectiveness of the word that gave birth to propaganda (Hłowiecki & Zasepa, 2003, p. 18); i.e., a process that today is usually defined as the process of controlling information and managing public opinion with

the intention of achieving reactions that will be consistent with the promoter's intentions.

Fake news, hoaxes and conspiracies

In the online space, the degree of truth and veracity of stories that are constructed based on interpretation, perception, belief and intentionality (i.e., the interest of the content creator to achieve something) is very questionable. Although stories are, in the words of the Israeli historian Y. N. Harari, the "decisive evolutionary advantage of man", thanks to which he won over other animals in the fight for space (Harari, 2018, p. 31), it is precisely fake news, hoaxes and conspiracies (creating myths, fiction, fantasies, assumptions, subjective constructs or attitudes, etc.), which significantly complicate the situation today.

Research repeatedly confirms that the majority of people who have access to a computer or own a smartphone trust these types of media outlets rather than official information provided by major and socially recognized institutions (Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2018, 2022). This subjective trust in one's own judgments is also supported algorithmically in the social media environment, i.e., thanks to algorithms, users are primarily fed content with which the recipients sympathize, and therefore, moving away from fake media content is a really challenging goal (Pronin et al., 2001). The establishment of fake news in society is accompanied, among other things, by skepticism in the implementation of the remedy. As a result of long-term media manipulation, there is an assumption that recipients are unlikely to accept corrective information coming from scientists or experts (Pasek, 2018; Lewandowski, 2018; Landrum & Olshansky, 2019).

Methodology of the Research

The aim of my own research is (C1) presentation of the transfer of manipulative techniques from traditional media to online media (i.e., New media practices) and (C2) identification of the most common manipulative techniques that determine the nature of digital media.

The first part of the research (C1) presents the findings based on our own long-term observation of the media and their correlation with online media. We understand the transfer of manipulative techniques from traditional media to online media as new media practices that co-determine the nature of the online media we are investigating.

With the intention of fulfilling the second research objective, a qualitative content analysis of the texts of popular online media in Slovakia proved to be a suitable research method. The second part of the research therefore examines the most popular Slovak online media, which include: Pluska, Topky, Markiza,

Joj, s Čas (medialne.trend.sk, 2022). It is interesting that in the list of the most popular online media, there are no serious media in the first five; in all cases, we can talk about online media that are primarily entertaining in nature and are considered more like tabloid online media.

The research set of texts represents a total of 180 texts.

The research method was content analysis. We consider content analysis of 180 randomly selected texts from studied online media as an appropriate research technique to make inferences by interpreting and coding textual material. Despite the fact that coding can identify several important characteristics (for example, frequency, space, direction or intensity), we studied only one variable, namely the potential presence of manipulative techniques in randomly selected contents published in the investigated online media. The most common techniques of current online media manipulation are presented in the results section.

The time frame of the second part of the research is the interval September 1, 2021 - September 1, 2022. The design of the research is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the research file subjected to content analysis

Name of the online medium	Number of examined texts (n = 180)
Pluska.sk	n = 36
Topky.sk	n = 36
Markiza.sk	n = 36
Joj.sk	n = 36
Čas.sk	n = 36

Results

New media practices - transfer of manipulative techniques from traditional media to the digital world (C1)

The five basic properties of digital media and the selected specifics of the online space presented above lead to various possibilities that are increasingly abused in the online space today for the deliberate manipulation of the online audience. Many manipulative techniques are “brought” into the digital space from traditional media. We understand the transfer of manipulative techniques from traditional media to online media as new media practices that co-determine the character of online media.

- *Agenda setting* – Selection (choice) of topics and determining the order of topics (based on their importance, significance from the point of view of the media) (Jiráček & Říchnová, 2000, p. 8). In relation to the selected topics, the interconnectedness of the channels (i.e., multimediality) increases the effects (influence) of online media on the recipients, resulting in the influence of several human sensory organs at the same

time. The management of online content based on agenda setting is further effective due to the speed of information dissemination, which is unrivaled thanks to the Internet (and its technical possibilities presented above).

- *Framing theory* – Framing is closely related to the order of presentation; is the following process. Through framing, online media influence how to think about something; i.e., they give the audience a perspective on how to think and emphasize this perspective not only through text (print media) or through image (audiovisual media), but by including several human senses at once (text, sound, image).
- *Priming theory* – A method based on the amount of time and space that the media devotes to a specific issue. This determines the audience's receptivity and vigilance in relation to the presented problem and conditions not only interest in the problem (i.e., priming), but also lack of interest in similar (possibly the same) problems that the mass media no longer attach importance to. Interactivity and virtuality give new power and impact to the online message, i.e., they bring new experiences into the human physical world: new ways of communication and interaction, new (virtual) images, new simulations, new spaces and tools, etc.
- *Spiral of silence* – Mass media often contribute to the silence of some and the loudness of the opinions of others, which naturally affects the audience. There is a presentation of the opinions of the apparent majority, which actively uses the technical support of the Internet (unlimited time and space, the speed of spreading news, etc.). The spiral of silence is supported, for example, by “opinion bubbles” that are formed from users with the same opinion (e.g., in discussions on forums or blogs, in discussion groups on social networks, etc.). Also according to research, the same participants in the debate are mostly active, while others only passively read the posts. This is also the reason why online debates have a manipulative nature.
- *Headline Manipulation* – Online audience manipulation can occur through a headline that focuses confusing, misleading or deceptive content. Despite the fact that it is an untruth or a partial lie, a certain assessment is fixed in the minds of the recipients. Manipulative techniques thrive in the online space thanks to the distracted attention of users, which, according to experts, arises as a result of overloading the human senses and leads, for example, to erroneous interpretation of information (Schweibenz & Thissen, 2003).
- *Manipulation of Media Vocabulary* – Manipulation of online audiences occurs by creating new meanings for old and commonly known words.

This is the distortion of the meaning of some words by the media and the imposition of new meanings that suit the creators of media content, political leaders, individuals with a specific agenda or ideology, etc.

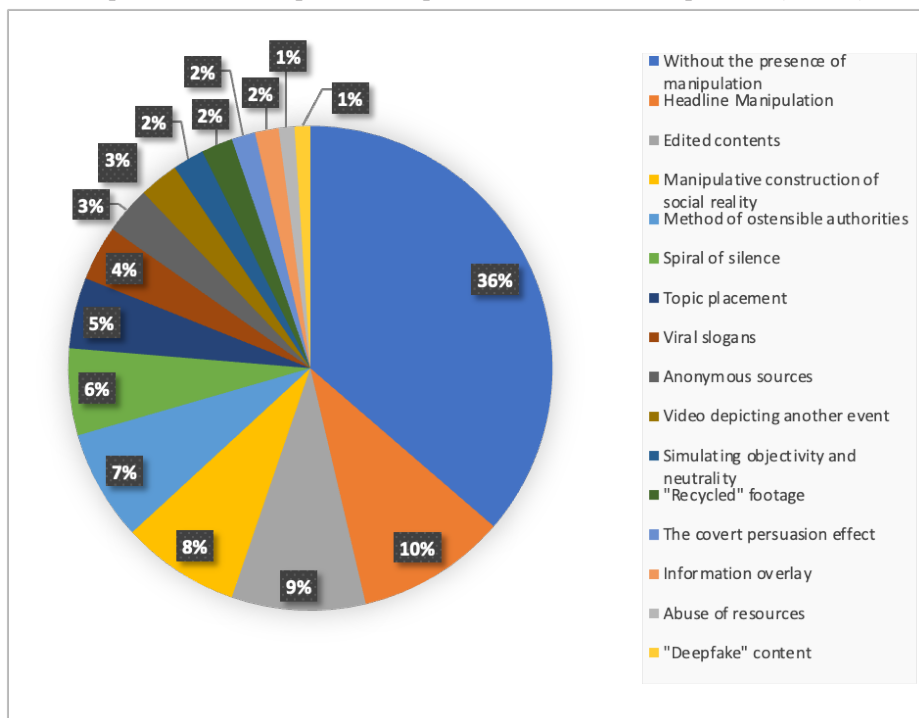
- *Method of ostensible authorities* – Pushing ostensible authorities to the public who present their own opinions or attitudes. A person who is presented as an authority by the media becomes an authority through the mass media. The problem is, the frequent confusion of moral authority with intellectual authority or even celebrity. Potentially all active users become “authorities” in the online space. In addition, online media provide space for uncensored online communication (e.g., within discussion forums, blogs or in the space of online communities on social networks), which encourages the “apparent authorities” in the online space to be active.
- *The covert persuasion effect* – A manipulative method whereby the mass media present controversial and often false opinions as natural and self-evident. In the amount of information on the Internet, this is an increasingly common form of mass media manipulation. Therefore, experts warn against the increase in the consumption of media texts that are false or even intentionally false (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Fitzpatrick, 2018; Levy, 2022) and yet become credible for an increasing number of recipients (Vosoughi et al., 2018; Zhou & Zafarani, 2022).
- *Overlay method* – A manipulative technique that represents the presentation of information (or a topic or issue) in an interesting or sensational form in order to divert the attention of the recipients from another topic or issue. We commonly talk about overlaying information with information. The technique is called a “red herring” in journalistic jargon, and it has many possibilities in the online space, taking place every day. Every day, news (created by someone) disappears in the maze of news programs, information channels or websites. According to Shah, contents that “disappear” in this way, on the other hand, often appear purified, i.e., in the form of “independent” journalism (Shah, 2006).
- *Simulating objectivity and neutrality* – Objectivity and neutrality are basic principles of journalistic ethics. However, many media outlets claim to be independent and objective and yet carry out manipulative techniques. In the context of the simulation of objectivity and neutrality in all types of mass media, a hidden but tendentious (mostly political) opinion is promoted. According to Iłowiecki and Zasepa, an accompanying phenomenon of this technique is the frequent absence of evaluation or defense of socially recognized values (Iłowiecki & Zasepa, 2003). In

addition to other negatives, the usefulness of the website and its offer for the user also decreases.

The most common techniques of online media manipulation (C2)

Based on the use of consciously manipulative actions and activities that change the true nature of media content to a deceptive one, several frequent techniques of online manipulation can be identified in the texts we examined (n = 180). The sum of the findings exceeds the value of 100% because several manipulative techniques were sometimes found in the examined texts at the same time. Our findings are shown in Graph 1.

Graph 1 The most frequent techniques of online media manipulation (n = 180)



- *Without the presence of manipulation* –The largest set in our research sample is represented by media contents in which we did not find any of the manipulative techniques known to us. From the total set, this variable represents 69 units, which is more than a third of the investigated media contents (36%).
- *Headline Manipulation* – In our research set, the headline is the most common attempt at manipulation in the online media we examine. Accepting the opinion that even a few words create a link, because even a brief link is communication, we can also consider false information in

the headline as manipulative communication. Unfortunately, the headline itself turns out to be a tool that very often, instead of providing objective information, exposes the recipients to a manipulative discourse in which influence and persuasion are masked by complex of linguistic strategies. This manipulation is dangerous because, as research confirms, ideas planted by a headline can be hard to shake – even if the rest of the article doesn't support it (Ecker et al., 2014). And because the headline creates the first impression, it significantly changes not only the way people read the article, but also the way they remember it (Digirolamo & Hintzman, 1997). This variable received 10% of the total set, i.e., 19 times.

- *Edited contents* – When working with text, a fairly common manipulation technique is the selective selection of information or its false arrangement. Creators of text content also reach out to combine true information with their own interpretations, etc. In the field of manipulation of media content, in our research sample we noted, for example, the connection of a new event with a previous event, which the creator “enriched” with new elements such as dramatization and emotionalism. Moreover, the new form of media content include editing text, which included manipulative intervention - compared to the original text - which was taken from serious media. The manipulative text did not contain the entire statement, i.e. most of all we can see a selection of the authority's statement. This variable received 9% of the total set, i.e., 17 times.
- *Manipulative construction of social reality* – The technique of online media manipulation is based on the ideological selection of messages, i.e., a selection that focuses, for example, on contents with elements of manipulation, criticism of officially accepted solutions or emphasizes the negativism of solutions, etc. The ideological choice of news can be accompanied by the choice of more tabloid means of expression: an increase in visual material at the expense of text, a departure from scientific authorities and sources, etc. Overall, we can talk about the sensational graphic rendering of the contents (title size, prominent punctuation, etc.). In our research set, this technique occurs quite often, which corresponds to the nature of the investigated media, i.e., it is online media with a tabloid character. We recorded this variable in 8%, i.e., 15 times.
- *Method of ostensible authorities* – In our research sample we can see the confusion of moral authorities with intellectual authorities, and even celebrities. It is celebrities who appear as relatively frequent “authorities” who evaluate the state of healthcare, indicate trends in the direction of society, talk about the consequences of government regulations, etc. Their

statements trigger uncensored online communication within discussion forums and online communities under statements on social networks. Celebrities seem to be relatively new phenomenon in online space, that confirms the relationship between celebrity, media and public (Sharon, 2019). Even on the Internet, celebrities are the “authorities” who say “what comes and goes, including what people strive for or reject” (Gaffney, Holmes, 2007, p. 1). That is why they are in their opinions “close to the person”, i.e., they appear to be an authority (van Zoonen, 2005). The placement of the topic with a manipulative character in our research file acquired a value of 7%, i.e., 14 times.

- *Spiral of silence* – We often find a one-sided preference for certain ideologies (especially the political agenda) in our research sample. The silence of some and the loudness of the opinions of others, with the participation of the media, naturally influences the opinion of users. Even in our research sample, online media “spin” the spiral of silence (i.e., the silence of the majority and vice versa, the predominance of the opinions of the majority to the detriment of minorities). It is this technique that allows the media to influence the voices that resonate in society (and those that don’t) and thus the media shape the attitudes that prevail in society (although it may not be so in reality). Spiral of silence with a manipulative character in our research set acquired a value of 6%, i.e., 11 times.
- *Topic Placement* – If newsrooms have a topic that they feel is “inconvenient” (such as an apology for a mistake they have to publish), they have several options to hide that information from the public as much as possible. One such trick is to place unwanted information in the media on the back pages of a specific issue, where information of lesser significance is usually found. In the case of electronic media, the solution is even simpler. It is enough if the unwanted information is not found on the main website, but will be placed in one of its sections or even subsections. In this case, the information will be logistically hidden and will soon be absorbed by a whole range of other information (we are talking about the so-called information smog). The placement of the topic with a manipulative character in our research file acquired a value of 5%, i.e., 9 times.
- *Viral Slogans* – A tactic of creating short, catchy phrases that aim to deliver a compelling and more than once shocking message. They spread virally through memes, hashtags, posters and videos. They expand in the social media landscape despite often not citing the source or author of the slogan. Successful viral slogans often capitalize on the latest events.

This is also why they mistakenly become a catalyst for news (Harvard Kennedy School, n.d.). Viral slogans often spread outside the media (i.e., used both online and offline). An example of a viral slogan in our research sample is the anti-vaxxer campaign of the non-parliamentary radical political party called Republika, which with the slogan “Hands off our children: Stop corona totality!” moved from digital media to billboards in Slovak streets. Viral slogans with a manipulative character in our research set acquired a value of 4%, i.e., 7 times.

- *Anonymous sources* – Journalists and editors have an obligation to protect the sources of their information. On the other hand, it is considered a dangerous mistake if they state the information with the addition that it comes from a source “who does not wish to be named” or they talk about a “well-informed source” or a “source that is close” to the person to whom the information refers. In these cases, a careful distinction is necessary. It is fine if it is about protecting an existing source of information and the above examples are used by the journalist to inform the public and protect the public interest. However, if this originally protective mechanism is misused and used, for example, for the purpose of spreading misinformation or a targeted anti-campaign, we are talking about manipulation. Anonymous sources occurred in our research set in 3%, i.e., 6 times.
- *Video depicting another event* – During almost any major news event, video from previous incidents can be “recycled” and shared along with a description that relates it to the current event. This is a deliberate act with the intent to cause fear or anger, but it can also be an accidental act that occurs if files are not properly labelled. An example of this online manipulative technique in our research file is an image that was used to illustrate a report on a wave of protests. Some readers may have overlooked the caption that said it was from the previous year and shared the image, mistakenly believing it was from today. This variable received 3% of the total set, i.e., 5 times.
- *Simulating objectivity and neutrality* – Objectivity and neutrality, as expressions of concern for truth and respect for the basic principles of journalistic ethics, are necessary and should be valued accordingly. They testify to the credibility of the journalist, the reporting and the editorial office. The media examined by us claim to be serious, independent and objective. However, under this “label” they sometimes take manipulative steps. In the context of this method, we mean above all the inclination of journalists to use editorial lists of suitable specialists and experts from various areas of the social spectrum. They are approached by the media as

experts on a certain topic. By presenting events from their point of view - and only from their point of view - however, there is only a one-sided presentation of an event or phenomenon. In the examined media there is also a relatively visible editorial ideological line and the promotion of a tendentious political opinion through such an “agreed expert”. We see the biggest problem as the absence of evaluation or defense of socially recognized values, i. e., the objectivity and neutrality of the media is only apparent. This variable received 2% of the total set, i.e., 4 times.

- *“Recycled” footage* – In the online environment, you can often come across authentic videos or photos that are associated with misleading information. This is content that was not filmed in the place they are reporting on, but usually much earlier and in a completely different context. With the intention of deceiving users (inducing panic, fear, outrage, etc. in the audience), they are used again and quickly become viral in the social media environment. An even bigger problem is “recycled” footage from the same conflict location, i.e., when a news event occurred in the same place more than once. In an online environment, users may be able to confirm the location and identify the event, but it is much more difficult to determine the date of the event, again aiding manipulation. We also recorded this variable in 2%, i.e., 4 times.
- *The covert persuasion effect* – In our research sample, covert persuasion appears in reporting of a political nature. Not only the hidden persuasion, but also the use of vague or ambiguous terms with which politicians operate are manifestations of this method. Using terms with a hidden or unclear meaning to the audience causes little intelligibility of the content. In addition, users do not have to understand not only the meaning of terms, but also the context in which these terms occur. This allows the media and politicians or for example ostensible authorities to instill meanings that are beneficial to them. The covert persuasion effect occurred in our research set in 2%, i.e., 3 times.
- *Information overlay* – Covering information with additional information, which can be used today thanks to information smog, i.e., a huge amount of information in the online space (also called “information overload” of users). Information overlay through the media is used in the event that the media needs to divert attention from significant, but for it unfavorable (less advantageous) information. In the case of unimportant information, online media reach for more interesting topics that bring them more profit. This manipulative method is encouraged by so-called clickbait, i.e., article bait (primarily in the form of a headline or a dominant image)

that leads the user to click on a hyperlink. We recorded this variable in 2%, i.e., 3 times.

- *Abuse of resources (hacking)* – In an effort to capture a wide audience of ordinary users (and even reach journalists), online media produce a lot of similar media content; this is a tactic known as “resource hacking”, i.e., abuse of resources, unauthorized access to data resources (The Economic Times, n.d.). This tactic represents a versatile set of techniques aimed at creating, disseminating and providing controlled information that relates to key social events or topics that divide (polarize) society. In our research set, we noticed the amplification of content using a celebrity who spoke on the issue of vaccination without having adequate education. Abuse of resources occurred in our research set in the amount of 1%, i.e., 2 times.

According to experts, online manipulative tactics in the context of resource abuse include:

- a) Creating fake news;
 - b) Spreading fake news using people (trolls, paid journalists, doxing, i.e., unsolicited disclosure of identifying or personal data about a person who does not consent to it and which another person nevertheless spreads in the digital sphere);
 - c) Spreading fake news using digital tools (bots, i.e., more advanced forms of trolling; a tool of political propaganda, the purpose of which is to create the impression of real users and thus spread a predetermined ideology or political message among other users more quickly and easily);
 - d) Amplification of fake news using algorithms (users are exposed to the same problematic content);
 - e) Amplification of fake news by focusing on well-known personalities (psychological manipulation created by a well-known personality or possibly a celebrity becomes the basis for amplifying a false message);
 - f) Coordination of actions aimed at amplifying fake news using multiple user accounts (Data & society, n.d.).
- *“Deepfake” content* – Online newsrooms use creative options to reach the widest possible audience with their content. In the online environment, their efforts also include computer-generated or edited images that are only slightly different from the real view. Combined with the speed and accuracy of audience targeting (and with the help of algorithms), these images or videos quickly go viral and are virtually unstoppable in the online environment. An example of “deepfake” content is a video of a violent street scene that is reduced in quality and supplemented with a

presentation of an event unrelated to the original event. This variable received 1% of the total set, i.e., 2 times.

Discussion

The transfer of manipulative techniques from traditional media to digital media, which we illustrated on ten manipulative techniques of online media (C1) and the identification of the most frequent manipulative techniques that determine the character of digital media (C2) cannot be considered as representative findings. Nevertheless, they are a certain signal about the state of online media, which are considered the most popular in Slovakia. It is their popularity and daily readership that calls for reflection on their contents from the point of view of the academic and scientific community.

We do not consider the findings of the first part of our own research to be significantly negative. The transfer of ten manipulative techniques from traditional media to digital media (C1) is in a sense a natural phenomenon. Online media always reflect not only the company, but also the traditional media that inform about the company. Manipulations present in traditional media are naturally transferred to the digital environment and, as the overwhelming majority of experts agree, are gaining strength in the online space. A stimulus for further research can therefore be a comparison of specific manipulative techniques in traditional and digital media. Currently, it can be interesting to compare, for example, the spiral of silence or the method of apparent authorities, which can faithfully demonstrate to whom the media devotes its space and what their motivations are.

We also consider the findings of the second part of our own research to be relatively positive. The most frequent manipulative techniques that determine the character of digital media (C2) were shown relatively little in our research sample. The most, 69 texts were evaluated without the presence of manipulation, i.e., 36%, which represents is more than a third of the investigated media contents.

The most common manipulative technique was *manipulation with headlines*, which was recorded 19 times in our entire research sample ($n = 180$), i.e., 10%. It is interesting that most of the examined headlines in our research sample had a negative character, i.e., reported on death, fear, sadness, frustration, etc. Our findings correspond with the findings of other experts, who confirm that media headlines have grown remarkably negative over the past two decades. According to an analysis published in PLoS ONE, headlines denoting anger have increased 104% since the year 2000. Headlines featuring fear (increased 150%), sadness (increased 54%) or disgust (increased 29%) have also soared. We can therefore agree with the conclusions of experts who claim that “negative,

emotionally-arousing headlines attract more clicks and attention than positive or neutral headlines, creating a perverse incentive for news media to spread gloomy content” (Rozado et al., PLoS ONE, 2022).

However, despite the relatively positive findings, we believe that the mere presence of the identified manipulative techniques in the online media we examined cannot leave us indifferent. On the contrary, the results of one’s own research can also be considered as warnings or at least as consequences of several truly negative processes. We mention, for example:

- a) Tendencies to believe in unreliable scientific claims (European Science–Media Hub, 2022);
- b) Indifference of the audience in an effort to reject false contents or conspiracies, which leads to their further spread (Mikheev & Nestik, 2018);
- c) “Imperviousness” to attempts to reevaluate one’s opinion due to one’s own cognitive biases or xenophobia (Chou, Gaysynsky & Vanderpool, 2021);
- d) Sympathy with people with similar views;
- e) Efforts to self-isolate into so-called information bubbles in which like-minded people associate;
- f) Denials of reliable and responsible sources of information (European Science–Media Hub, 2022);
- g) Emotionalism and the rhetoric of emotions in the media (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Khashimwo, 2022; Beckett, 2022; American Press Institute, 2022 and others);
- h) and so on.

Considering the results of our own research, it can be assumed that manipulation in the digital space occurs for several reasons. Among others, there are also the following reasons:

- *Online media must fulfil their content* – i.e., certain specific number of pages or minutes of broadcast. With this goal in mind, they come up with content that can also be manipulative in nature (assumptions, quickly processed analyses, speculative revelations, incomplete information, etc.).
- *Online media are under pressure from economic factors* – Information is a commodity that is sold. The media know that they must deliver information not only quickly (ideally as the first), but also varied and interesting, because such content is liked by the audience and therefore “sells” and generates profit. With this goal, however, there is also

a shift in content from seriousness and balance to scandalization and tabloidization. It seems to be a worldwide trend that has hit all kinds of media. An example is the world's largest traditional serious media, which do not hesitate to include "breaking news" in their broadcasts, i.e., news that contains information and stories considered shocking, extraordinary and that must go on the front page or even go off the air.

- *Online media must provide information that is as brief and clear as possible* – Clear and concise processing is possible, for example, with news of disasters and other generally negative and quickly understandable phenomena.
- *Online media must provide information that recipients expect* – To this end, they adapt to the demands of the audience, often before the need to report on important information of social importance. Audience taste influences, as we said above, not only the opinions and the hierarchy of values of the recipients, including their role models (Ramonet, 2003), but also the media's tendency to favor prominent personalities over experts and to favor elites and celebrities over real personalities. Jaššová also evaluates it in a similar way, who sees the trend of media "celebrification of society", and therefore the tendency of the media not to emphasize and highlight the types of people who do not represent a benefit to society due to their specialization, expertise or lifelong contribution, but to present the types of people who attract and increase viewership media thanks to its bizarreness (Jaššová, cited in Jaššová & Sečík, 2014, p. 71).
- *Online media are the bearers of stories that must engage* – Mass media are the bearers of stories and creators of media, mediated reality through stories. It is the story that becomes a tool that not only moves the information from the editorial office to the recipients, but also makes the information attractive. However, the story as a complete genre hides a lot of manipulative elements – exaggeration, metaphors, stressing the conflict, etc. The media presentation of the story also differs, which can be represented by the media as a show, as an event with tension or as serious information.
- *Online media intend to be part of influence structures in society* – In online media, media manipulation techniques are persistent attempts to achieve the media's own goals. The lack of regulation of the Internet contributes to the fact that in many cases we are not talking about an accidental mistake or accidental bad intention of the online editors, but about conscious manipulation, i.e., about targeted influencing of recipients by online media.

- *Online media provide space for the development of a questionable “collective intelligence”* – Especially on the Internet today there is an active audience that creates “collective intelligence”. This risk is represented, for example, by a well-organized, joint initiative that can be a partial contribution to knowledge (for example, Wikipedia), but its influence in forming public opinion is questionable. The quality of information is always a serious problem (which is true in the offline world as well as, for example, in online discussion communities). And although there is a good intention at the beginning, collective intelligence can also be a source of massive mistakes.
- *Online media provide space for uncensored online communication* – Online communities are created in the framework of discussion forums, blogs or in the space of social networks, in which diverse discussions between users take place. According to research, the same debate participants are mostly active, while others passively read posts or turn to political representatives in one direction. This is also the reason why online debates have a manipulative nature. They are the space of a selected group of people, whose opinions are mostly sharply defined, and therefore rarely lead to conclusions and an agreement between the discussing parties (Radičová, cited in Kasarda, 2018).

Let us add that we consider the need to understand the main principle of manipulation in the online space to be crucial, namely to introduce topics, keywords or questions that are inherently false into the public debate. The challenge therefore becomes not only the detection of manipulation in the online space, but also the current, ever-increasing interconnection of manipulative techniques that are developing with the use of digital media and especially social media. Dr. also draws attention to them. Samantha Bradshaw, lead author of a research report on public manipulation through digital media. According to her recent findings, in each of the eighty countries studied, manipulation of public opinion occurs precisely through social media. The author talks about “a growing threat to democracies around the world.” Furthermore, this extensive representative research confirms that:

- Government agencies, political parties and private companies use the media and social media to spread political propaganda;
- There is significant pollution of the digital ecosystem;
- Suppression of freedom of expression and freedom of the press can be observed in all countries;
- Much of the manipulation in the digital space has become “professionalized”, with private firms offering public opinion

manipulation and disinformation services “for hire” (The Oxford Internet Institute, 2022).

Moreover, the research findings confirm that there is a “professionalization” of manipulation in the space of social media and with the use of social media. The results are alarming also because, according to experts, they are still increasing (The Oxford Internet Institute, 2022).

Conclusion

Speaking about the nature of digital communication, it is certain that we can talk about many positive and negative features. Among the positive features, we include: availability of information, speed of transmission of messages, the possibility of participation in culture and education, the possibility of quick warning of dangers, etc. We consider negative features of digital communication to be: possibilities for political and ideological manipulation without consequences, creation of distorted reality, commercialism, tabloidization of culture, addiction to pleasure and entertainment, blurring of ethical standards, bad role models, etc. The mentioned phenomena are conditioned by the online space in which digital media exist. Moreover, the nature of digital media is also negatively affected by the economic pressures on sales faced by online editors, the economic pressures on readership faced by authors of online content (clickbait); rogue sources; a large amount of often inaccurate information; short time allocated for processing the topic; audience requirements and much more. These are real phenomena that affect the work of newsrooms and journalists all over the world, from The New York Times or CNN to the portal of the Slovak daily Aktuality.sk.

We are aware that media manipulation not only affects the nature of the current online space (especially online news), but also co-determines the nature of the information that circulates between users. It is therefore no coincidence that the increase in false or manipulative content is directly related to the current distrust of a large part of the population towards facts, expert information and scientific authorities and, conversely, the inclination of an increasingly large audience towards conspirativism (Pipes, 1997; Uscinski et al., 2020). which is understood as a global threat (Webb et al., 2016). The indicated negatives are related to manipulative campaigns in the Internet environment, which are pre-planned, effective and at the same time addressing a wide audience. Our text also focused on digital communication and manipulation in the online space.

The paper presented the possibilities of digital communication in the online environment (digitalization, virtuality, interactivity, dispersion of the media system and hypertextuality), which were followed by nine selected specifics that characterize manipulation in the online space (lostness in cyberspace, manipulations using digital media technology, infodemic online environment,

individual users, active audience, questionable collective intelligence, manipulative potential of online discussions, online propaganda and fake news, hoaxes and conspiracies).

The main goal of the paper was to present the transfer of manipulative techniques from traditional media to digital media (C1). We talked about the transfer of manipulative techniques from the environment of traditional media to the environment of digital media, which can also be perceived as new media procedures, or ways in which manipulative media techniques are also applied in digital media. We have distinguished the ten most important techniques that characterize this shift: *Agenda setting, framing theory, priming theory, spiral of silence, manipulation with subtitles, manipulation of media vocabulary and method apparent authorities, the effect of hidden persuasion, the overlay method and the simulation of objectivity and neutrality*. Let us add that the presence of these manipulative techniques in digital media is currently being pointed out by several authors (Reuters News Agency, n.d.; Sonwalka, 2021; Culloty & Suiter, 2021; Keenan, 2022; NATO StratCom, 2022).

The second goal of the paper was to identify the most common manipulative techniques that determine the nature of digital media, as seen and experienced by each of us on a daily basis (C2). The most frequent manipulative techniques in our research sample are the following fifteen techniques: *Headline Manipulation; Edited contents; Manipulative construction of social reality; Method of ostensible authorities; Spiral of silence; Topic placement; Viral slogans; Anonymous sources; Video depicting another event; Simulating objectivity and neutrality; "Recycled" footage; The covert persuasion effect; Information overlay; Abuse of resources and "deepfake" content*.

We can see that among the fifteen techniques, there are five manipulative techniques that were transferred from traditional media to the digital world (findings of C1), namely: *Headline Manipulation (in our research it is even the most common manipulative technique); Method of ostensible authorities; Spiral of silence; Simulating objectivity and neutrality and the covert persuasion effect*.

During the discussion, eight possible reasons why manipulation occurs in the digital space were presented. We started from the assumption that older and still persistent techniques of media manipulation appear in the online space as well. And under their influence, manipulation techniques appear in digital media as well, which deepen the gap between what the real world is like and who and how this world is trying to be portrayed. Digital media manipulators seem to know that if they can generate enough content with almost the same message, people will assume that where there is smoke, there is fire... and the unreal will become real (Holiday, 2013).

In this context, one can agree with Alner that modern technologies are not a threat to man and society, because they are the result of natural development and represent a step forward. It is rather a struggle for positive development, which, however, “is not played by technologies, but by the people who control them” (Alner, 2018, p. 41). Finally, the presented text wants to be a reminder of the fact that the source of social power is control over what people believe. And that is why today’s journalists and media workers must not only know the ethics of their profession, but recognize this ethics as superior to all other interests. In this ideal, one can also see the importance of mass communication in present and future society.

And although the ideal of “working for the community” is probably not quite attainable, it is always necessary to strive for it. In this sense, the words of the Italian philosopher, sociologist and writer Umberto Eco (1932-2016) are confirmed, who was convinced that civilization can be saved only if it makes mass media communication a stimulus for critical self-reflection - not an invitation to hypnosis.

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THE POWER OF STORYTELLING IN BRAND COMMUNICATION: THE DESIGN OF THE STORY AND ITS ROLE IN PERSUASION PROCESS

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Introduction

In a world where consumer needs have evolved from simple goods and services to experience, and consumption behaviors are given meaning through stories, the phenomenon of brand is not only commercial element with its signs, label names and logos but also leading part adding various meanings to our lives. While the fact that they have started to take up such an important place in our daily lives has led brands to be adorned with humanistic features, the unique power of globalization has also removed the boundaries of competition and turned our world into a multidimensional life full of messages.

Today, when the digital age is experienced with great dynamism, brands have turned their focus almost entirely to digital communication. Now, thanks to the advantages of digital technology, there are efforts to convey not only the name and logo of the brand to large consumer groups, but also the stance of that brand, its perspective on life, and the philosophy of the manufacturer who owns the brand. In other words, we can talk about the enrichment and deepening of the communication that brands establish with consumers and thus a much richer and multidimensional communication. ng to expect more effective stories to be designed when team members have a wide distribution, such as employees of an agency, solution partners, suppliers, representatives in close contact with customers. While firms continue their brand communication activities on all kinds of platforms where they meet with consumers, they began to resort to storytelling in this process, and while telling their stories, they began to strive to ensure that consumers find themselves in these stories. In this way, it is possible to say that there has been a transition from a mechanical/superficial communication between brands and consumers to a live/active interaction. Just as a novel reader identifies herself with the protagonist of a novel or finds herself in the protagonist of a novel, brands are trying to explain to their

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target audiences why they should prefer that brand with very rich narratives. Undoubtedly, there are those who prefer this method as well as those who do not, and the firms with traditional perspectives carry out their communication processes with traditional methods and convey their messages to the masses in a direct or straightforward way. For example, while one supermarket announces “People’s Day” with a plain/straightforward/direct message (We have People’s Day in our grocery section on Sundays), another supermarket can make this communication more layered (Let’s contribute to your family happiness at the weekend) and positions itself as a “Happiness Partner” in all communication processes. Thus, it shapes the whole narrative around the concept of “Happiness” in communication towards consumers.

The telling of stories and listening to these stories, as parts of a whole, appear one of the oldest forms of communication in human history. Regardless of the era in which they live, people have been listening to stories, paying attention and following them with curiosity for thousands of years. One of the most prominent reasons for this is that the stories appeal to the subconscious, dreams and aspirations of the listeners. As Will Storr puts it, “we are creatures programmed to enjoy stories” ((The Science of Storytelling, 2020).

Undoubtedly, this is a field that has been enlightened with the discoveries made in the last hundred years on the way the human brain works, neurological processes, people’s “Natural Predispositions” arising from the way the brain works and their reflections on human behavior. For example, it is important to remember that “major” topics such as people’s desire to hear positive things, the tendency to avoid negativity, the triumph of good over evil, the longing for and expectation of happiness have all been the main topics of stories for thousands of years. In an almost neurological way, the human mind waits for narratives/stories that articulate what it wants to hear, its dreams, aspirations and expectations, and when it encounters these narrative forms, it tends to internally adopt and take them into consideration.

In this context, in order to be more persuasive in brand communication, we are talking about the transition of brands from a direct/lean/depthless communication process to narratives that are enriched and appropriate for neurological mental processes, and thus conveying their messages by telling a story to the target audiences. In other words, depending on their superior and stronger communication skills, brands can be able to build persuasiveness and a higher level of competitiveness in the market environment. Therefore, another issue just as important as storytelling is story design. Now, story design as a part of storytelling is on its way to becoming a factor that determines the competitiveness of brands in the marketplace.

The importance of brand communication in the competitive environment also increases the importance of story design and its persuasiveness. Significant changes are also observed in the literature on this subject. “Story design” and “storytelling”, which are new concepts, also finds its place in this new context and it becomes important for brands to learn this method and integrate it into all marketing communication processes in the name of efficiency and competitive results.

Brands communicate with consumers through products, their packaging, user manuals, labels, all traditional and digital media channels, the brand’s website and social media accounts, all store designs, employees, events organized, news, advertisements, in short, all behaviors that deliver messages to society. In both chaotic and highly competitive conditions where thousands of similar companies appeal to consumers with thousands of similar products in the market environment, brands need to discover the power of story, give importance to this issue and design powerful stories that will appeal to consumers’ emotional worlds in order to become “distinctive from others” in their market activities. At this point, the brand communication process supported by storytelling will mean building a solid ground for convincing consumers towards the company’s goods and services.

Brand Communication in the Digitalizing World

The traditional definition of communication describes a process of conveying “information, ideas and feelings through the use of symbols such as words, pictures, numbers”. Communication, which is a natural activity that takes place both in the daily life of individuals and in business life, in short, wherever there are people, is also a basic activity and the expression of a basic need (Soniansih, 2021). We inevitably need communication in every moment of our daily lives. The fact that the need for communication is “unavoidable” (De Vito, 2007 :38) is an indication of how special and important this event is. The fact that human beings are social beings by nature and that this is an automatic state of being from birth makes all human communities, without exception, the subjects or direct interlocutors of communication processes.

Even though the environments, technologies, understandings and forms of contact between interlocutors have changed from past to present, the only unchanging purpose of communication is to create a change in attitudes and behaviors by directing certain messages to the other party (Ackoff, 1958; Luhman, 1992; Trenholm, 2020). In this context, companies/firms, which are among the most important actors in today’s modern world as well as in social and commercial life, have the task of sending powerful messages to the masses about the products and brands they produce. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about the functions of businesses as producers of physical products

or services on the one hand, and producers of communication and content on the other. When businesses that have successfully realized the production of physical products are not successful in the complementary “production of communication” processes, the success achieved in the first stage can become meaningless or dysfunctional.

In this context, it is a critically important skill for businesses and their brands, which are their face in the market, to design and deliver messages to the masses in a way that will inform their target audiences, influence them and explain “why” they should buy the products and services in question (Delgado-Ballester, Navarro, Sicilia, 2012).

Communication between businesses and their target audiences can be briefly defined as the messaging process between producers and consumers. Brands, which are in an active position here and play the role of “narrator”, have to develop and deliver messages to inform and persuade consumers and offer them reasons why they should choose them. This situation is defined as “marketing communication” in the literature (Kotler & Keller, 2018; Blythe, 2006; Buttle, 2015). In this context, it is necessary to carefully consider whether impressive and powerful narratives can be made and whether such an institutional skill is possessed.

Since the main goal of communication is to create a new situation in the interlocutor with the messages conveyed, the main goal of marketing communication is to stay in the minds of consumers and influence their current and future purchasing decisions (Martin, Stewart and Matta, 2005). Undoubtedly, this influence is an effort in the market environment in favor of the brand or business that is the “source of the message”. As a natural requirements of these efforts, the effectiveness of the messages on the one hand, and whether the reasons presented through the messages are “strong justifications” on the other, represent the decisive areas in the communication process.

When we are talking about an important and strategic goal such as influencing or changing the behavior of consumers, marketing communication is not just the responsibility of a marketing department, but an “integrated” part of all business activities. Because all written and unwritten messages of the company play a key role in the formation of the brand image in the eyes of customers (Soniansih, 2021). This can also be called the institutional memory of the marketplace. For example, the impact of a company’s stance on a social event, the political wing it takes sides with, and the corporate response it gives or does not give can be much higher and longer lasting than the impact of written advertising messages prepared by the marketing department. These are the images that stick in the public’s memory for the long term and “stick” to the business or brand. These images are deeply embedded in social memory

and have the function of telling consumers, who are members of that society, many things about that business or brand. For example, any prominent position a brand or business takes on religious issues, or its stance on sensitive issues such as women's rights or children's rights, will "define" that business in the social memory.

Marketing communication, or more specifically Brand Communication, is the effort to design specific messages for a society as a whole or for a specific target audience within a society (Lee et al., 2018) and to deliver these messages to them through the most meaningful channels, platforms and activities for that society or target audience (Voorveld, 2019). Therefore, when we talk about brand communication, we are actually talking about general communication processes adapted to a specific field.

The main goal of brand communication is to become a long-term, permanent brand. What is meant by branding is not to choose the name, logo, colors of the brand; it is to gain a different, privileged, valuable and special place in the minds of the consumers. Brand communication is the process of introducing a brand to the public (launch), building "public trust" in that brand and, together with this trust, embedding a "special image" in the public's memory. For example, the association of the Volvo brand with "durability", the Victoria's Secret brand with "being sexy" or the Lacoste brand with "quality" are some of the salient examples of what this "special image" can be. On the other hand, the "Digital Revolution", which has progressed in an almost uninterrupted process with technological developments from the past to the present, is experienced as a part of our lives. It should be noted that with the digital revolution and digital technologies becoming a natural part of daily life, the communication of brands with consumers has turned into an almost uninterrupted communication. Therefore, all kinds of opportunities and conditions are now ready at the highest level for "communication investments" and "image creations" of brands for collective memory of consumer groups (Kreutzer & Land, 2015). In such a market environment, what needs to be done now is for companies or brands to improve their communication skills and even treat it as a strategy in itself. In other words, in today's world, where all conditions are most favorable for communication, the main task that is now expected to be done is that when brands appear on the stage in front of consumers, they should be able to make a strong statement about where they position themselves, what concepts or what values they claim to represent.

In this context, the basis of brand communication is the issue of what kind of narrative/story brands or companies present to consumers and, when looked at even more deeply, what kind of narrative/story they construct. Consumers need to be provided with descriptive information to facilitate their perception of

marketing messages. Advertisements, brochures, packaging and labels are used for this purpose. However, the persuasiveness of the message can also become a new source of problems if the information conveyed through the use of these technical instruments is just a cold / technical data. In order to overcome this very important handicap, the technical information/data needs to be wrapped in warm and human stories so that it can be transformed into something that is suitable for the human mind to perceive and accept. For example, if some vitamins and minerals that are important for children's growth and strengthening (metabolic supplementation) are added to a box of milk, presenting this technical data (e.g. that this milk has 12 minerals and 5 vitamins) with a story that will attract the attention of parents has the power to change the outcome of the communication. In other words, narratives/stories such as "why" every parent who loves and cares for their children should give importance to these vitamins, "how" these vitamins and minerals have an important effect on children's health, "how" one of the responsibilities of a "good parent" is to provide "good food" for children, and how a "happy" family emerges from healthy individuals become the main communication underlying the technical information such as ingredients of the product or the number of supplements in the product.

On the other hand, when brands fail or are ineffective in managing the brand communication process, consumers spend more time and effort to make decision for buying that brand's products. For this reason alone, consumers may give up one brand and switch to another. In other words, as the persuasiveness of messages from brands/companies decreases, consumers' purchasing or preference behaviors are left to "chance". An innovative and solution-oriented communication process that responds to consumers' expectations will create a strong bond between the brand and consumers (Derinözlü, 2020). Therefore, the main thing is not to convey a message to consumers (e.g. a milk with 12 minerals and 5 vitamins) but to convey that message in a persuasive form.

At this point, it can be said that brand communication is the expression of a process in which brands demonstrate (or fail to demonstrate) their ability to write and tell their own stories. Brands will be able to establish strong emotional/psychological bonds with consumers by sharing corporate perspectives and values for the whole society and also audiences (McCull & Legorburu, 2014). For example, Robert Bosch's famous phrase "I would rather lose money than lose the trust of my customers", a phrase used by Bosch for many years and now memorized by the whole world, is a typical example of a brand/company sharing its values and perspective with the masses. It is noteworthy that here again, the perspective of the company/brand to "quality", the commitments made to the customers and how the promises made to consumers are strongly stood by are conveyed to the society with a mythical narrative. Brands' ability

to write and tell stories can therefore be a direct determinant of competitive outcomes in the marketplace.

As well as positive effects of digitalization, negative reflections are also observed. Brands sometimes forget the human side of their customers. While digital technologies are used by some brands only for message bombardment, the content of the message and its permanence in the collective mind of the society can be overlooked. While this situation is mostly observed in brands/companies with a short-term perspective, brands/companies with a long-term perspective have the opportunity to tell powerful stories to the “collective mind of society” with the help of digital technologies. In other words, brands that succeed in being human-centered in their communication processes can become an integral part of their customers’ lives with the impressive stories they tell. In this context, it can be said that being able to tell the story in a human mind-centered way is an important differentiation factor in the competition between brands (Kotler et al., 2020).

With the impact of ever-evolving digital technology, media usage habits of consumers are changing and evolving day by day. They are at the center of more and more active communication through posts on social media, forums, blogs, etc. (Heinonen, 2011). For this reason, brands should take care to construct their communication processes in a way that will provide interaction with their target audience and allow them to internalize and personalize the messages conveyed by including entertaining elements as well as informative ones (Lou & Xie, 2020).

The acceleration of technological developments in the world is changing the structure of mass media, and traditional communication channels are insufficient to reach consumers quickly. Therefore, there is a transition from traditional to digital or, in other words, from one-way communication to interactive communication between brands and consumers. However, this transition does not mean the end of traditional media. Whether traditional or digital, what matters is which message is being told to consumers/society with what kind of story and the traces it leaves on the mind of the society in which consumers are natural members.

The Importance of Story in Brand Communication

First and foremost, one should start by remembering that the main and ultimate interlocutor in business activities is “human”. Human is a being that needs to be analyzed according to its innate natural tendencies, natural behaviors and natural psychology. These natural characteristics of human beings also shed light on how they should be treated and approached. At this point, it is necessary to mention the name of Sigmund Freud, who laid the

foundations of modern psychology, and to recall his explanations of the natural causes of human behavior and tendencies. Telling an event to the interlocutors, elaborating while telling, being able to tell what is told in a beautiful way, and being able to influence the interlocutor in return for the act of telling are among the natural tendencies of human beings. Similarly, in terms of listeners, the desire to listen to a narrative that is not boring and to be exposed to a pleasant narrative represents a natural tendency, while the desire to avoid or stay away from boring and unpleasant narratives is also a natural behavior.

Since early humans, stories have been an important part of our daily lives. The narratives revealed by our far ancestors through the paintings they made on cave walls are the first and best examples of both communication and the use of stories in communication. The epics that have been told throughout the ages, the unique tales of various nations, the thousands of years of myths belonging to various religions are indicators that reveal how important and permanent the story and storytelling are in the communication process of human beings. The messages given through the good and bad heroes in these stories and the detailed fictional narratives made to increase the impact of these messages, in fact, also means structuring an effective communication process (White & Epston, 1990). Great heroes, legendary loves, great pains and happiness always constitute the main complementary part of the main message and the communication process.

Presenting the message in the communication process to the receivers accompanied by a story is an expression of an approach that is compatible with the human natural tendency to listen to stories. As stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, this means recognizing human beings with their natural inclinations and natural psychology and approaching them in the most appropriate way. It is not possible to consider the communication processes that brands put forward to reach consumers separately from the natural psychology of human beings and the general communication process models explained by communication science. Consumer behavior and reactions are based on the natural psychology, natural tendencies, natural fears and natural desires of human beings.

The main goal of brand communication is to ensure that the messages conveyed by brands are effectively taken into consideration and accepted by consumers. A natural extension or expected consequence of this situation is the emergence of a behavioral change in consumers in favor of the brand that owns the message. Therefore, in order to increase the impact and permanence of the direct/plain/technical message, brands need to use storytelling to add depth, meaning and context to the message (Lundqvist vd., 2013). For example, while the direct/plain message of a shampoo company may be the high quality level

of the product and its contribution to the hair, it is possible to increase the communication effectiveness to higher levels by adding depth and a special context (being sexy) to the message through a story added to this direct/plain message. Individuals with higher attractiveness and sexier appearance as a result of the use of the shampoo and thus becoming more popular in social environments becomes the narrator of the “quality level of the shampoo”.

One of the most important points for brands is to tell stories that make sense to consumers and that they want to hear (Coleman, 2022). When consumers find themselves in the story, it would enable them to take action in line with the brand’s expectations. Listening to a good, romantic or funny story is a source of satisfaction psychologically for masses due to natural human behavior (Godin, 2012).

Information conveyed as a story finds a place in the minds of people more easily and is remembered much longer time in their minds. This unique mechanism is the main reason why stories are need to employ in brand communication. Brands can deepen their relationship with consumers through the stories they tell, and enable them to embrace the brand “as part of their world” (McColl & Legorburu, 2014).

It should be noted that every story needs a hero. If the protagonist in the stories of the brands is designed to be “the customers themselves”, it is possible for consumers to “internalize” the brand in their minds due to their natural dreams and expectations. In this context, storytelling in the brand communication process includes the elements of “incentive” and “provocation” in which consumers will provide internal/psychological/emotional participation in addition to just listening to the story told (Dietz & Silverman, 2014). Therefore, storytelling is one of the best ways to communicate with consumers as it refers to their experiences or future expectations or dreams. When the story told by the brand overlaps with their own experience or their own dreams and expectations, the brand’s message grabs the consumer’s attention and makes them curious about the rest of the story. Thus, it is possible to mention that consumers become more engaged with the brand through stories and connect with the brand and product personally in their own world (Öztürk Göçmen, 2018).

From Storytelling to Story Design

The stage preceding the stories told by brands to consumers is the fictionalization of the story to be told. In other words, the sequence of events that will take place in the story, the protagonists of the story, the troublesome situations or difficulties within the story, and how the protagonist will overcome these difficulties and reach a happy ending should be designed with a skillfull and fluent narrative. For example, in a happy and crowded/traditional family table with laughter and enthusiastic conversations, enriched by grandmothers,

grandfathers and grandchildren, the place of the brand (e.g. a beverage brand or a cookie brand) in this picture of happiness, and even its contribution to this picture, is a result of designing the story in this way specifically.

Rutledge (2016), in his book “Everything is a Story: Storytelling and Positive Psychology”, states that the natural psychology of human beings is positively oriented and it is characterized by an inclination towards the positive and the beautiful, such as a tendency to believe, a tendency towards happiness, and a tendency to support. Similarly, according to Vincent (2002), humans are naturally story-loving beings. It is possible to say that two different issues are important for people to love stories; one is that the beauty of the story itself and the other is that the beauty of the way the story is told. It should be noted that both of these elements are a direct part of the “design” process. In other words, either the design of the story or the design of the storytelling should be emphasized. Story design is a methodology where brands rely on interaction and emotion to become part of consumers’ own stories (McColl & Legorburu, 2014). Brands, with this approach, can transform their own stories into the stories of the customers they emotionally touch.

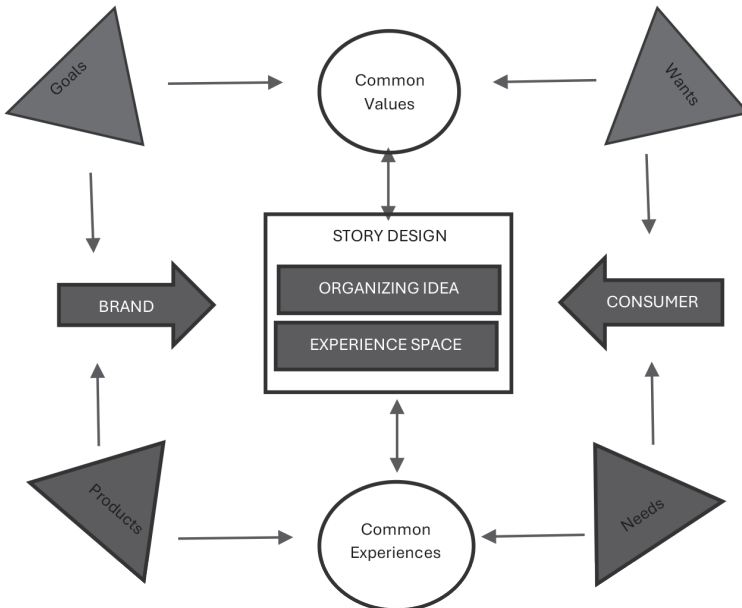
Story design is primarily about deciding what a brand needs to tell in order to establish itself in the consumer world in a distinctive and lasting way in a chaotic marketplace with thousands of brands. What emotions will the main message of the brand be aimed at and with what concept will it be directed to consumers? For example, the transformation of a housewife, who is worn out due to fatigue and boredom brought on by daily routine housework, into a well-groomed and attractive woman as a result of a floor cleaning product “making things easier” she uses, and becoming highly impressive for the man of the house appeals to a very strong emotion in the subconscious of women, such as the feeling of “being liked” and “being desired”. It should be noted that the main message of the floor cleaning brand here is “technical superiorities” such as how functional the product is, how effective it can clean, how it makes the job easier, but this main message is given through the very basic human psychology of “being liked” and “being beautiful”. This is a typical example of the various decisions about which emotions and which concepts to use in the design of the story.

Story design is a team effort and everyone in the team needs to know “human psychology” and have a high understanding of what people’s “natural” expectations, fears and dreams are (McColl & Legorburu, 2014). It would not be wrong even psychologists. Story design starts with the principle of “how to communicate the message more effectively” when bringing brands and consumers together. The aim is to create shared values and experiences by writing common stories about the brand, the consumer and “human beings”.

This stage can be defined as “creating an experience space” (McColl & Legorburu, 2014). This stage consists of two parts: first, deciding “which” experience space to design in an agency environment or marketing department, and second, how to tell a story about that experience space. For example, the experience of a milk brand might be “healthier, stronger and happier children”. In fact, it is a brand promise (Barwise & Meehan, 2010). In the second stage, a concrete example of the story design process is how children who prefer the milk brand in a school competition or in a basketball game between two different school teams become stronger, bigger, healthier and ultimately happier because they win the game.

When designing stories at the company headquarters, in the marketing department or in an agency environment, brands must first create experience maps and improve every connection point with consumers, that is, every experience, with the feedback they receive from them (McColl & Legorburu, 2014). This map also allows them to see new story design opportunities. For example, when it is realized that the toy cars offered to the market by a manufacturer are collected (purchased) by children with a collection logic and that children try to create their own personal series (based on color or model), the brand starts to emphasize this point in its main messages and emphasizes the concept of collection in its promotional messages, which is a result of a good analysis of the experience map. The story design model created by McColl and Legorburu (2014) is based on the perspective of understanding and connecting the experience space (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Story Design Model



Shared values and shared experiences in this model represent natural expectations and natural tendencies that “arise from human nature”. “Values” and “Experiences”, which are fed by natural expectations, natural desires, natural fears and natural dreams, and even the natural subconscious, also show where to start in the design of a story (McCull & Legorburu, 2014). In the experience area, care should be taken to ensure that the experiences that brands want consumers to have are both functional and natural emotional needs “due to being human”.

In story design, it is necessary to identify both the functional and emotional needs or expectations of consumers and, accordingly, to be able to tell the unique selling proposition - the brand promise - that will differentiate our goods and services from those of competing brands (Megehee & Woodside, 2010). Therefore, story design should be based on functional (i.e. technical) messages on the one hand and emotional messages on the other. In other words, it is necessary to design a story in which both sides are integrated rather than a story designed on the basis of only one-sided messages.

The presence of guiding messages that can be defined as “organizing ideas” within the story design may reveal the opportunity for brands to manage the mental processes of consumers. The fact that the human mind is open to “suggestion” (Suddendorf & Corballis, 1997) has been known for thousands of years and its theoretical foundations have been clarified in psychology science for over a hundred years. In this context, when designing a story to be told to consumers by the brand, the organizing idea can suggest what expectations consumers should have or what emotions they should experience. For example, when a car brand explains how suitable the interior space is for a large family, and therefore what expectations a large family should match with this car in their own minds, it can narrate the story of a crowded picnic and how many items needed for this picnic can be fit into the car. The organizing idea in this story and in the commercial is the mental suggestion of “suitability for large families” or “many things can fit in”. Therefore, there is a need for storytelling of mental suggestions through the “Organizing Idea” in order to avoid any loss in the perception of the technical functions attributed to the brand or product by listeners/consumers.

Persuasive Story Design

Everyone tells a story every day, but some are more effective than others. Therefore, the point to be emphasized is not just to tell a story, but to be able to tell an impressive story. In storytelling, both the physical and character traits of the narrator contribute to the story’s power of influence. Every story evokes a variety of emotions when it is over, and beautiful stories told brilliantly affect their listeners deeply (Hegarty, 2014).

Persuasion is one of the basic concepts of contemporary social psychology. It is defined as making the interlocutor/recipient believe in any subject and bringing about a change in belief or behavior (Demarzo et al., 2003). While communications that succeed in bringing about a change in belief or behavior become “Persuasive Communication” (Taillard, 2000), dialogues that fail to achieve this belief or change in behavior remain just a communication. Because in the second one just like in the first one, the elements of the classical communication process such as the source, the receiver and the message are exactly the same, but at the end of this process, the message does not have any effect on the receiver (Taillard, 2000).

In this context, the transformation of the brand communication process into a persuasive brand communication process is a necessity. Martin (2005) mentions three main purposes of the brand communication process. These are informing purpose, persuading purpose and reminding purpose. In addition to informing and reminding, persuading the target audience to believe and take action represents the most critical task in brand communication (Jin and Sung, 2010). Persuasive communication can be defined as the process of creating new attitudes or changing existing attitudes in consumers about the brand and product. This process includes conveying the message to the consumer, the perception of the message by the consumer and taking action in the desired direction (Martin et al., 2005).

From the perspective above, the stories presented to consumers should be designed to be believable, highly provocative, intriguing, engaging and stimulating to the human mind. Therefore, the credibility, level of expertise and general sympathy of the people or institutions that are the “source of the message” in the story will transform the storytelling process into persuasive storytelling as key elements that reveal the effectiveness of communication. This means creating a process of building positive attitudes in the target audience.

For example, if the woman who is the protagonist in the story told by a detergent brand through a commercial is considered “trustworthy” in real life through the programs she presents on TV channels, or if she is perceived as a “role model” by millions of women in the society, the story told will turn into a believable or interesting story. Similarly, in a toothpaste brand communication, telling the story of white teeth, happy smiles and subsequent romantic developments through a dentist in a white dress elevates the main message to a message with high persuasive power.

Conclusion

The power of story in brand communication is unquestionably a phenomenon that can be observed by everyone. Due to the nature of human beings, our interest in listening to stories causes brands to care about this issue. Story design is a process that enables brand-consumer interaction to be more effective and enables the consumer to feel that they are the hero of the story. For this reason, every stage of the design should be consumer-oriented. Understanding the role of story in brand communication and the role of telling good stories in the persuasion process, brands use stories in almost every marketing behavior. It is possible to talk about stories in every business activity that falls within marketing's area of expertise. Today, while we come across stories that resemble a catwalk, a home, an office in shop windows, we can clearly observe this phenomenon in fashion shows and advertisements. Today's hot selling is all about stories. For example, in the sale of a house with millions of dollars, you are sold your "future memories" of living in that house. The reason why we pay more than the value of the house is not only inflation but also our dreams, that is, intangible issues.

Integrating the right stories with the right brands would make the brand communication process more effective. The credibility of the story, and therefore its ability to persuade, will also have an impact on the interlocutors/consumers' positive attitude towards the brand. It should be noted that there is a direct relationship between the level of persuasiveness of a story created for brand communication and its ability to appeal to the soul and emotions of consumers. In other words, "narratives" that appeal to consumers' dreams, expectations and desires and make them feel like the protagonists of their own real stories will also deliver the message of the company/brand to the target people. Stories that touch emotions, dreams and desires can psychologically mobilize, motivate or literally "provoke" consumers, leading to an active outcome as the form of the purchase of products and services.

Consumers can go directly and buy from that brand, or they can refer other consumers. The fact that the consumer does not buy directly does not mean that he/she is not inclined towards positive behavior, even if he/she has not yet purchased a product from that brand, he/she can dream of buying, set it as a goal, and therefore see himself/herself as the future hero of the story.

The ability of brands to communicate interactively with their customers represents a great advantage for them. With the feedback they receive from them, companies can improve their brands and brand communication processes. Small businesses, in particular, are closer to customers and have the chance to listen to their stories about their brand. Nutella's past practice of asking its

customers to share photos of their Nutella tables on Instagram is actually a desire to learn about the memories in which Nutella and its consumers played a leading role. Later on, the transition from Nutella breakfasts to catering hours was a result of this experience.

Companies that listen to their customers, examine and analyze them, read their experience maps correctly and design their stories accordingly can improve their brand communication in line with the expectations of consumer groups. Brands that cannot establish emotional bonds with their customers beyond technical/cold communication cannot survive in today's highly competitive environment. One of the most important elements of building emotional bonds with consumers is the ability to create and tell beautiful stories. A good story and good storytelling have the power like a magnet to draw people to a brand and make them feel part of the story. This represents a very powerful approach, which is in line with the natural psychological tendencies of human beings: the tendency to be happy, the tendency to have positive expectations, the tendency to live a good life, and the tendency to have a happy family life. Therefore, among the factors that determine the competitiveness of companies or brands today, "the ability to establish emotional bonds with customers" and one of the elements of this skill, the ability to construct a story and to tell this story well, stand before us as a critical element.

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PERSUADING CONSUMERS OR UNDERSTANDING HUMAN BEINGS?

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Abstract

This article highlights the paradoxical relationship between people and marketing, where they may dislike advertisements but love brands. It discusses how people, as consumers and marketers, use marketing strategies every day in their personal and professional lives and how a deep knowledge of their real motivation can explain people's behavior. Thus, the understanding of humans at 360 degrees and putting the customers at the center of the strategy results are crucial in modern marketing. The article highlights that to build brand love and loyalty, companies must focus on creating an emotional connection with their customers and not just rely on advertisements or promotions. In this article you will see that there is a difference between persuading your consumers to sell them something versus understanding them as humans and creating brands that will help them to improve their lives, making them feel better about themselves and others.

Methodology of the research

This paper consists of a literature review of some of the most important works in the behavioral marketing field, with a focus on branding, motivational marketing, and customer-centricity. The research is enhanced by the personal experience of the author in the field during the last decade working as consultants for global companies in more than 20 countries and empirical observations.

The paper aims to build a bridge between academic research and marketing managers and directors working in the fields, enhancing both the research, through observations and experiences from the field (both the author and his colleagues and clients) and the people working in marketing through consolidated qualitative and quantitative studies.

In this study, a relevant role is played by the data provided by Kantar Media across different countries (with a particular focus on Europe and Turkey). For example, the dataset for France, Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom

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comprises a rich array of data points, exceeding 90,000 variables, the Italian database has 10,000 while the Turkish one has more than 40,000. The dataset is spanning various categories:

1. **Geographical Information:** Details about respondents' locations and regions within Europe.
2. **Demographic Data:** Information encompassing age, gender, marital status, and other pertinent demographic attributes.
3. **Internet Usage:** This category encompasses a wide range of online activities, including social networking, email usage, participation in various online hobbies and activities, and engagement with e-commerce platforms.
4. **Personal Interests and Opinions:** Insights into respondents' interests and personal viewpoints.
5. **Vacation and Travel:** Data related to respondents' travel preferences, holiday plans, and past travel experiences.
6. **Daily Routines:** Information about respondents' daily schedules and routines.
7. **Leisure and Sports:** Data regarding leisure activities, sports participation, and recreational interests.
8. **Entertainment:** Insights into respondents' preferences for cinema, TV, radio, and music.
9. **Outdoor and Print Media:** Data concerning the print media, such as newspapers and magazines, that respondents read and their engagement with outdoor advertising.
10. **Word of Mouth:** Information on how frequently and where respondents recommend products, services, and tourist destinations.
11. **Consumption Habits:** Data covering food and beverage consumption, as well as purchasing patterns for furniture, appliances, vehicles, financial services, health-related products and services, shopping behavior, and pet-related products.
12. **Technological Products:** Insights into respondents' use and preferences for technological products.
13. **Cosmetics:** Data on cosmetics and personal care product preferences.

Introduction

In this time of uncertainty, where some companies are still grappling with constant changes, it's more important than ever to focus on the customer. Sigmund Freud believed that an individual's behavior is driven by their

unconscious fears and desires, this knowledge is nowadays crucial in marketing to create brands and communications that are meaningful for the audience and generate positive behavior (purchase and/or recommendation of companies' products and services). Thus, a deep understanding of the consumer and their choices is crucial for success.

Many companies make the mistake of limiting their research to only their product category, but this narrow focus won't provide enough insight into the consumer's motivations. Most companies tend to study their category to find the right arguments to persuade consumers and shoppers to buy their brands. Now, for some people, to persuade has a negative connotation: seduce, force, or cajole. For other people, to persuade has a positive meaning: encourage, inspire, or motivate. In this piece, you will see that there is only one way of doing marketing and that is to focus on the second kind of persuasion.

The goal of any marketer should be to genuinely create and market products that would make people feel better based on their passions and tension points. This is not easy, marketing is not easy, especially if we consider that is full of paradoxes, which makes it both intriguing and challenging. One paradox is the dichotomy between people's aversion to marketing and advertising, and their love for brands. Another paradox is that despite people's dislike of marketing, they actively engage in marketing-related activities in their daily lives.

The marketing paradoxes

Let's now go deeper into what I mean when I talk about marketing paradoxes:

People hate advertising but they love brands.

People hate it when they are forced to watch an advertisement for five seconds before their video starts on YouTube. People hate it when their favorite song stops playing because Spotify is running a commercial. People are easily annoyed by advertising, and, also when it is digital, look for ways to avoid it. (Cho & as-, 2004)

While people hate marketing and everything associated with it, they love brands. They love brands so much that they are willing to wait in long lines and even sleep outside the store to be among the first to buy a new product.

They love brands so much that they are willing to travel overseas just to purchase a product that is not available in their own country. They love brands so much that they are even willing to get tattoos of them. The concept of brand love, and how it can be crucial to improve products perception and loyalty (Batra et al., 2012), has been deeply studied in marketing literature; let's think for example important contributions like the book *Lovemarks* (Roberts, 2004) or researches that have demonstrated the impact of brand love on people willing to pay premium prices (Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005) and on

WOM (word of mouth) (Carroll and Ahuvia 2006; Fournier 1998; Thomson, MacInnis, and Park 2005)

People hate marketing but they use it every day

People hate marketing but they are marketers: when deciding what to like on Facebook, what to post on Twitter, and what to publish on Instagram, they are trying to build an ideal image of themselves and to get status, well-being, and self-esteem by the interpersonal communication of it (Lee et al., 2014)

We use marketing strategies as weapons of persuasion since pre-school when we wanted to convince our playmate to share a toy or our mother to purchase sweets (Weiss & Sachs, 1991), or when, still very young, we wanted to convince our parents to give us money for a movie. We knew exactly when the best time to ask for it was. If I have to think about the first time, I also used a marketing strategy to achieve something I wanted (target), then I would say that it was when I was 14 years old and I wanted to convince my dad to buy me a scooter (pretty common in the south of Italy where I grew up). I knew that if I wanted to increase my chance of receiving a YES, I had to ask it at the right time, in the right place, and with the right words.

Let's start with the context (setting). My dad is the kind of person who used to work very late. He usually came home full of nervous tension. After saying hi to all of us, he would turn to my mother and ask "*Amore*, what's for dinner tonight?" We would then sit down around the dinner table, and everyone would share their day. After dinner, he liked to take off his shoes, sit on his favorite sofa, and watch a football match (he still enjoys it when we do this together; we both support Napoli). When Napoli won, his mood would change, and he would be more open to any kind of discussion. That was exactly the right time for me to engage with him.

Now, the content (message). I knew that his tension point was that "scooters are dangerous," and that he believed in "rewarding rather than spoiling." With this in mind, the only thing left was to build my case:

- "Dad," I said, "I think that Calaiò had a great game tonight. I'm so happy we won and now we're getting closer to Juventus in the championship."

- "Yes son, this year could be the right one to win the championship," replied my dad.

Perfect. I'd already gotten him to agree with me on something. It would be easier to make him agree to the scooter now.

"You know dad, I got an A- in my latest math test, and overall, my grades are improving. I was thinking that since next month I will turn fourteen, I would be grateful if you decided to reward my hard work with something I desire the most right now, a scooter. I've found a very safe model. It doesn't go too fast and has

great brakes. I'd only use it during the daytime, mainly to go to school, so that I can save some time and I can sleep a bit more in the morning – this will also help my productivity at school. I won't use it at night, you know, as that can be dangerous.”

While on other occasions and with a different message, I'd have received a straight “No!”, in this case, my dad was open to talking about it, and after some negotiations and promises, he got me the scooter I wanted.

“Marketing is too important to be left to the marketing department.”
– David Packard

With his sentence, David Packard highlights the fact that marketing is everywhere and in anyone.

Nowadays, while many companies still struggle to be customer-centric (Ulaga, 2018), those who managed to put the people at the center of their business model have collected important results in their respective markets (Shah et al., 2006). Whether you're a business developer, a doctor, or an entrepreneur, you can't ignore the importance of your customer, you can't ignore the importance of marketing.

I hope that with these paradoxes I will be able to highlight unconventionally the importance of marketing inside any organization and in our daily life. Thus, the follow-up questions would be: how can we create successful marketing strategies?

As you have probably understood by now, I like stories. So here is a new one, which I hope you will enjoy. I was having a meeting in Barilla a few years ago – the brand that makes us Italians very proud since is the most important pasta brand in the world -. So, here the story goes, during a meeting I used the word “Consumers”, but the marketing director immediately stopped me and said: “In Barilla we try to avoid using the word “consumer”. Indeed, this word refers to those that buy and consume products. Instead, we like to use the word “people” because people live experiences, people live our brands. We believe that a brand can be powerful only if it truly brings value in the lives of people and can touch their hearts”.

What I like about this story is that we should stop thinking B2B or B2C, we should always think H2H (human to human). It is only when we look at customers in a more holistic way as humans with full and complicated lives that we can create more engaging brands and more powerful communication. But where to start? Well, I think we should start with this question:

Why do people do what they do?

In a Focus Group with my company, Human Centric Group, we did the following experiment: we poured the same beer into two different bottles, the

first one more modern and stylish, the second more simple and traditional. We told the participants that the price of the first one was four times higher and then we asked them to try both and to tell us their thoughts. The results were that almost everyone liked more the taste of the first beer, they said that the quality was for sure higher and that indeed the second beer was giving headaches already after the second sip.

Surprised? Probably not, especially if we think that Pepsi, wins all the blind tests (an experiment in which information about the test is masked (kept) from the participant, to reduce or eliminate bias, until after a trial outcome is known) versus Coca-Cola since the 80s, meaning that it tastes better, but people continue buying more Coca-Cola (Van Doorn & Miloyan, 2018).

Moreover, it has been widely studied how motivation, cognition and other psychological factors are decisive for purchasing behavior (Bayton, 1958). That is why a good marketer should always ask himself the whys beyond a certain behaviour and not only what that consumers like.

Discovering the way is the key to marketing but is not that easy. Most of our decisions, as Freud, the Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, used to mention in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1899) are unconsciously driven by emotions. If you ask someone WHY she/he bought an iPhone, that person will probably lie to you. She/he instead of giving you the real WHY, will start justifying themselves for their decision of buying an iPhone: “It is easy to use, it has a nice design, makes good pictures and I can download the apps I need the most, etc.”.

This is not the real WHY, you don’t need to be a marketing expert to know that these characteristics are shared by most of the competition. Describing why you have an emotional connection with someone, or something is hard. Answering the question WHY did you buy an iPhone, is not any easier than answering the question of why you married your wife/husband.

From knowing your consumers to understanding them as human beings.

Freud believed that behavior is driven by fears and desires locked in the ‘unconscious’- a part of us he attempted to reach through psychoanalysis. In some ways, the work of a marketer is very much in line with the one of a psychoanalyst: discover the unconscious factors that drive people’s behaviors. This is the key to creating meaningful marketing strategies for consumers.

Freud was also the reason why I became so passionate about this subject. My mother is a psychologist, and my father is a psychiatrist. I grew up, using an Italian expression, “*a pane e Freud*”, which means “with bread and Freud.”

My parents instilled in me a curiosity, a yearning to go deeper and understand more about myself as well as those around me. Since the end of my studies, I

have been obsessed with understanding consumers and how a brand can help them feel better, which in my opinion is a very different approach than: “let me see how I can persuade them to do what I want”.

It is like being a psychoanalyst, your job is not to persuade (negative meaning) your patients but is about listening to them and understanding what is that they need to grow and feel better. This kind of approach in my opinion will help to create truly successful brands. This means that you’ll need to be curious and try to understand why people do what they do: dive into people’s behaviors, beliefs, and psychologies, because the more you understand the more you can create an emotionally engaging connection between brands and people.

In my experience of working with multiple brands, from many different categories, and across various countries I have found three key reasons why it is important to look at customers as human beings.

Brands are a source of emotions.

As marketers, we tend to think that customers overanalyse their choices, but as human beings, we usually act based on our emotions and then seek a rational explanation for our actions (Achar et al., 2016). Our purchasing decisions are no exception. Abraham Lincoln once said: “To win a man to your cause, you must first reach his heart, the great high road to his reason.” Indeed, to be successful, every brand should balance communication between functional and emotional benefits.

Humans influence other humans

As humans, we all aspire. Whether consciously or not, we are constantly influencing and being influenced by others (Blazevic et al., 2013). Consequently, to make the best choice when making purchasing decisions, we often seek advice from those whom we think of as experts (Naujoks & Benkenstein, 2020), those who are passionate about the specific category we are interested in, just as others look to us in areas where we have the expertise or strong experience. Therefore, it is important to focus on those people whom strongly influence others and who others aspire to be like.

Lifestyle matters

Understanding peoples’ lifestyles allows companies to determine when and where a specific message will be captured and assimilated by the receiver in the most impactful way (Wolburg, 2014). This can be achieved by understanding the varying mindsets and levels of receptivity people experience throughout their daily activities.

Using the right Data

Understanding consumers is the first step to creating brands that can improve people’s lives. In this scenario, big data have a very important role. In today’s

digital age, the term “big data” has become a buzzword, often alluding to the vast amounts of information people generate, often unwittingly, through their smartphones, supermarket loyalty cards, credit card transactions, and more. In the realm of marketing, the true revolution lies in the ability to harness this wealth of data to process, analyse, and extract insights upon which to base strategic decisions.

Insight is the true revelation that captures the most significant aspects of consumer choices: it is from these that it can emerge why the target audience thinks what it thinks, behaves as it does, and feels what it feels. Going back to big data, it empowers businesses to create various consumer profiles, built upon four fundamental factors:

Lifestyle Analysis: Understanding a consumer’s lifestyle is akin to grasping the intricacies of their personality: their values, attitudes, interests, opinions, behaviors, and social practices, all intertwined.

Preferred Products and Brands: Identity and consumption are intimately linked; what we buy, consume, or wear defines us. For marketers, it is crucial not only to analyze data related to their brand’s product category but also to understand general consumption patterns.

Shopping Locations: Analyzing not just what consumers buy but also how and where they shop can enrich consumer understanding and uncover relevant insights.

Media Consumption: Understanding how people engage with media is equally crucial. Some engage passively for entertainment, while others are active, writing blogs, sharing articles, conducting research, and writing reviews. This insight into media consumption patterns can provide valuable clues about consumers’ interests, behaviors, and potential influencers.

In the age of big data, the ability to derive meaningful insights from vast amounts of information has become a game-changer for marketers. By going beyond mere consumer categorizations and delving into the depths of individual behaviours and preferences, businesses can create more targeted, personalized, and effective marketing strategies. In doing so, they can forge stronger connections with their audience and navigate the ever-evolving landscape of consumer behaviour with precision and insight.

How to create a human segmentation

In this example we present the Italian segmentation; the sample of this research consists of 10,000 individuals (representative of the Italian population) in terms of geography and demographics (age and gender) and includes people ranging in age from 18 to 70 years old.

The first step is to divide them into three life-stages:

Earliers: Young adults aged 18 and above who do not have children yet.

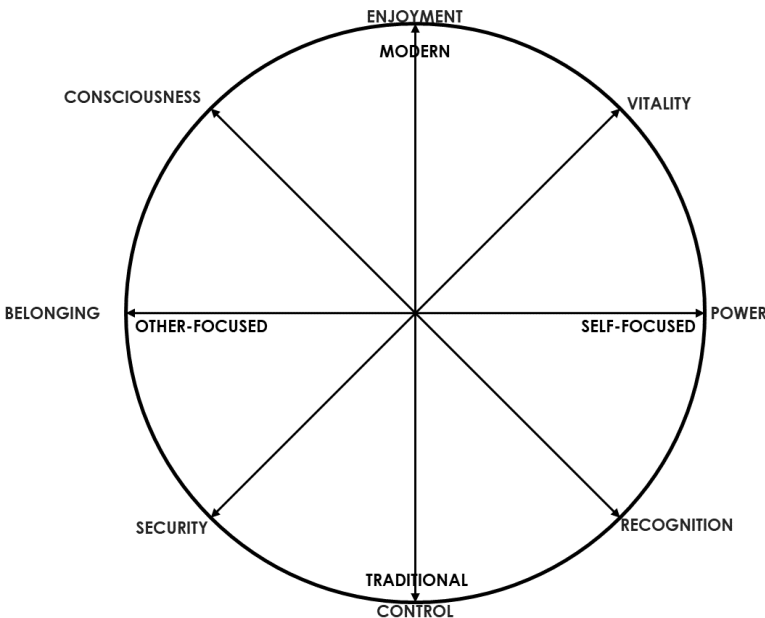
Parents: Those who have children until the last child reaches 18 or no longer live under the same roof.

Seniors: Individuals from the time the last child leaves home until their seventies.

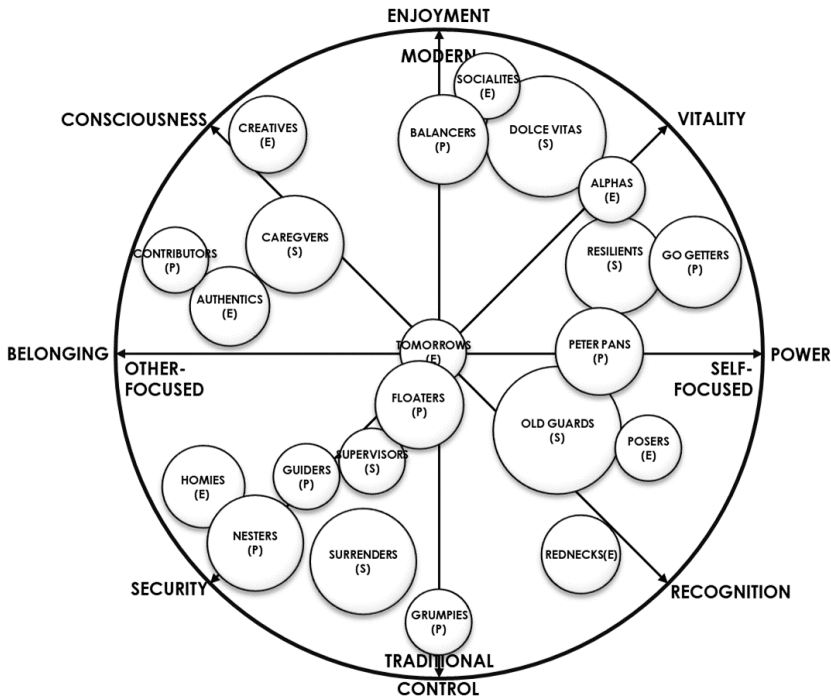
The reason segments are divided into life-stages is that with the arrival of a child, purchasing behaviors change drastically, as do priorities, fears, and tensions. The second step is creating distinct personality types:

Once consumers are grouped by life-stage, the next step is to identify those who have responded similarly within each category. This process results in the creation of twenty-two unique segments, eight for “earliers,” eight for “parents,” and six for “seniors”. These segments are considered “different personality types” because as previously mentioned, they encapsulate a wide range of characteristics and behaviors.

To represent this human-centric segmentation, a map inspired by the insights of Alfred Adler, a renowned psychologist, is utilized. Adler, a student of Freud, believed that every person can be categorized based on their inclination toward different priorities. They may be more oriented toward enjoyment than control, more interested in individual power than a sense of belonging, more driven by vitality than a need for security, and may place greater importance on consciousness rather than the pursuit of social recognition.



The positioning of segments on the map provides immediate access to valuable information about each segment. Segments in the upper part exhibit a modern and dynamic lifestyle, conversely, those in the lower part tend to lead a more moderate and traditional lifestyle. The segments leaning toward the right side of the map tend to be more self-focused, while those on the left prioritize relationships with family and friends.



Knowing and understanding these segments is the best way to create more involving brands and more engaging and ethical communication.

Of course, the objective of any communication should be to increase sales, but in my opinion, there are different ways to do it. Some advertising tries to persuade the watcher by showing something different from reality and very often by doing some overpromises. This could have probably worked twenty years ago, when the consumers did not have so much access to information, nowadays the consumers become way more informed and smarter. Unfortunately, many companies are still using this method which can payoff in the short run but not in the long one. More and more people are looking for advertising that is real, authentic and that can connect at an emotional level with them.

Emotions constitute a fundamental aspect of human life. Humans continuously feed on emotions, which allow them to categorize and evaluate

experiences. Thanks to our own experiences, each of us knows what an emotion entails, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Emotions make us feel alive and connected to the world around us. They also make us aware of inhabiting our bodies; our bodies participate in the emotional experience. We laugh, cry, tremble, sweat, and feel our hearts beating.

Achieving effective emotional communication with others has three significant consequences.

Communication that evokes emotions enhances the level of attention to the conveyed message. A few years ago, The New York Times reported that the average citizen in major cities around the world is exposed to approximately 5,000 advertising stimuli daily. Consequently, according to a study by Microsoft, our attention span, around eight seconds, is even shorter than that of a goldfish, which is nine seconds. An excessive influx of information diminishes both attention thresholds and the ability to concentrate. However, when advertising succeeds in triggering emotions, it is followed more closely, and the message being conveyed is focused upon.

Emotion-evoking communication is more easily remembered. Let's pause to consider the brand communications we have seen or heard today. How many do we recall? It's peculiar that we remember so few, considering the massive amount of advertising we've been exposed to. Advertising experts Roberto Rondinelli and Riccardo Bresciani explain in their book "Nice to Brand You" how our brains tend to discard non-priority information to ensure efficiency. In 1977, an advertisement realized its persuasive potential after being seen at least four times.

Twenty years later, it requires at least sixteen viewings. Hence, being memorable without an extensive budget is quite challenging. The science of "neuromarketing," which applies neuroscientific theories and techniques to develop effective marketing strategies, elucidates how emotions are reactions to stimuli, and how the brain associates them with lived experiences. Emotions are consequently more resistant to being "erased." I recall my grandfather, who in the last years of his life, after a serious motorcycle accident (three months in a coma), could barely remember his children's names but continued to recount (negative) emotions linked to the wartime period and his captivity in Poland. Another of his stories, certainly more pleasant, revolved around his long return to Italy and the embrace of his rediscovered fiancée, my grandmother Marisa. I find the human mind truly fascinating, and the role of emotions essential for both remembering and being remembered.

The emotions we experience when viewing an advertisement can alter our perception of reality. This is perhaps the most intriguing point. Let's discuss the rivalry between Pepsi and Coca-Cola. Pepsi wins blind taste tests,

where consumers prefer Pepsi because, not knowing which liquid is in the two glasses, the consumer activates brain areas associated with sensory perception – taste, smell, temperature, flavor, etc.

As thoroughly explained by colleagues Rondinelli and Bresciani, is that if the brain knows beforehand which brand it is tasting – and if there’s a history of experience, narrative, and brand communication that has managed to evoke emotion in the consumer – well, things will change drastically. The brain areas that will then be activated are no longer those linked to sensory perception but those associated with emotion and memory. What the brain does then is not merely evaluate the product but evoke the emotion linked to the brand, provoked by its communication. That’s why when the consumer must choose, with eyes wide open, what to drink between the two, Coca-Cola is always the preferred choice. Creating emotional communication doesn’t necessarily require spending millions on special effects to showcase something sensational or spectacular. It’s about carving out a small space in an individual’s emotional imagination by leveraging their points of tension. The term “emotion” derives from the Latin “emotus,” the past participle of “emovere,” meaning “to move,” and it’s precisely about stirring, engaging, and intriguing (in addition to informing) that the new forms of communication, upon which marketing is focusing, aim to achieve.

How can we create emotional communication that works and that is sincere?

The first thing is to understand the most significant pain points of the target audience linked to their needs and crafting a message aimed at efficiently resolving these pain points is imperative. Let’s consider a practical example. Take the “balancers,” a segment of parents who strive to maintain a balance in their lives among work, friends, family, hobbies, and more. One of their pain points is a constant sense of guilt: when they work excessively and lack time for their family, when they miss a work deadline to attend their child’s swimming practice, or when they can’t organize a tennis match due to work constraints. Now, let’s imagine being a company that produces chocolate bars for children and has a small boutique within an airport.

We aim to create a message that taps into this pain point: the feeling of guilt. How about a simple storefront sticker featuring an image of a girl with a stuffed animal, pajamas, and teary eyes, asking, “Daddy, what did you bring me from your business trip?” I assure you it would be effective. In fact, during my time in Armenia, I often transited through Dubai Airport for my business trips, where a similar sticker was present. I can assure you that not a single time did my “balancer” colleague pass without purchasing something for his child.



The second thing that we should never forget when creating a new advertisement is to balance functional and emotional benefits. It's crucial to remember that a brand cannot communicate solely on an emotional level; otherwise, it would lack substance. It must be an escalation, starting with functional benefits and gradually communicating emotional ones. Before being the beverage that encapsulates happiness, Coca-Cola tells us it is thirst-quenching, refreshing, and flavorful. Volvo, before emphasizing safety and making us feel like responsible parents, showcases its car's ability to automatically brake upon detecting a hazard ahead. The reason Red Bull gives you "wings" is due to its taurine and caffeine content, which indeed have an energizing function. A brand can't possess emotional connotations unless it also communicates key product and brand functionalities. However, it's equally true that communicating solely on a functional level (neglecting the emotional aspect) would render the brand "flat," almost lacking its "soul." Such a brand would struggle to establish a connection with consumers. Competing solely based on functional benefits, which are easily replicable, leads to a price war with competitors who exclusively communicate at this level. If a consumer is willing to pay ten times more for a plain white t-shirt just because it has a black mustache embroidered at heart level, it's due to the emotional experience that Nike embodies by stimulating the "athlete within each of us," not solely for its functional benefits that match any other basic white t-shirt.

Even when choosing an influencer, you need to make sure that whatever he/she says about the brand is perceived as authentic and true. As marketers we should always remember that we shouldn't merely consider the celebrity's fame, but also evaluate how their involvement would contribute to enhancing the

brand equity. The fact that Zlatan Ibrahimović is Swedish, and an internationally renowned figure isn't sufficient to make him a suitable fit as a spokesperson for IKEA. Can you imagine Zlatan promoting values like "humility," "altruism," and "family warmth"? Probably not.

Each celebrity is also a type of brand in themselves, as they represent specific values in the minds of their fans. Hence, it's crucial for there to be alignment between these values and those of the brand they are endorsing.

The brands that instead of persuading (negatively) people to sell more focus more on creating an emotional connection with their target through their communications are the ones that are able to succeed in their markets. In my career I have observed three main positive consequences of creating an emotional connection with people:

Consumers will become your brand ambassadors and will promote the brand for you among their peers and social connections.

People will forgive your mistakes because they love you. Even if Apple's iPhone battery has been horrible for decades, people keep buying it because has an emotional connection with the brand.

You can stop worrying about your competitors because customers will have "eyes only for you."

Best practices

Here are some examples of advertisements that, in my opinion, have succeeded in inspiring and motivating rather than manipulating and deceiving:

Google – *Dear Sophie*

As we grow up, memories of when we were little fade away. It's indeed challenging to remember being a baby, the first time we put on skis or rode a bicycle, yet our parents remember them as moments filled with emotions. Google, with the ad "Dear Sophie," tells the story of an ordinary father, Daniel Lee, who manages to collect and narrate some of the most exciting moments of their life to his daughter Sophie, thanks to Google's platform that showcases its features simply and truthfully. The tone is authentic, and the message is clear and motivating: "The web is what you make out of it."

Link to watch the advertisement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhPklt9nYas>

Gillette Venus - "*Basta un Gesto*" (*Just a Touch*).

Another example of advertising that captured my attention a few years ago is Gillette Venus: "Basta un Gesto" (Just a Touch). The ad delicately explores the mother-daughter relationship during adolescence when the daughter's body

changes. It tells the story of a mother who, perhaps unknowingly, fails to grasp this phase of her daughter's body transformation, causing a rift between them and tension. Empathy is demonstrated when the mother buys her daughter adult razors, Venus blades, for the first time. The happiness on the daughter's face reveals that she finally feels seen by her mother as a young woman, not just as a child. The ad concludes with a message: "When you no longer see her as a child, you help her become a woman." In this case, Unilever addresses a crucial topic and communicates something beyond the product sale: the importance of being present for your daughter during a challenging phase of her life.

Link to watch the advertisement: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2OjOS7GsP0Q>

Nike – Dream Crazy

Lastly, I believe that every respectable brand should have a purpose, a reason for its existence that goes beyond the desire to create profits, such as Nike, whose mission is:

"To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world.

*If you have a body, you are an athlete."

Campaigns authentically connected to their brand's purpose, in my opinion, are the ones that truly succeed in inspiring, moving, and engaging, like Nike's "Dream Crazy" campaign.

Link to watch the advertisement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WW2yKSt2C_A

Conclusion:

A great deal of work has been done to understand the topic of interest. The research provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on the subject and offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Overall, this study provides a synthesis of the literature in the field of consumer behaviour and emotional marketing and a link between academic research and fieldwork. The concepts discussed in the article can inspire managers and people working in the marketing field, to improve their strategy, tactical activations, and results remembering them how to approach the word "persuasion".

Persuasion, when used ethically and authentically, can create genuine bonds between brands and people, inspiring, moving, and engaging them. Conversely, when it is synonymous with manipulation or deceit, it creates distance. What sets negative persuasion apart from positive persuasion is the intention to create real value for the audience. This becomes evident when marketers strive

to understand people's fears, desires, and points of tension to address them through their brand.

In the end, persuasion in marketing is a powerful tool that can shape people's perceptions and influence their decisions. However, it is up to companies to decide how to use it: to manipulate or to create value, emotion, and connection. This study aims to convince other marketers that true success for a brand lies in an ethical, authentic, and positive approach to persuasion that contributes to improving people's lives.

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NEW MEDIA APPLICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF PERSUASION AND PERCEPTION MANAGEMENT: TWITTER EXAMPLE

Hakan Yüksel¹

Introduction

In the context of developing technologies, human life has new areas of movement every day and tries to integrate into renewed processes. This situation can also stand out in the centre of life within the framework of different dynamics as well as in the sectoral sense. Therefore, being able to control the masses and at the same time to direct and influence them at the desired level can be realised through persuasion and perception management. Mass media plays an important role at this point. As a matter of fact, persuasion skills and perception management in every phenomenon that exists in terms of influencing the masses as well as political and ideological issues can only be possible through media tools that can reach widespread masses. In the context of directing the lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours, current consumption habits and ideological approaches of potential masses, persuasion and perception management are of strategic importance. The media factor, which has been provided by traditional media tools from the past to the present and which has kept the masses under the influence by combining audio-visual qualities, especially with the invention of television, is now going one step further with internet technology.

In this framework, the current study is centred on the Twitter platform in particular new media applications. In fact, on this platform, where millions of users are actively involved, the masses are likely to be affected by the content produced and the written/visual elements shared. In recent history, in many sensational events from economy to politics, from magazine to current developments, the new media field and the content shared in this field have influenced and directed the masses. This study will focus on the issues of persuasion and perception management on the Twitter platform through case studies. Before these data, which will be carried out by conducting due diligence, persuasion and perception management will be emphasised in the

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conceptual context. The concepts of digital communication and new media will be associated with the persuasion and perception management in question and a conceptual background will be tried to be created. In the conclusion section, determinations and evaluations will be made based on the problem of the study. The problem of this study is whether internet users are affected by the content shared on Twitter and how this situation is related to persuasion and perception management.

Digital Communication and New Media

Throughout human history, communication has played an important role and is constantly evolving. In early times, people tried to communicate with each other through movement and sounds. Later, communication was further developed by drawing pictures and writings on walls and other materials. With the technical developments in the last two centuries, communication has changed. First, communication was accelerated with Morse code, and then more advanced methods such as audio and video transmission emerged. The emergence of the Internet and smartphones led to a rapid diversification of communication channels. This diversity led to the emergence of social communication tools. Social communication tools started to be used with the Web 2.0 era and started to provide interaction between communication parties. With the development of technology, social communication tools have also developed and gained different features. Today, thanks to social communication tools, audio, video and document transmission can be easily achieved. In summary, communication is constantly evolving and has gained speed with technological developments. Social communication tools have also emerged as a result of these developments and have strongly increased the interaction between the communication parties (Ertürk, 2020: 89).

In the historical process, it is possible to examine the transition period of communication tools evolving towards digitalisation through four different periods. In this context, the characteristics of these four periods should be discussed as follows (İnuğur, 1978: 17):

- In the first period, there is a long communicative phase starting from the period when symbols and images were used and account stones were analysed and continuing until the French Revolution in the 18th century.
- The second period is characterised by a period of censorship at the beginning, followed by a free process until the Industrial Revolution.
- The third period lasts until the first quarter of the 20th century. In this period, which lasted until the First World War, it would be correct to say that the print media was an effective means of communication and became widespread especially in cities.

- The fourth and last period is the modern period, which lasted until the last quarter of the 20th century, in which other mass communication tools other than the print media came to the fore at an effective level. In this period, changing and developing communication tools have brought the world closer to each other on a global level.

It is also possible to talk about the fifth period in which digital communication has become widespread and internet technology is now used in every field. As a matter of fact, in this period, which has continued until today, mass communication tools have developed considerably in terms of digitalisation. Therefore, a process in which traditional media was replaced by new media came to the fore. In this process, traditional televisions turned into interactive televisions and integrated into the new media with their smart features. In addition, other traditional media tools have also integrated with the new media and carried the digital communication process further. The transition to an effective and powerful communication process in which time and space problems are eliminated and dozens of people from different parts of the world can interact simultaneously (visually, audibly and in writing) on a small computer or telephone screen has begun.

With digitalisation, new communication technologies have emerged that have transformed traditional media and broadcasting systems. These technologies include versatile digital media and interactive media alternatives. These media alternatives have five main characteristics (Güçlü, 2022: 6):

- Modularity: Modularity allows the media to be modular and different components can be easily assembled and organised.
- Digital representation: Digital representation allows the media to be represented and stored digitally.
- Automation: This feature allows the processes involved in media production to be automated.
- Variability: Variability enables media to be compatible with different platforms as well as other devices and to adapt to changing needs and conditions.
- Transcoding: Transcoding refers to the relationship between media and coding and programming languages.

These prominent features contribute to new media environments becoming more interactive, flexible and customisable thanks to the new communication technologies brought about by digitalisation. As a matter of fact, new media, which emerged with the development of digital technologies, refers to virtual environments where users interact independently of time and space. These virtual environments are created and presented on various platforms thanks

to developing computer, internet and mobile technologies. Unlike traditional media, new media offers users more control and participation opportunities. The interactivity of these virtual environments provides users with the opportunity to interact and share. For example, on social media platforms, users can perform activities such as messaging, commenting, sharing and interacting. These interactions allow users to create virtual communities and have different experiences. New media, unlike traditional media, can also be customised according to the demands of users and presented to the target audience. This feature can also be used in digital marketing and advertising, contributing to the creation of more effective and target-oriented strategies. In conclusion, new media offers a world where users can interact interactively and have different experiences in virtual environments thanks to the opportunities brought by developing technologies. Unlike traditional media, this world has a more customisable and target-oriented structure (Bulunmaz, 2014: 25).

On the other hand, new communication technologies developed with the digital communication process and integrated into new media enable individuals to exchange messages without being limited by time. While news broadcasts or phone calls made at certain times in traditional communication methods require waiting due to time constraints, new technologies make it possible to access the desired information instantly through asynchronous communication. For example, news or information sources can be accessed at any time via the Internet. Moreover, thanks to smartphones, it is easy and possible to access the source and caller information of an unanswered phone call. In this way, individuals can keep their communication channels open even when they do not have to respond to their messages and can respond to their messages at any time (Ertürk, 2020: 86). Such practical situations are among the conveniences offered to individuals by digital communication and new media environment.

The definition based on the works of Lev Manovich contains very important information about the digitalisation process and new media. In fact, Manovich defines new media as a digitised classical medium. This definition states that the new media exists in digital format and digital format and this situation has a significant impact on the media. Digitisation is one of the most important features of the new media, whereby data can be recorded, stored, archived and distributed. This provides a great advantage in terms of information sharing and access. Manovich also states that new media allows for an anti-linear reading. This means that, unlike traditional media, the content of new media does not have to be presented in a specific order. Instead, users can randomly access the information they want and thus create their own reading experience. In conclusion, Manovich's definition highlights important features of new media such as digitisation and anti-linear reading. These features mean that new media

can be used in an interactive, versatile and time and space independent manner (Manovich, 2001: 59).

In this context, with the new media process and the effect of digitalisation, media tools have become smaller and more portable. Because in the past there were only televisions and radios in homes, now it is possible to connect to the internet everywhere with much more portable devices such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops. In addition, the use of personal media has also increased in recent years. Personal media tools such as social media platforms, blogs and podcasts allow people to make their voices heard and create and publish their own content. Digitalisation has affected not only the field of communication but also almost every sector. For example, digitalisation has led to the spread of tele-medicine applications in the health sector, the increase in online education platforms in the education sector and the spread of e-commerce in the trade sector. One of the most important features of digitalisation is that it offers rapid development opportunities. In this way, sectors have been enabled to discover innovations that were not possible before and to develop more rapidly, and the sector is now managed with a fingertip (Ertürk, 2020: 85).

It is also very important to make a comparison in order to understand the transition to digital communication process and the differences between new media and traditional media within this framework. Traditional media refers to mass communication tools that appeal to a wide audience and require large financial resources for the publication and distribution of content. Media such as television, newspapers and radio offer the opportunity to reach a wide audience, but there is no direct interaction between transmitters and receivers. Instead, content is broadcast in the form of one-way communication and recipients passively consume it. On the other hand, new media is a type of media that emerged as a result of digitalisation and offers the opportunity to reach a wide audience through tools such as the internet, social media and mobile applications. Thanks to their interactive and interactive features, new media allow recipients to play an active role such as sharing, interpreting and even producing content instead of consuming it. In addition, another important characteristic of new media is that they can be accessed at any time and from any place. Therefore, one of the main differences between new media and traditional media is the possibility of interactive communication. Thanks to new media, recipients have a direct channel to produce and share content, which makes communication more personalised. On the other hand, traditional media addresses a wider audience and recipients passively consume the content. These differences enable new media to be used much more effectively than traditional media (Güçlü, 2022: 9).

New Media And Persuasion Management

Persuasion is an important part of the communication process and focuses on changing ideas, attitudes and behaviour towards a set goal. The techniques used to persuade are designed to influence and change people's thoughts, beliefs and behaviour. The success rate of these techniques is directly related to the persuader's abilities, understanding of the target audience and management skills. The persuasion process consists of the concepts of influence and persuasiveness. Influence is one of the tools used by the persuader to influence the target audience and usually involves the use of emotional connections, social evidence and authority figures. The second stage of the persuasion process is credibility. If the persuader's presentation, suggestion or demand is not convincing, the target audience will not accept it. In between the two stages, there are also the orientation strategies that the persuader realises in the context of his/her abilities and management skills. In the persuasion process, the persuader's management ability helps him/her to understand the needs, concerns and values of the target audience, to guide them and to communicate effectively with them. In this context, the persuasion process is a systematic communication process involving many different factors. For a successful persuasion process, the persuader needs to understand and apply factors such as understanding the target audience, management ability, influence and credibility (İplikçi, 2015: 68).

The relationship between persuasion and consumer deception brings with it debates in the disciplines of socio-psychology and anthropology. Issues such as persuasive communication, human attitudes and change, social influence and perception are important topics in the field of advertising and are aimed at understanding human behaviour and discovering ways to influence it. Humans, as social beings, are shaped by seeing, hearing and feeling social interactions, reactions, imitations, attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, advertisements have an effective function in terms of social acceptance of products. Advertisements are one of the most common methods used to help consumers identify their needs and orient them towards products. However, the use of adverts can also lead to negative consequences such as misleading and deceiving consumers. The impact of adverts is related to social influence and perception, which are two of the basic concepts of social psychology. Social influence is considered a phenomenon that shows that people tend to imitate the behaviour of others. Persuasive communication tools try to create the perception that a product is popular and preferred by other people by using this imitation tendency of consumers. In this context, the persuasion process in the field of advertising encompasses many factors that influence the consumer's purchasing behaviour (Elden, 2016).

The persuasion process is the whole of the efforts of individuals to accept, internalise and ultimately reflect ideas on behaviour, taking into account their social environment and social dynamics. In this context, persuasion is a process in which the individual interacts with elements such as other people and culture in his/her social environment. In order to establish a persuasive communication, the individual must take into account the factors in his/her social environment and determine an appropriate method. Moreover, the process of persuasion can be used not only to get ideas accepted, but also to strengthen relationships between people and to achieve a better understanding (Uztuğ, 2012: 14). It is also possible to say that the concept of persuasion is a phenomenon that we encounter very often in our daily lives. However, the concept of persuasion is not a phenomenon that has emerged only today. Historically, people have been working on persuasion methods for thousands of years and have developed many theories and practices in this regard. Today, many disciplines such as social psychologists, marketing experts and communicators are conducting research on the concept of persuasion. The concept of persuasion plays an important role not only in personal relationships but also in other fields. Therefore, research on persuasion and the theories developed on persuasion provide benefits in many areas of our lives (Yüksel vd, 2012: 21).

The role of the media in the persuasion process is important. As a matter of fact, in today's communication age where social experiences and judgements are generally obtained from news, the media has a dominant influence on the perception, recognition, knowledge and recall of issues and events (Yurdigül ve Yurdigül, 2014: 13). In fact, with the integration of communication technologies into our lives, there have been significant changes in how society communicates and interacts. These technologies have accelerated and facilitated communication between people and increased connections on a global scale. However, at the same time, social media has also brought new issues such as digital addiction and privacy issues. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the use and impact of communication technologies that bring new changes (Zinderen, 2020: 417). The communication factor, which constitutes a process that is necessary for human communities to live together (Solmaz vd, 2017: 717), is important for the ability to persuade in this sense.

The role of advertisements is also important in the context of new media and persuasion management. In this context, Ritzer emphasises that the efforts made to persuade people are increased by advertisements. He also mentions that advertisements are also effective as individuals in the mass are influenced by each other in an effort to protect their status by ignoring their own economic level (Ritzer, 2000: 233). On the other hand, it should be noted that there are many strategies that assist in the development of persuasive communication

strategies. Among these, the elaboration probability model stands out. This model is used to understand the effectiveness of persuasive communication and its basic premise is that the strength of the message can vary depending on the degree to which an issue or argument is elaborated. Therefore, a detailed and elaborated presentation of messages may be more effective in changing people's attitudes (Jones *et al.*, 2003: 180).

Persuasion is a fundamental part of human communication and is widely used in almost every sector, business, political campaigns and social life. The methods and techniques used to persuade can vary from the way arguments are presented to the use of language. However, effective persuasion often involves presenting an argument in a systematic way and supporting it with appropriate evidence. Aristotle's criticism was particularly against orators being content with presenting arguments, and he felt that because they did not organise them in a systematic way, they failed to offer anything instructive to their audience. Therefore, today, knowledge of the importance of persuasion and methods of building an effective persuasion strategy is critical to the ability to communicate successfully (Bal, 2009: 183).

The persuasion management process, which reaches widespread audiences in the context of new media, is a method used to influence people's beliefs, thoughts, behaviours, motivations, wishes and desires. This method can be realised in both rational and irrational dimensions. Rational arguments can change attitudes by using sound logic and evidence. For example, in a Socratic type dialogue, persuasion can occur when logical evidence is presented to the participants. However, the emotional dimension is also very important in the persuasion process. People's feelings and emotions can also influence and change attitudes through a set of values that are not based on logic. Therefore, persuasive appeals can be made in many ways. Although persuasion is used to influence people's thoughts, beliefs and behaviour, the aim of persuasive appeals is not only a change in attitude but also a change in behaviour. Persuasive appeals are designed to mobilise people into action. Therefore, the persuasion process is not only a process of persuasion or persuasion, but also a process of mobilisation (Jamieson, 1996: 215).

New Media and Perception Management

In the context of perception management, the differences offered to the masses by new communication technologies change the power of media tools on social perception. This change replaces new communication technologies in daily life practices and causes the transformation of traditional methods used in political media studies with the digitalisation process. This situation necessitates changes in the practices of policy actors towards their target audiences. The personalised aspect of the new media, the easy, fast and cheap

access to information, the multi-level resource feature and the opportunity for interactive communication between users of messages cause messages to be more effective in the context of perception management. Therefore, awareness is created in terms of communication studies compared to traditional media (Ceng, 2018: 668-669).

As a matter of fact, perception is the process of sensory experience of the external world and its processing and interpretation in the brain. Through this process, we perceive, identify and respond to environmental stimuli. Perception helps us to make sense of the world by providing us with information about the characteristics of the environment we are in (Otara, 2011: 22). Perception is the process of transferring the stimuli received from the outside world to the brain, where they are processed and interpreted to reach a decision (Malkoç, 2018: 100). Perception is the process by which people understand and make sense of the world around them. In this process, people receive stimuli from their environment through their visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory and olfactory senses and interpret them through complex processing processes of the brain. The perception process is also influenced by factors such as the individual's previous experiences, expectations, motivation and emotions. Therefore, different people may perceive even the same events in different ways. Perception is a fundamental process through which people interact with their environment, and this interaction can also influence an individual's behaviour, reactions and thoughts (Göksu, 2016: 50).

According to Siegel, perception management has three main objectives. The first is to keep the behaviour and attitudes of the local population under control. The second is to convince opponents of the consequences of their own behaviour. The third is to create public opinion in order to gain and maintain legitimacy in the national and international arena (Siegel, 2005: 118).

According to Zeynep Özcan and Nilüfer Sezer, perception management is evaluated with the following statements (Özcan ve Sezer, 2021: 72):

“Although the concept of perception management has first found its place in a systematic set of activities in a definitional form and has emerged recently as a concept, it has actually been seen in daily life routines and inter-community relations since the first human being. The existence of perception management practices cannot be denied even in the image management that individuals try to create in order to survive in nature, to introduce themselves to other individuals, and to make themselves liked by the opposite sex. Therefore, perception management is one of the basic methods that the individual applies to possible or existing negative situations and to reinforce positive situations in his/her relations with his/her social environment.”

On the other hand, perception management is a term that has existed throughout the historical process and is frequently used. Although the US Department of Defence has recently introduced this concept into our language, it has been frequently applied in history as a very important method to influence target audiences (Öksüz, 2013: 12). At the same time, perception management is a process that aims to mobilise people of their own will without putting them under pressure. Different methods are used to persuade the target audience, and as a result, when the target audience reaches the desired result with the effect of the guidance, perception management is considered to be realised. This process adopts an approach that allows people to act voluntarily (Hamzaçebi ve Yozgat, 2019: 54). Perception management is also a process that aims to control how information and facts should be perceived. In this process, various techniques can be used to consciously create a certain perception (Payam, 2018: 20).

Strategies related to perception management in the context of new media can be mentioned in terms of the following items (Eraslan, 2018: 128):

- **Memorisation by Repetition:** Repetition of perception materials regularly and without excessive repetition is a strategy to reach the target audience and make them memorised.
- **Periodic Renewal:** It is a strategy applied in order for perception materials to come to the forefront and not to become ordinary by presenting them at certain intervals rather than continuously.
- **Presenting Before or After:** It is the presentation of perception materials to the target audience before or after in order to create or finalise perception on the desired subject.
- **Dissemination through Multiple Social Media Channels:** It is the dissemination of perception materials through multiple social media channels in order to reach the target audience from everywhere and to be on the agenda in this direction.
- **Creating the Impression of Coming from Reliable Sources:** Creating the impression that perception materials come from legitimate sources in order to increase their reliability.
- **Pretence of Removal:** It is a strategy to ensure that perception materials continue to exist in the target audience despite being pretended to have been removed.
- **Progressive Dissemination:** It is the presentation of perception materials to the target audience in stages.
- **Content Formatting Strategies:** Formatting strategies such as video, image, message or message-image-video on how perception management materials will be presented to the target audience.

Perception management is a process that depends on the existence of a communication environment. This process is carried out to influence and regulate the motivations, needs, behaviours and perception levels of potential audiences. Perception management is actually the management of the communication process (Türk, 2017: 17). In this context, communication processes, which stand out as individual-centred in the new media environment, draw attention in terms of perception management gaining a field of action. A perception management that is compatible with the target audience should include being compatible with the values and culture of the target audience, adopting an approach that exceeds expectations, customisation, focusing on the result, measurement, being based on facts, continuous repetition, differentiation, managing visual elements correctly and preferring emotional interactions to thoughts (Özer, 2002: 175).

The multimedia structure and hypertextual feature of the new media provide a wide range of effects on the symbolic, visual, emotional and selective perceptions of individuals and provide multi-directional perception. Social networks constitute an ideal platform for the exhibition of visual materials due to their strong connection with visual culture, the rapid spread of visual materials and the attractiveness of information supported by images (Uğurlu, 2015: 311).

Perception management has also established certain rules for individuals or organisational structures to achieve success. These rules can be handled under the existing headings (Saydam, 2012):

- Acting in accordance with the values of the target audience and carrying out activities within this framework,
- Respect and care for the cultural values of the target audience,
- Adopting an approach in line with the expectations of the target audience,
- Avoiding confusing the target audience, using clear and understandable language,
- Focus on the results of the implemented work,
- Measurability of the work done,
- Studies and practices are realistic and properly justified,
- Repeating the work done at certain intervals,
- Managing differentiation,
- Studies are orientated towards interaction with an emotional approach rather than a logical approach.

On the other hand, when perception management is considered as a method used in the context of influencing the target audience, it may lead to an idea similar to propaganda. In order for perception management to be effective, public diplomacy, media relations, cultural communication and psychological operations should all be handled together. Because all of these disciplines aim to change what others believe to be true. In order to change the opinions of the masses, it is necessary to use media tools as well as cultural and educational activities in the long term. In addition, the reliability of information is extremely important and necessary for the society to change and persuade its own truths. For this reason, the reliability and influence of the media becomes imperative in terms of perception management (Taylor, 2002 Akt: Hügül, 2011: 22).

Twitter Application In Persuasion And Perception Management

In terms of persuasion and perception management, social media environment is recognised as an important field of action. Because the perception management and persuasion process carried out through the social environment and media focuses on perception and sensation processes such as awareness of stimuli and the realisation of appropriate behaviours. Attitudes depend on how we interpret what is perceived and personal characteristics such as expectations, needs, motives and goals play an important role in interpretation. Perception management focuses on these key characteristics, aiming to manage individuals in accordance with their personal needs (Arğın, 2021). In this context, social media is recorded as the biggest revolution in the world of technology after the Internet, and the importance of location, time and real identities disappear in this virtual platform. Moreover, the limits of what we can do on social media are not clearly defined (Öksüz, 2013: 14). On the other hand, the limitlessness and rapid interaction network in social media constitute an important place in persuading the masses and creating a dominant effect on their perceptions.

The widespread use of social media tools, such as the Twitter application, has also had a decisive impact on the stages of communication, organisation and action among individuals and has led to some political and social changes. In Turkey, as in the rest of the world, social media tools have emerged as an alternative news source to traditional media tools in important social and political events and have played a critical role in social movements. In addition, studies have shown that as the number of repetitions of information, messages and rumours spread on social media increases, they begin to gain more credibility in the society. After exceeding a certain time and distribution threshold, these rumours, information and messages are accepted as true. However, in terms of directing the masses and forming public opinion, when traditional media tools are compared with social media tools, the frequency of preference is higher due to some features of social media. In terms of perception management and

persuasion process, social media tools are more effective than traditional media tools and therefore are used more frequently (Arğın, 2021).

An example of persuasion and perception management in the current social media areas, which are more frequently preferred by the masses, can be shown in the sales processes of digital marketing content. As a matter of fact, this management process, which is a planned and systematic communication activity, is seen as a sectoral necessity in terms of keeping the masses under the influence. For this reason, people are generally not asked questions in the process of persuasion and perception management. Instead of asking the question “*What do you want?*” through advertisements, companies enter the perception management effect by asking which option they want to choose and eventually make you make a choice. As Steve Jobs put it, “*People usually don't know what they want until you show them.*” For this reason; you should research what you want or what you may want for your product category and determine your perception management strategy and implement it through digital advertisements (Uyar, 2019).



Image 1: An Example Tweet for Viral Marketing (Erdem, 2018)

In the persuasion and perception processes in the social media environment, the influence of users as well as organisations can come to the fore. For example, the current tweet in the image above is important in explaining this situation. With this tweet, both a new interaction is created on social media and an indirect contribution is made to the advertisement of the brand (store) in question. The event in question develops as follows: A user tweeted an offer to the Migros store, but considering the possibility that Migros might not accept this offer, he also included Caffè Nero. The user stated that if he did not receive the response he expected from Migros, he would go to Nero 50 metres away, as stated in

his tweet. Migros Turkey's official Twitter account responded to the tweet of the user named "Evrım Maymunođlu" and announced that if the user sends a video, they will gift money points equal to one month's public transport costs (Erdem, 2018). We can say that this social media post, which is also important in terms of viral marketing, and the feedback made by the relevant store, has turned into an important persuasion and perception management process thanks to just one tweet.

On the other hand, social media posts made for the purpose of persuasion and perception may also come to the fore for the purpose of provocation. Considering the impact of provocative information on the masses, it is clear how vulnerable they are to manipulation attacks. Therefore, individuals and society may be at risk of misuse of social media for perception management. In addition, malicious perception management attacks can bring many problems that can disrupt social order. When unconscious users adapt their virtual behaviour on social media to real life, they easily insult others in a way that disrupts trust between people. It is also possible to become individuals who have hundreds of followers and friends on social media but who are lonely and sceptical in real life. Therefore, every individual should be aware of perception management. Being an unconscious social media user can negatively affect personality, opinions, behaviour and social relations. Therefore, raising awareness among users and working for the positive use of perception management is important and valuable for social welfare (Uyar, 2019).

As an example of how important the Twitter platform is in terms of perception and persuasion management, election processes generally come to the fore. Prior to the "Presidential Elections of the Republic of Turkey" to be held on Sunday 14 May 2023, the twitter posts made by the candidates give messages in the context of persuasion and perception management. In this context, the latest social media posts of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the current President and candidate for President in the new elections, and Kemal Kılıçdarođlu, another Presidential candidate, are included in the visual content below:



Image 2: Tweets of Political Leaders (Twitter, 2023)

The visuals and preferred discourses in the related tweet contents reveal that an approach is planned to directly influence, persuade and create a positive impression on political voters. As a matter of fact, the slogan “*Together We Are Stronger*” in the background of Erdoğan’s tweet is observed as an effective expression preference in terms of persuasive discourse. Kılıçdaroğlu, on the other hand, fulfils perception management on the electorate in a strong way with his video-based tweets. In this sense, the assertive expressions in the content of the tweets, which stand out as election promises, draw attention. In

addition, the smiling expressions on the faces of both political leaders and the Presidential candidates are decisive in terms of expressing hope and confidence on the electorate. Therefore, the Twitter platform, which is a powerful social media network, stands out as an important network in terms of political influence, just like the persuasion and perception management skills in the field of digital marketing.

14 May 2023 The current twitter posts of Muharrem İnce and Sinan Oğan, the other political leaders who are candidates for the “Presidential Elections of the Republic of Turkey” are given below:



Muharrem İNCE @vekilince · 27 Nis

Etimesgut ve Polatlı'dayız. İnsanlarımızın dertlerine de neşelerine de ortak olmak için yorulmak nedir bilmeden yurttaşlarımızla buluşmaya devam ediyoruz. Çünkü biz diyoruz ki; Memleket Partisi var #UmutVar



721 1.017 5.733 640,8 B



Dr. Sinan Oğan @DrSinanOgan · 31d

Bugün Samsun'da halkımızla kucaklaştık, Bandırma Vapuru'nu gezdik, SİMDER'i ve Dernek Başkanı @yunusguney55'i ziyaret ettik ve yerel basınla buluştuk.

Atamızın 19 Mayıs ruhunu yeniden yaşatan Samsun'umuza teşekkür ederim.

Şimdi de Bafra'ya geçiyoruz.



Image 3: Tweets of Political Leaders (Twitter, 2023)

As can be seen in the image, there are similar contents in the posts of the current candidates. Creating an impression of integration with the public, instilling hope in voters with smiling expressions, declaring that all segments of the society will be reached and giving the message “*We are also one of you*” by entering the public can be considered as strong steps in terms of persuasion and perception management. In this sense, the Twitter platform assumes the role of an important fulcrum and surpasses other social media platforms in terms of both persuasiveness and perception management. In fact, especially political organisations prefer Twitter more than social media applications such as Facebook and Instagram in persuasion and perception management. Although there is a social media reality that is susceptible to manipulation, provocation and misleading, Twitter is recognised as a safer space in this sense.

On the other hand, the obvious existence of the bot problem on the Twitter platform draws attention as a separate problematic. According to Tuğrulcan Elmas, the bot problem cannot be solved because Twitter does not take proactive measures such as closing bots or changing the trending algorithm. Elmas states that Twitter regularly closes bot accounts every six months, but does so with a delay. Bot accounts are put on hold after they are closed, and when active bot accounts are closed, the held accounts are immediately reactivated. Therefore, account closure is not an effective solution. Within minutes or seconds, bots send 200, 300, 500 or a thousand tweets containing campaign slogans and random words, and then delete the tweets. The aim is to make that slogan a hashtag. Therefore, these bots cannot be seen and it cannot be understood that the tag is misleading (t24.com.tr).

In addition, each social media post or like provides many clues about who we actually are. However, the message received by everyone for any content may not be the same because people’s past life experiences, social experiences, cultural differences and moral structures may affect the message. Therefore, people from different cultures may interpret the same message in quite different ways. In addition, social media tools and perception management techniques can be used to ensure that the messages desired to be delivered to the target audience are communicated effectively and that people are orientated towards the specified targets. Since human psychology is open to external factors, the psychological impact of social media on communities can play an important role in perception management. Therefore, one should be sceptical about the information read on social media and information channels should be diversified. Reliable, clear and evidence-based information should be used so that people can access the true meaning of the messages they Access (Aksakallı, 2020). Thus, it should be possible to react correctly to the effects of the content in social media channels in the context of persuasion and perception management and to take action against possible manipulation situations.

Conclusion

In the context of perception management and persuasion process, persuasive communication, which stands out both face-to-face and with the support of mass media, is an effort that people use to influence each other and change their behaviour and is used in all areas of life. This endeavour used to be defined by philosophers expressing their ideas in their meetings in order to influence individuals. However, with information and technological advances, the use of persuasive communication has become increasingly widespread. As a matter of fact, individuals try to direct others to a behaviour or change their attitudes by using effective means of communication to persuade. With the development of technology and the availability of computers in every home, a new method of persuasion has emerged. Especially with the widespread use of the Internet, persuasion has evolved into a dimension that covers more than face-to-face meetings or traditional media tools. Thus, with the help of technology, a new dimension is being adopted to persuade people in many fields from education to marketing, from health to tourism (Akyol, 2019: 20). Considering the impact of social media, the persuasive communication factor is also supportive in perception management.

In this study, the issue of how the persuasion and perception process can be provided in the context of examples on the Twitter platform has been addressed. Persuasion and perception management, which is prominent in political processes as well as in advertising and marketing processes, has also been evaluated by presenting sample content. Therefore, it is possible to say that internet technology and social media platforms, which have a widespread impact on the masses in this framework, are very effective in terms of persuasion and perception management. This is because internet access is very widespread and is now available to everyone through mobile phones. Although there may be a disinformation problem in the posts on social media, the fact that there is a fast sharing network and that social media content reaches millions of users instantly increases the size of the effect. So much so that messages, visuals, videos and also advertisement contents that frequently rotate on social media can have the effect of subliminal messages over time. Thus, masses can be persuaded more easily and can be directed at the desired level with correctly applied perception management.

As a result, social media content with high visibility is more permanent on the masses and gains a field of action in a sustainable context. The examples discussed in this study are only highlighted in order to determine the situation. For this reason, this study aims to be a guide for new studies to be conducted on this axis. It is likely that new studies that can be carried out with quantitative

and qualitative analyses and in a more comprehensive manner can reach a similar conclusion. The conclusion in question is that social media applications and the Twitter platform, which is at the centre of the study in this context, have value as a strong parameter in terms of influencing potential audiences in terms of both persuasion management and perception management.

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SEARCHING FOR ROOTS, IDENTITY AND ATTACHMENT IN CHILDHOOD: REFLECTIONS OF THE FILM “THE MAGICIAN’S ELEPHANT”

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Abstract

Teenagers and teen-related stories are commencing to receive more and more media attention. As they experience transition through infancy, teenagers who need to establish an identity and reintegrate into society start to doubt their own values as well as those of their family members, society, and the world around them. They start to view their family members, not as the people with whom they had a natural attachment, but more objectively, and since they can now become more mobile to move around, they can forge new connections and disseminate several different perceptions. On the one hand, despite the fact that many wars and conflicts throughout the world have a detrimental impact on people’s lives, children have started to dissolve family and kinship ties, lose their sense of identity, and cause issues when they come into contact with the reality of life. It is quite frustrating to witness that these issues remain prevalent in the twenty-first century if it is well-recognized for millennia.

“The Magician’s Elephant” is a 2023 computer-animated fantasy action film that Wendy Rogers directed, Martin Hynes wrote the screenplay for, and Julia Pistor acted as producer. The film is adapted from the 2009 book of the same name by Kate DiCamillo. Critics gave the film a range of ratings after its March 17, 2023, premiere and home screenings made available by Netflix. This study questions if the kid-friendly narratives in this animated film, which is an adaptation of a novel and features the voices of well-known actors. This movie is believed to have a lot to say for people who are caught between social issues like leadership, democracy, citizenship, and both reason and feelings. It emphasizes how quickly hope can fade in post-war societies, the difficulty of maintaining family ties, and the positive impact of belief. Whereas the identity problems occur with puberty, the study also dwells on the call for

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identity changes. The narrative style of the film draws attention to the after-war pessimism of the population requiring some kind of miracle just like in the film. This study, which aims at a perceptual analysis of the descriptions of the narrative, focuses on making it as an eclectic evaluation as possible from a structural and functional perspective. While considering the effects that actions can have on the audience, it also focuses on what exactly the actions or indicators mean scientifically, what kind of perception they create on the side of the audience, or what kind of manipulation they apply. The main aim of the study is to have a structural and semiotic analysis of the film regarding the perceptions it creates both on the adult's and children's levels. The purpose of this study is to question if the perceptions are related to the children's world through a structural, linguistic, and semiotic, sociological, and psychological perspective.

Key Words: Adolescents, identity, attachment, war, kinship, family, manipulation

Introduction

Today, Current World Population reached at the number of 8,063,818,313. In such a crowd nobody needs to see, talk or understand each other but everybody needs to respect to each other. Yet, most of the individuals have a very low tolerance to the differences or diversities. Instead, there is great increase in the number of the fears, anxieties and insecurities. Due to the convergences of forces, the world is passing through a shift of values regarding scientific, political, environmental, social, moral, legal perspectives. All these were attributed to the concept of global citizenship indicating the basic values such as democracy, equality, diversity, etc. Recent events in Eastern and Central Europe have dramatically changed the educational, political and economic landscape in many countries. The fall of communism was among the most decisive events of the late 20th century. The collapse of communist ideology and economy enabled deep societal change in Central Europe, which in turn triggered massive restructuring in all fields specifically of education and media. The changing political and economical situations in a country means a 'core' change that, as in a domino theory, triggering a societal metamorphosis. Most of the countries are almost giving up their national history in their textbooks just to give way to a more internationalized education to make it possible to integrate their students into a wider circle, to maintain some exchange programs or develop global citizens. Impact of globalization is having a greater impact on the youngsters since they are the part of the population much more effected by global trek (migration), the hyperreality (the media) and the virtual reality (the digital revolution). (Kratsborn, et.al., 2008). Because so many people are migrating, the European map appears from above like a weather map with a lot

of turbulence. This is a novel phenomenon for Europe, where the culture was historically divided among more than a hundred different nations who all lived in the same region. Following the Second World War, there has been a recent influx of people, money, and goods due to globalization. A ‘cultural diaspora’ exists. Cultures are mobile, along with the car and the smartphone.

Because they have two allegiances, migrants have a unique quality about them. To the multi-cultural community, they bring “the land that lives inside” with them. Perhaps the biggest ‘cultural dispersion’ is yet to come (Rifkin, 2004). In fifteen nations of Europe, the average percentage of people between the ages of 15 and 25 who have multiple identities is 52%. 40% for Great Britain, 68% for France, 59% of Dutch people identify as both Europeans and Dutch people. According to Lutz (2007), the coefficient is 0.48%, which predicts that 226 million people—up from 177 million in 2004—will have multiple identities by 2030. Yet, not much tolerance is perceived among the people when it comes to the World Values Survey (<https://serdaryurdakul.com/2023/03/26/dunya-degerler-arastirmasi-world-values-survey/>). WVS contends that the majority of variations in human values among civilizations can be condensed down to two key dimensions, citing the work of political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010) in support of this claim: “Traditional values versus secular-rational values” Secular-rational values reflect the opposing scenarios, whereas traditional values place an emphasis on religious, patriotism, respect for authority, obedience, and marriage. “Values of freedom of expression versus values of survival.” Survival principles, which prioritize security above freedom, disapprove of homosexuality and sexual variety. Political activity and the pursuit of rights are avoided since the state is prioritized. Strangers are not trusted, and happiness is not strong. The situation is reversed in communities that respect freedom and self-expression. Taking into mind the aforementioned value distinction, WVS produced a map showing the positions of several nations in 2023. The value assessments for each nation are depicted on axes with positive/negative directions (take note). According to the map, the Scandinavian nations rank first in both dimensions, closely followed by the Netherlands and New Zealand. On the other hand, Turkey is perceived as a nation that shares the African-Islamic group of nations’ values and is still caught between two major value groups that fight to uphold traditional authoritarian values while also continuing to fight for freedom, secularism, and rationality.

The kinship relations, being close friends or just seeing each other frequently could evolve the way you behave to others according to Granovetter, (2018). When it comes to economics, the effect of knowing each other on the price changes with their relationship, the cost of changing to various partners, and

the market scenario becomes extraordinary. It is not only significant for social relations, acceptance, or tolerance but also when it comes to price variations due to their relationship, acceptance, or intolerance. Young individuals participate in several social networks, with connections that might be either strong or weak. Strong links are formed with family and friends, whereas weak bonds are formed with acquaintances. However, to maintain ties to the network society, young people must set aside a portion of their identity for a new relationship. Being alone, left out, and missing something are the three things we fear most. Entrance, involvement, and community are all or nothing propositions (Rifkin, 2004). "The real me is becoming relational and out of sight." Eventually, the self ceases to exist (Gergen, 1991).

Narratives Are Important

Narratives, stories are important to the lives of children: When we are born, we enter into a world of stories, the stories of our parents, our generation, our culture, our nation, our civilization and so on. Over time we begin to add our own stories and through this may alter the stories that have been told about who and what we are. When we die the stories of our lives continue in the stories of others (Goodson, et.al., 2010:2). According to the education and communication theories, the messages conveyed through the films are very important due to the identification factor. Yet, especially with the kids it is much more important since they feel like in a liquid identity which could be dissolved in any different way any time. Since it is not known exactly what the identity in fluctuation will turn into, it is recommended that the identities that the child model should be positive role models and evoke concepts appropriate to the child. Many pedagogical approaches suggest that children's perceptions differ from adults' perceptions and that children directly incorporate what they perceive as children without consciously evaluating it. To Parry (2013:151), what appears to be important is not this film or that film or any other media, what is more significant to children but that the children benefited from the opportunity to consider all of their experiences of narrative to develop their own point of view. Parry (2013:38) also states that popular children's films continue to be significant to children's lives and that as such, they are an important early source of narrative.

Portrayal Of Children Is Important

The portrayal of children in movies is important. Young people who need to establish their identity and reintegrate into society, sometimes they do that through a shift of identity. Mostly in films a loss of identity or a need to re-identify the self occurs. Identity and perception in conditions of war and extraordinary conditions could occur all of a sudden.

Children who are portrayed as orphans in movies are a common trope, and they have a significant impact on the viewer. Identity and a lack of identity are becoming common elements of plot in movies. Identity conflict is one of the genre's most enduring and sensitive elements, and the character in the film reflects this to both the other characters and the audience's young viewers. Good, bad, rich, poor, handsome, ugly, lower class, upper class, etc. are all involved in these confrontations. To provide the youngster access to the richness of viewing both simultaneously, they both arise with opposing conceptions and are employed together. Particularly in films about orphans and orphaned children, solitude and poverty seem to be the key conflicts. In these stories, existence and deprivation are presented as a conflict issue. The disinterest and sometimes lack of love of the parents come along with being broke most of the time. In the story of the movie, orphaned kids can thus get caught in the traps of wicked individuals or turn into unlawful persons. Another significant issue is when parents are not there. Sometimes, the youngster looks for his identity in the story and discovers it. The adventure of reunion is very impressive, so children feel like they are without an identity, at least for a while, while watching the movie, and then they experience the excitement of the change that comes with discovering a new identity.

Research into early years education in particular has produced a growing consensus that popular culture has an important role to play in children's learning (Levy, 2009). Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that children's responses to stories might be different from that of adults' and should be credited with considerable sensibility.

The issue of identity and the change of identities is very important. It is known that these kids play very different roles in their respective worlds. Children get excited about changing their appearance and identity since this thrill is recurrent. To Parry, (2013: 47, 122) this means children's cultural capital, that they acknowledge the cultural texts as they encounter them and when they are asked to retell the story they have just heard they all have an individual process through their own absorbance of ideas regarding the story. That means they do not only understand but immediately interpret it. No matter how old the youngster is, s/he never forgets the narrative watched; instead, s/he stores it in a part of the mind and recalls it whenever the slightest chance is provided. He wants the ability to alter his own identity. Social media currently offers numerous chances for children to acquire multiple identities, the first of which is to present one's own identity to others. Of course, the identity-related issues of that culture do not only arise with children's interest in movies.

Social Media and Liquid Identity

Social media, specifically Facebook, have set in motion complex patterns of competition for network capital and social status based on mobilities state Gössling and Stavrinidi, (2016). On social media, the children aim to project or design a certain model of themselves. Children may also have the tendency to present themselves, as well as their parents differently. While doing that they may change or hide their gender, family, country of origin, and geographic locations. They try to establish a new self or a hidden persona just to test the possibility of being or becoming somebody. Even though the percentage of children who have access to these chances appears to be fairly low when all children in the world are taken into account, children have a very strong impression of the need for change in terms of their identity. Suyanto (2022) talks about the liquid identity of adolescents with disabilities. Any physical disability is something that could be perceived or easily detected and children can even cover it up since they feel themselves uncomfortable about this issue. However, any kind of disadvantaged child might have some psychological problems that might not be seen by the others. That means they could also test the liquid identity. social media sites are constantly mutating as users cooperate with providers to develop new modes of contact and identity and such uses, we suggest, are also liquid claim Trottier and Lyon (2013). In their study, Wang, Huang, and Guo (2020) question the impact of social media on journalistic identity presentation in China and this study enriches existing discussions on the multiplicity of social media and liquid identities in the information industry. Regarding the social media on journalistic identity presentation in China, the findings indicate an empirical link between micro conceptions of journalists and macro changes in media specifically of social media and liquid identities. This provides enough clue to argue that it's not only the children who create liquid identities but also the adults.

There are gadgets in media making everything possible. Television is the simplest source of reference nowadays, especially in large cities or in medium-sized urbanization patterns where dispersed living is prevalent. These broad technologies have transformed into mobile phones that fit in the palm of our hands or smart watches. In particular, for youngsters who experience loneliness and for people who experience loneliness and who are able to discover various employment opportunities. Family members of the target age range report having more than one television receiver at home, and the percentage of kids who own these gadgets is steadily rising.

What Happens Children In Films

When we question what happens to children in films, each country cinema reveals different perspectives. Especially in Turkish cinema, we see that even in

the war time, between the years 1910 and 1947, 58 feature films were produced, and that these films often reflected orphans and children in education. We notice that the majority of them feature narratives of war-affected youngsters or their families attempting to resume normal lives. Whether or not the children actually appear in the film, we can still observe how hard they worked to promote education and human self-realization despite having few resources at the time. For instance, one of these films is the *Immigrant Child* (Göçmen Çocuğu) from 1952, another is the *Governess* (Mürebbiye) from 1910, and in these films, there are the kids. Because practically everyone was an amateur actor at the time, discovering kids as actors wasn't a major deal. For instance, 50 kids appeared in the film *Immigrant Child* had a distinct role to play. A lot of the depictions in these films also portray adopted children, most of these portrayals are particularly unacceptable and negative. Maybe because throughout those times, families with or without children adopted children and added orphans to their families because the law required it, and this also introduced the concepts of a stepmother, stepfather, or alienation into the child's life. This is especially evident in novels and stories set during those times. Their suffering becomes our suffering, and everyone is concerned about the results of their choices, whether they will be good or bad.

Different versions of Cinderellas are famous all over the world as the fairy tales. *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, (Charles Dickens), *Pollyanna* (Eleanor H. Porter) and many others. Nowadays, a serial adapted from another classic, "Anne With an E", is becoming very famous as well. Bukhina (2019) questions "why are they so afraid of children's books?" interpreting that the image of orphans are dreadful for most of the people in society. In fact the article discusses the subversive power of children's books as it is expressed in many classical and contemporary works for young readers. Starting with a brief psychological explanation of the source of creativity and playfulness in children's literature, the author uses a Bakhtinian approach in analysing the carnivalesque quality of these books in their ability to create a topsy-turvy world, to use 'a festive laughter,' to present grotesque bodily transformations, and to discuss the lower stratum bodily functions such as food consumption and excretion. Burnett (2019) in her book "The Secret Garden", "A Little Princess", "Little Lord Fauntleroy" depicts all the orphans. In *Little Princess* the identity of the little girl vanishes for a while during her fathers loss in the battle-field and is gained again upon the return of his memory and healing process. Even during the loss of her identity, she creates another identity of her own, referring to her mother, positioning herself as the storyteller providing wisdom and joy not only to herself but all to the other friends. Apart from what happens in each and every story, when the overall messages were analyzed, the image of the

orphans seems to be awful. According to McCallum and Stephens (2011:197) “child stolen away at birth but recognized years later by birth tokens; an orphan whose origins are mysterious; identical twins or doubles, one good and one bad; matched opposing heroes or heroines, one dark and one blond, etc.”. Starling (2015) states that “*what began as a tale of orphaned children becomes a lesson in good and evil, right and wrong. So, the world for children is a world of allusions within a series of unfortunate events*”.

Portrayal of Children In Children Classics

Most of the children books called “child classics” are seriously criticized in terms of language and content time to time in Turkey. It is argued that these books are western oriented and contain western values, and more importantly they teach religious and moral values of Christianity, while they do not include any knowledge about Turkish culture and Islamic religious and moral values (Turan, 2010). In another research, Yıldız, (2016), analyzed these childrens books in terms of plot, theme, characters, plan, language and style and the findings indicate that popular translated children’s novels are series books in adventure and fantasy genres. Besides, it has been pointed out that the main characters in the books are children but there are also supernatural creatures, struggle against the evil is emphasized and elements from children’s lives are included. Aytekin (2008) emphasizes that with the themes the books and films address, children’s literature helps to prepare them for life. However, children attempt to identify with the characters and comprehend the positive and negative aspects of life in these works.

The Concept of Loss, Death and Orphans

The concept of “Death” is one of these facts of life that is intended to assist them in understanding. Even though the youngster struggles to understand “Death” in the stories, s/he gradually begins to understand it and loses dread of the concept of death. When death is depicted in some works as “everlasting sleep,” “ending of life,” occasionally “a reward,” and “non-existence,” it is also represented in other works as “the fresh beginning of life,” “ascending to the sky,” “freedom,” and “taking shelter near “God.”. As a result of these explanations, the youngster has a solid understanding of the concept of “Death” and perceives it as a component of life’s reality. As a result, these works seek to increase the meaning of life despite all of its challenges. The number of orphans surged over this time period in many different countries, including England, America, and many others. These youngsters are all related to one another. Due to the lack of children of all ethnicities in Turkey at the time, the situation there is a bit different. The risks that lie ahead for us here include things like a child getting into the hands of a gang of street children, as in the Memduh Un (1955) movie adaptation, which featured orphaned kids, or getting

into the hands of illegals, but they are typically harmful to kids. Their adoption by kind-hearted and wealthy individuals is followed by the children's quick growth into adults who are now attempting to deal with adult issues. Of course, the issue is the child's exclusion from other friends, his lack of participation in activities, his perception of his inadequacy, and the gift of unconditional love. Even now, these kinds of tales enrich contemporary narratives. For instance, according to Pembecioğlu & Çomak, (2023) a Turkish television series with the title *Daughter of the Green Valley* was released, originally of Canada, as if this girl were in Turkey and was a member of this society. This series was inspired by a Canadian television show with the title of "Anne With An E" which has recently been adapted and enjoyed great popularity and the audience shared her struggles and sorrows. Thus, the issue of identification and lack of identity has long been a part of the narratives.

The Impact Of The Narratives On The Spectator Child

Children's books and stories for example by Kemalettin Tuğcu, a Turkish writer of children's books and several featuring the characters like Ayşecik, Ömercik and Sezercik, are commonly emphasized ones in films during that era. This was not only common in Turkey, in those years, the world was watching similar themes such as in Shirley Temple films. It is now known that each piece of visual or reading experience of children come across during childhood could stay with them almost forever. They have the ability to empathize with the character and perhaps feel the same sorrow they pass through in the film or the book. Rizzo, et.al., (2004) in their studies proved that virtual environment obviously indicates behaviours mediated by virtual environments. But in psychology and brain functions, these prompts do not only "look like the real world, but actually incorporate with challenges and experiences as well as the 'real-world' functional behaviours.

Thus, the reader or the spectator child, after all these virtual environment experiences might feel alienated in society, even though everything around him is fine. When the absence of either the mother, father, or both might be added to that, it truly makes the youngster feel psychologically low or harms them in some way. Even if supported by the others, like friends, relatives, teachers, neighbours, the child yearns for his real parents, or does not experience any hardship, and is not impoverished. Finding out a person's origins is important, especially in foreign films portraying the times of conflict or war, when there has been forced migration or a change in identity.

Change of Identity

Bearce et.al., (2023) argue that based on the identity shift happening at the top classes of the society but not at the bottom, globalization should also

be associated with a larger identity difference between the elite and the mass public. In the narratives, throughout the ups and downs of life, the child changes identity in different ways. This could be perhaps a change in religion, perhaps people have relocated to a different region, or perhaps people are fleeing or changing their identities to rid themselves of a power from the past, due to a blood feud, or because they are in a situation where they will be accused by others, such as being Jewish or else, because they are in a position of privilege. These kids look like the kids in nowadays whose families are still in conflict and who are still on our agenda. According to the Unicef report (2016) an estimated 535 million children – nearly one in four – were living in countries affected by conflict or disaster, often without access to medical care, quality education, proper nutrition and protection (<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/nearly-quarter-worlds-children-live-conflict-or-disaster-stricken-countries>). The figures also include nearly 50 million children who have been uprooted – more than half of them driven from their homes by conflicts. In a more recent report, “Seven years ago, the world made a promise to end extreme child poverty by 2030. We have made progress, showing that with the right investments and will, there is a way to lift millions of children out of what is often a vicious cycle of poverty,” said UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. “But compounding crises, from the impacts of COVID-19, conflict, climate change and economic shocks, have stalled progress, and left millions of children in extreme poverty (<https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/press-releases/children-bearing-brunt-stalled-progress-extreme-poverty-reduction-worldwide>).

According to a report released by UNICEF by December 2019, the number of children whose births are officially registered has increased significantly worldwide, yet 166 million children under-five, or 1 in 4, remain unregistered. “A child not registered at birth is invisible – nonexistent in the eyes of the government or the law. Without proof of identity, children are often excluded from education, health care and other vital services, and are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.” UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore stated (<https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/press-releases/despite-significant-increase-birth-registration-quarter-worlds-children-remain>).

In her study Wood, (2018) indicates that detention of children for immigration purposes is known to be practiced in over 100 countries worldwide, despite a significant body of research demonstrating the extensive harm of such policies. Wood also states that children are separated from their parents for almost four years due to the paperwork, key potential impacts of family separation, and detention of children for immigration purposes including damaged attachment relationships, traumatization, toxic stress, and wider detrimental impacts on immigrant communities. Cohodes et.al., (2021) also pointed out that children

separated from their parents face long-lasting effects on brain development problems. This viewpoint led to the predicament of Turkish workers traveling overseas in 1970. Along with jobs, the migration phenomenon—where kids must live apart from their parents while working abroad—comes to light. Particularly for Turkey, which has started to merge with the German population, this is of utmost importance. The child being a boy or a girl, or forced to leave a job, having someone who covets them, concepts of honor, social loneliness, not being able to find psychological support, being alone in a foreign country, or being left behind in Turkey, are all on the agenda. Most probably, he can't sustain this environment, and the children are greatly impacted by the desire for an identity of their own. Even if children have a nature, helping them quickly move from one persona to another for example when playing games at home, they also have the capacity to position or imagine themselves in various locations across the universe. As opposed to adults, we may presume that kids find it easier to transform their identities due to their imagination.

Children Left Alone In Narratives

In stories where kids are left alone, the spectators usually concentrate on their problems. Despite the child's desire for a family in its most ideal form the narrative mostly dwells on the sorrows of loneliness throughout most of the text. It is obvious that writers and filmmakers place more attention on the boy character since he is thought to be better equipped to confront challenges. A conflict in the family or a child getting sick might put the family's relationships and integrity, which have always been revered and maintained, in danger. But in some scenarios the daughter is abandoned or consciously or unknowingly assumes a different identity, resulting in cases of broken families and divided siblings. In its better forms, anyhow, some kind of tragic event, such as undergoing painful surgery, passing away, or being abducted prevents the family members from uniting again. It is common to experience difficulty undergoing surgery, death, or kidnapping.

Long-term separations or divorce that cause families to drift apart are often not spurred on by either pride or fortune in the majority of the accounts. When the person who left home fills in the identity-related gaps and comes home, for example, after acquiring the necessary financial resources, he finds that his family has either dispersed, his children have gone away, or the partner got married to someone by force. In Turkish cinema, for example, orphan images depict situations in which children are capable of creating their own solutions. For example, the child grows up as a young person and consequently gains fame and fortune simply singing a sorrowful arabesque song. Alternatively, on occasion, he gathers his parents. Sometimes, s/he might also be wealthy enough not to need them. These are now popular and realistic cinematic or narrative

endeavors as the harshness, difficulties, and brutality of this life are typically stressed in the narratives.

Typically, the kids make it to the end of the film. The stories come to a happy end when people recover their old identities rather than trying to hide themselves or change true selves. Aytuna is aware that children wait for their father, and it appears that the mother is also waiting for the father, according to the director of the 1990 film *The Sea Was Waiting*, for instance. Despite the occurrence of a new and potential father profile, the children seem to be helpless due to the mother's never-ending love for the dead father. Her passionate love for her deceased husband prevents her from making up a new decision and changing her life. But as their bond grows with the potential father, her son will be able to acknowledge this stranger, new potential father as the real father and won't be reluctant to jolt his mother out of this fantasy. They just welcomed this new prospective father into their home and family.

Pembecioğlu (2006) states that different images of children can be inferred for (a) the child whose mother must look after in the absence of the father; (b) the child in whose absence the father must look after; (c) the child in whose absence a relative must look after; and (d) the child in whose absence a stranger must look after. For instance, in Turkish cinema, the motif of the mother caring for her child has been revived 65 times throughout all the films examined, with an 8.43% rate for all films featuring child images. Children consequently either encounter the absence of fathers or have to take on the role of the father due to their family responsibilities. Although not as frequently as the mother is, the father is occasionally shown caring for the child in the narrative. Usually, the father is left to raise the child on his own in the event that his wife passes away, has an accident, or flees owing to a family dispute. There are 18 films in Turkish cinema where the father is obliged to take care of the child; this equates to 2.33% of all children-related films. There are fewer narratives when a stranger is in charge of taking care of the child. This group of texts handles children and emphasizes how children can be really all alone in life, usually involving street children, adopted children, or children who are found years later.

The instance in which a child must be taken care of by a relative appeared three times in the films analyzed. The child's loneliness cannot be completely eliminated despite all of these different adoption approaches. A young person who lives in wealthy circumstances, however, can nevertheless feel socially and physically alone, engage in crime, steal, or lie. As a result, out of all the films, child on the streets was featured in 27 of them. Even though they are street children, these youngsters are good, intelligent, and conscious of who they are, what to do, and how to handle their lives and challenges—even if only subconsciously. The aforementioned ideas typically trigger images of a

growing youngster who all of a sudden develops into a vocalist or gets adopted by a wealthy man. For both good and negative reasons, children turning up alone might potentially be a sign of kidnapping. When a child has been hit by a car, for example, or when there are unpleasant marriages, shattered homes, or stepmothers, it may be necessary to save their life. The idea of an orphan and an orphan child conjures up the idea of a stepchild since, in the majority of cases, adversaries kidnap children who are subsequently raised by others, making their lives incredibly difficult.

The tales commonly portray the kid who has been placed for adoption as being unwelcomed, and not being treated as a member of the family, which frequently causes the youngster to feel alienated and disconnected. Approximately 20 films in Turkish cinema embrace the image of a kid in the form of an illegitimate child; the majority of these adopted children are girls, though there are a few boys as well. Sometimes the narratives depict the story of two siblings who are adopted by two different families, separated, and subsequently reunited. The family's ability to remain together in the face of challenges is what counts in this process. In the new narratives, new role models for stepmothers and stepfathers are developing nowadays as a consequence of second marriages.

In the intricate structure of western cultures, this is typically perceived as being more important. The treatment of orphans and orphaned children in Turkish cinema has changed since the 1990s. The new youngsters in these movies might now be kids who have discovered evil, succeeded in blending in, are capable of standing on their own, and even have found a profession. For instance, in the 1990 film "Glass Heart," directed by Fehmi Yaşar, there is a shoe shine kid who can judge a person's character by looking at their shoes, as if telling fortunes, and determine if they are good or bad. He too has his own troubles and dreams, and even wants to escape into his dreams of a different way of life. This is why he believes that he may be content in this lifestyle, to which he neither belongs nor even aspires. In movies, orphaned kids frequently flee or get lost.

Children usually recall the past, but they have hazy memories of it. Most of the time, he is unaware that he was an eyewitness to a significant event, has a memory trigger, or possesses a record concerning his past. This is a small touch that expresses his/her identity or true roots, such as a locket, a bracelet or jewelry, a snapshot, or a photo, but this detail appears somewhere in the film and this information helps to reveal the real identity later.

Another frequent occurrence is the child getting lost in the movie's plot. Adopting a new identity is the result of choosing a different course of action or being lost. These kids can't even find their parents sometimes. Even though the child may not be visible on the screen, we can still see the image of the

child that the mother or father is looking for. Mothers inherently have a deeper motivation and desire to interact with their children. With this knowledge, we may now observe how the child's perception changes.

Identity shift in movies frequently manifests as a change in appearance or gender, such as when a boy is shown as a girl or a girl is portrayed as a girl or cross-dressing occurrences might accompany the identity change. For example, kidnapped children had their names and hairstyles changed in public. These changes may be made either knowingly or unknowingly by the youngster. The choice of whether to keep the child confined to one area or prevent his actions from spreading to other areas is an important one. As a result, the youngster is made to appear incapable of doing something while he is actually capable of accomplishing it, as well as to be ignorant of something despite the fact that he is aware of it. It is just a matter of accessing the information throughout the film. This perspective also shows us how important childhood, constant questioning, and the pursuit of knowledge are, and why children are ready to pursue different events.

Naturally, when a youngster is left alone, the concept of a "child who has to be looked after" from the perspective of the adult comes into action. A child's portrayal is important, whether it is the mother's child, the father's child, a sibling, a stranger, or any other child, the child who needs to be found by others after being re-adopted. Having to look after children is obviously related to desertion. Parents who have abandoned their children experience different psychological effects.

The child who is left alone and unsupervised must, after all, be self-reliant and able to speak for oneself. One will be able to fill this gap either by growing up and becoming a different person or by finding the missing loved ones, such as the mother, father, or other siblings. Equal importance is given to adopted boys and girls. Currently, we see something similar, particularly in Western films; there is a stigma that these adopted, or stepchildren bring evil into the home, can interfere with the normal functioning of the home, and can turn the family's lives into a nightmare. Adopted children are reportedly maintained at a lower level than youngsters who reside with family, friends, or even those who have committed crimes. Regarding the statistics, Jurviste et.al., (2016) state that in terms of scale, the UN has estimated that around 260 000 adoptions take place worldwide each year, meaning that fewer than 12 children are adopted for every 100 000 persons aged under 18.

According to popular belief, kids who are left alone frequently behave badly because they harbor resentment and wrath inside of them. As a result, the narrative of the film frequently depicts a setting where the young character lacks confidence. As a result, the parent develops a psychological state of

helplessness and uncertainty about what the child is doing. As a consequence, the child develops perspectives that are in conflict with one another and lacks self-assurance.

Aim and Methodology

“The Magician’s Elephant” is a 2023 computer-animated fantasy action film that Wendy Rogers directed, Martin Hynes wrote the screenplay for, and Julia Pistor acted as producer. The 2009 book of the same name by Kate DiCamillo served as the basis for the film. Critics gave the film a range of ratings after its March 17, 2023, premiere and home screenings made available by Netflix. This study questions if the kid-friendly narratives in this animated film, which is an adaptation of a novel and features the voices of well-known actors. This movie is believed to have a lot to say for people who are caught between social issues like leadership, democracy, citizenship, and both reason and feelings. It emphasizes how quickly hope can fade in post-war societies, the difficulty of maintaining family ties, and the positive impact of belief.

Findings

Frazier (2020) starts the review with an effective sentence. “*Peter Augustus Duchene is a ten-year-old orphan, taken in by an old soldier who served with his father.*” The film starts with the explanation “Peter is an orphan being raised by an old soldier. A soldier knows about fighting and hardship and danger”. In fact in the very first sentence, it’s startling the world-wide audience since there are an average of 1 billion orphans, orphans and social orphans in the world. According to Nar, (2021) in addition to 400 million orphaned children, nearly 10 thousand children become orphans every day. Nearly 40 million displaced children live in camps or on the streets. Every year, an average of 2.5 million children are kidnapped and disappear. Orphans are the main characters of the narratives for a long time. Orphan children in world children’s classics is a tough topic to be discussed. Henneberg (2010) discusses the moms vs grandmas in the children’s classics stating that “*While the origins of the absent or dead mother in literary classics have been explored at length, less attention has been paid to the role grandmother figures play once the impact of the mother has been minimized or eliminated. In many of the most influential tales our children read, female elders, unlike mothers, are granted the right to live but are cast in hopelessly stereotypical terms.*” In the film a similar thing happens, the mother is dead but the grandpa is alive to take care of the kid.

The name of the story is fascinating, the idea of magician is there to take all the audience up to a level of imagination where anything could be possible, whereas the call of the elephant, refers to the impossible things. The place referred is an imaginary location called Baltese. The visualization of the

landscape gives the impression that this is a cute little country that has been through war in Central Europe and is not yet very developed, with rivers flowing through it and medieval castles, ruled by a monarchy. This is a place where young and old, white and black-skinned people live in a magical atmosphere, cheerful, happy, abundant and peaceful. The descriptions of this settlement present an atmosphere where people help each other and where human emotions, equality and tolerance prevail. After the Great Foreign War, nothing would be the same. All this, of course, descriptions and historical information have many associations in the adult world, but in fact, young viewers, who are determined as the target audience of the film, cannot be expected to receive and interpret this background information. This brings up once again that the film may not have aimed primarily at children as its target audience. It seems that all that remains of this fairy-tale country is dark gray clouds, unhappy faces and a soulless life. Here we come across with Peter in such a landscape and surrounding atmosphere.

Again, the very first sentence of the narrative emphasizes the fact that there is a generation gap between the main characters of the narrative. This brings along a never-ending conflict between the traditional and modern, old and young, ordinary and creative, war and peace, etc. Luckily both are the male ones and at least could share some common ground when it comes to that. The attempts of the grandfather to train the boy for the hard life he already experienced would be the problematic point. During the first scenes of the narrative, we come across a young boy with a sad face, watching the other happy youngsters playing out in the street. But in their plain decorated home, the grandfather has so many other plans for him rather than sparing some time for relaxation or enjoyment. though it is difficult to understand how he could be the only one who still imagines such a dream even if he hasn't been a part of such a world. Moreover, while older people who have experienced this magical life before do not make any effort to make this dream come true and take back their old lives, identities and dreams, only Peter's coming forward with this issue brings about a very important conflict. In summary, despite being a member of the society he lives in, the character of Peter, who is sometimes heroized with his alienated actions and extraordinary desires, can even be thought of as being a little "exuberant" due to his age.

One of the most disruptive features of the film is the Vilna Lutz's - the grandpa's attitude towards Peter, frequently reminding him of his being an orphan and limiting his behaviors. This can be considered as a reminder to show us that children's stories are not always written for children, and that there are lessons that adults should also learn from them. However, the fundamental contrasts seem to be very clearly established. For example, the conflict between

the peaceful playground that the child is looking at and the military strategy game that the grandpa considers to be a game is war and peace. For the old man, everything is like a win-lose, profit-loss calculation, whereas, for the child, values such as family, friendship, trust and truth, humour, imagination are at the forefront. While the future planned for the child by the grandfather is a soldier's life in which he himself equips his grandson with the experiences of the past and main military skills, the crucial conflict point of the film is that the child has other dreams about the future. It is clear that the ex-soldier is trying to influence the child's destiny as well as instill old beliefs in him. Even sending the kid to the store to buy bread is portrayed as a chain of command. For their daily diet, he requests the youngster to bring stale bread and a small fish to be accustomed to hunger, just like in the past and during times of war, when only stale bread was consumed and no food around. In a way, the young child envisions a dream where family members have nice meals together, while the elderly man's illusions dwell on wartime hardships that must be endured and conquered. Another noticeable concern is that the elderly man, who has no apparent disabilities, continuously uses a wheelchair, barely moves, and never leaves his house. In a way, he limits himself by creating his own handicaps.

Here, Lutz occupies a position where he has the power to alter the child's identity, prevents the youngster from understanding who he is, and obstructs the child with a militaristic viewpoint. In terms of both children's rights and human rights, what he is doing is wrong and to be called manipulation or perception management. He consistently instills in this kid a sense of weakness and inadequacy. In light of these actions, it is possible to speculate that the parent not only manipulates the child's perceptions and future but also deceives him and makes every effort to ensure that his future depends on him. This could be considered a war crime. Although there are certain justifications, he additionally positions himself as injured or harmed due to his psychology of war and after-war traumas. Respecting Lutz, Peter, agreed to be an adoptee because he had no other choice and, like many other hidden children of war since this action has no legitimate reasons or paper approval process, his identity and being wholly depend upon the adopting party's decisions.

His situation reminds us the Korean Children adopted by USA families in bunches after the war. At the end of the Korean War (1950-1953) thousands of Korean children were orphaned. According to Pate (2014), Harry Holt is known as the father of Korean Adoption via the unprecedented adoption of eight mixed-race Korean children, despite having six biological children of his own. He even started his own adoption agency so that other American couples could adopt kids. The orphaned children make visible the militarized, gendered, racialized, sexualized, and imperialist dimensions of the society. And adoption

is provided as both a rescue project and reproduction of white heteronormative kinship building. In a way, it is a kind of reorientation of the society. Indeed, the terms orphan and adoptee were used interchangeably in the stories. However, the fact that the child adoption typology in the narrative reflects the same one that took place years ago seems still to be an attempt to establish a perception towards adults.

In search of a new cause to devote himself to and looking for a sense of belonging now that the war has ended, Lutz is restless. However, he is unaware of the harm Peter has endured as a result of applying this to a young boy. Because he is still too weak to resist him, Peter is not even aware of all of this perception management and manipulation caused by Lutz. By some miracle, an elephant shows up in town, giving Peter the chance to truly be himself. Since he is constrained by the rulers, he will be able to comprehend this till the appropriate time comes and that we can only express our desires and abilities to the extent that the rulers permit us to do so.

The outside is damaging and dangerous since there are strangers outside, according to another depiction for Peter's younger sister. It is said that young females should only wander through the streets with an adult at specific times. People experience worries and feel a lack of confidence. The "bad world syndrome" manifests in a passive lifestyle marked by fear of everyone and a refusal to take responsibility for one's actions. A fearful and anxious world is depicted, which has the potential to make everyone in society cynical, submissive, and timid. Even testing the perception of whether the world is actually horrible or not is forbidden. Here the perception management is applied successfully.

Magic finds Peter when he discovers an interesting fortune teller's tent, while he is running after his one coin. The magician asks him which one he prefers, one day without food or a life without knowing. The magician talks as if she knows everything about Peter, and the old soldier, Vilna Lutz, acts as if he is his grandfather rescuing him, and now raising him to be a soldier. She also knows about Peter's mother carrying a baby and her death during the birth of his sister, when Peter was only three years old. Even if the little boy still remembers his little sister, holding her, after her birth. Yet, Lutz tells him that both the mother and the sister were dead at birth, yet the magician tells him that she's alive and he can find him if only he follows the elephant. After learning about this magic fact, Peter wants to face his grandpa but the only thing he meets is a denial.

It is fostered to have unfavorable opinions of the outside world and to believe that outsiders are inherently evil. Due to the young girl's strong insistence, her religious parental figure, and the young girl, who went to see the elephant

that had come to town, eventually understood that this worldview presented to them was untrue. The outer world's beauty and allure convince them that their beliefs are false and that their concerns are unfounded. In order to prevent increasing to the young girl's stress, the woman agrees that the behavior of the child should not be restrained, and more flexibility should be displayed. The two adults smiled at each other when the young kids later realized they were sisters and brothers. This makes the parental figures happy and innocent, and they are grateful they had protected them from the consequences of war. They're on the verge of winning with this. They smile, believing that their time of fear and anxiety is over, that they may live more freely and cheerfully from this point forward, that they can put their previous memories behind them, and that they should get ready for a better, more beautiful future.

One of the most significant hints we are given throughout the movie is the fact that fairytales have a significant influence on individuals of all ages. Romain De Smedt, an elderly soldier alongside whom Luntz served in the military, used to read a fairy tale book at night that made him miss his home. On account of this, he once made the decision to track down and rejoin his parents. Luntz grabs his friend's book of fairy tales to stop him from reading it again because he believes that his friend may grow into a hardy soldier and that reading and thinking about the past and mom are both considered and acknowledged as weaknesses by Luntz.

This action of his not only seems to show that Luntz is capable of robbing people or lying to them even if it is for their benefit rather than his own, but it also gives us hints about his tendency to focus on loyalty to the army and the country. This also gives hints about his propensity to view feelings, trust, and love as secondary to concrete, hard, and ruthless aspects of life. Thus, in a way, he makes it clear that he absolutely does not want Peter to remember the past and find out more about his family. He does not allow him to read books, motivate his imagination, and strengthen his family ties.

Mandala is the name given to shapes that represent the commodity or microcosm in a metaphysical or symbolic sense in religions of Indian origin. With an analogy, Satir (1991) emphasizes that everyone has their own microcosm and that it has eight layers. Spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, sensual, interactional, nutritional, and contextual stratifications of the self also refer to important nutritional forms for the survival of the individual. At this point, Luntz tries to cut almost half of the individual and expects them to be nurtured only through the concrete parts of life that he thinks will help them to survive.

The scientific proofs indicate that children who often youngsters who frequently receive parental attention, such as a hug, are more emotionally intelligent than youngsters who do not. Psychologically, hugs tend to mold the

child into a kind and self-assured person. It makes it simpler for kids to interact with others and communicate with their surroundings. Children who don't receive frequent physical affection from their parents, such as hugs and kisses, will find it difficult to feel confident (Adriansyah & Rahayu, 2018:2). Satir also states that 'We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for physical, psychological health and maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth and keep young.' (cited in Houseman, 2021:1). According to scientific studies, hugging triggers the release of oxytocin, a hormone associated with trust, safety and love. Hugging releases oxytocin, sometimes called "the cuddle hormone," of these molecules of emotion, triggered by what's happening. While these studies provide more evidence that human love has a tremendous effect on people's health and happiness. When Oxytocin is secreted, it also stimulates certain major hormones in the body and ensures healthy development. To Kuchinskas (2009), hugging is the chemistry of connection, it strengthens the immune system, prevents the onset of many diseases, and has a direct stress-reducing effect. Hugging is a form of communication and it has been determined that 55% of human communication occurs through body language, 38% through tone of voice and only 7% through words. (Pennycook, 1985). Thus, among all other actions, hugging is the most comforting and bonding form of touch. The oxytocin response that is we learn to love – after birth, from our mothers since a baby's brain completes its development outside the womb, in the first three years of life, and this development is shaped by interactions with the mother. Starting from this point of view, it might be right to claim that Peter, spending his first three years with his mother, experienced love, respect and attention through his mother and was looking forward to sharing his life with his younger sister. However, love, defined as the oxytocin bond, is indeed central to our well-being (Kuchinskas, 2009:150), it brings balance and health to one's physiological state. If not mothers or fathers, close relatives or a human touch, the child could get the love touch from an animal companion. Thus, we see Peter being kind and understanding to animals around including the elephant.

Depending upon all these explanations it is obvious that Lutz is a person dedicated to the army and has a militarist perspective on life is trying to keep Peter from any kind of love and compassion and aims to prevent him from finding and uniting his family. However, in fact, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall only be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time (Article 37, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

It seems that Lutz does not have anything that can be taken as a role model. This old man, whose thoughts are unhealthy, has no foresight for the future and refuses to go beyond his own knowledge, and who bases his entire life on being a good and ruthless soldier, even observes the fights of cats with binoculars and assumes that lessons can be learned for humanity from their war and life strategies. However, while doing this, the task he gives to Peter is to walk around the room with military steps, saying “Fish are small, bread is stale, life is not a fairy tale”. In all this environment, Peter, who has a desire to search for an elephant awakened by a magician he has never met, is in a very helpless situation and repeats what the old man says. However, happiness is as close as the people on the lower floors who can tolerate differences. At mealtime, Leo Matienne and his wife sit down to eat, talk to each other, and feel happy about being able to do things for each other. They are also interested in Peter and experience and observe how he follows the old man’s directions, and they think about how they can get him out of this disadvantaged situation. Leo’s family has a set up that demonstrates that childless households can also be content. The husband and wife converse and smile with each other all the time. The perception that a new person might join the family is that they act well and conduct their marriage in a polite and affectionate way, but from a human perspective, it is based on being a family and enhancing their happiness. They are not afraid of strangers, they feel alienated, and they avoid them. Leo is the first person who believes in Peter and his idea of following an elephant.

Here the main dilemma is not only obeying the rules of another person or following the directions of someone from an elder generation. Beyond the self, there stands the identity requiring some cultivation for the future generation. Yet, these attributions to the past, old values, immobility and mostly the legal, economic and familial obligations or social obligations as Urry (2016) calls them. Mainly, creating a new world of utopia depends upon these five clusters: language, characters, class, culture and values. When the language of Lutz is analyzed it is seen that it was not perceived as the language of tender, kind, affectionate type of language that the youngsters might need. It’s rather in the imperative form and require only the things to be done instead of asking for things in a kind way. The character part is much more problematic. The relationship with Peter and Lutz is much more displayed in the form of orders and commands. This is neither a good example for the other kids or adults in the position of audience. Apart from the characters of Peter and Lutz, the character of Leo is a nice, kind and understanding one having powerful impact on Peter from the very beginning. Yet, the characters in the leader positions seem to be quite interesting ones with their own ups and downs. These two do not have anything to do with the kids in respect to becoming good role models. The film

states that “The Countess is fair and wise, and no one remember the last time she laughed”.

It is conceivable that the ideas conveyed in this part of the film are intended to alter the attitudes of adults, not youngsters, with regard to leadership portrayals. The fact that the audience repeatedly encounter instances demonstrating the absurdity of the behavior, deeds, and psychology of powerful individuals could not be a coincidence. This is also a powerful way of managing the perceptions of ordinary people in their most vulnerable moment, while enjoying a film. On the one hand, they highlight how impossible this portraying appropriate leadership is impossible using a variety of instances. On the other hand, these actions were used to help leaders be embraced and accepted by some only. Regarding the first appearance of the elephant for example, all the upper-level bureaucrats were imagining the worst such as: the reflections of the countess’s advisors were both unhealthy and funny, including all kind of political tricks relying upon the basic belief that humanity is bad in its essence. Both Peter and Romain De Smedt impart to them priceless lessons and stress the necessity of altering their viewpoints. In fact, it’s possible to compare two distinct managers to one another. Contrary to popular belief, the audience is reminded constantly that the female manager is not emotional and soft at all. The female manager tries to hide her discontent behind being a very kind, considerate, and understanding person who also happens to be very polite and understanding. She has been raised to believe that smiling or being cheerful in front of others is improper, and the palace laws partly forbid it. She consistently demonstrates her authoritarian leadership style, up to a certain point conceals her genuine emotions, and manages to keep herself under constant pressure.

The countess couldn’t decide what to do rather than getting rid of the elephant with the impact of the others surrounding her. Yet, Leo, sends a telegram to the king reporting that the city now has an elephant. However, it’s a bit strange that the king has never been to the Baltic! And having an elephant there means it’s time for him to have fun! In contrast, the king spots the elephant as he approaches the city and plans to drive it out. He doesn’t even want to consider the notion that someone might be attracted to the elephant or love her without any conditions because the king has never known or understood unconditional love. To him, the people around should respect him because he is the king. In such a case, he constantly thinks up new situations that will be challenging for Peter in an effort to stop him from completing the test. What he doesn’t comprehend is that while he claims to add comedy and amusing jokes to his management style and link it to his remarkable conduct, he actually scares people away and comes across as an unapproachable type of person.

People aren't used to doing favors for each other, the movie repeatedly emphasizes. It gives the impression that most outsiders and other people were either excluded or not welcomed. Doing a favor for someone is considered odd. For instance, trying to sneak into the palace secretly while the King is in town and all the others are busy welcoming him, Peter is shocked at the extent of Leo's assistance and remarks that he is not accustomed to such "help" at all.

On the other hand, when the old woman trapped under the elephant shows him the newspaper carrying the news and the king says to her, "I wish I were there, too," the spectator is better able to comprehend that the monarch is a conceited individual who lacks empathy.

For humans, an elephant is a thing that needs to be embellished and made visible by colors in preparation for the king's visit. The possibility that the paint could have hurt her or gotten in her eyes is not even considered. Everyone except Peter chooses to shoot the elephant after she expresses her uneasiness with the eye. Peter demonstrates a strong and wise leadership style by realizing her uneasiness, recognizing the elephant's requirements, and finding a solution by taking his life at risk. While Kusumaputri, (2017) emphasizes that the story brings the issue of environmental awareness, Chairani and Setyorini, (2019) point out the narrative's handling the relationship between human and animal. To them the narrative has a strong anthropocentrism and the characters' poor relationships with animals, particularly their mistreatment and exploitation. They believe that ecocriticism opposes the excessive exploitation of the environment and that every animal on the planet has the same fundamental right to existence as people. According to ecocriticism, animals may experience similar feelings to humans in terms of being aware of their surroundings and what is happening to them. Including their bodies, their freedom, and even their lives. As a result, we can interpret Peter's attempt to resolve the elephant's sightseeing problem through this angle and come to the conclusion that *The Magician's Elephant* has concerns with animal rights and that people should have positive relationships with nature, particularly with animals. Similarly, Henderson & Anderson (2005) argue that the lack of distinction between human and nonhuman animals in the fantastic world of children's literature and film results in distorted representations of intelligence, capabilities, and morality of nonhuman animals. From the perspective of attachment theory, their argument emphasizes how humans internalize and sustain misrepresentations throughout adulthood and how these misrepresentations influence relationships with real animals. Regarding the spectator children, the paper also discusses the disservice done to real animals as illusions of childhood and subsequent misunderstandings that could cause them judged by impossible, anthropocentric standards—which they rarely can fulfill.

The first “impossible task” Peter is forced to perform is to fight. “Who doesn’t like a fight!” the king exclaimed. This proves that the monarch actually shares Lutz’s military-inspired patriotism and desire to keep Peter apart from the people he loves. Kral, persuading people to fight believes that he’s doing something good, just, and meaningful. The perception created here is that if you need to have something you need to fight for it. As Cardon (2009) stated, “The characters are not real people; they are emotions incarnate, symbolizing secret desires of the human heart.”

The Countess and the King both apply the wrong leadership images because they display all their demands and conditions in the form of standing orders. The countess’ never-smiling nature shows that she is an individual who is distant from and even avoids emotions, like Lutz. However, it can be assumed that those in higher positions were also concerned that showing their emotions would indicate lower-class perception. The perception of an effective leader and management style is one of the key challenges associated with this situation. The leaders are not elected executives, despite the fact that the general public and the deputy administrators celebrate them. It is made for them to look if they are successful, just, and appreciated leaders with a different viewpoint mirrored on them by individuals in their immediate vicinity. However, it is true that managers do not have an adequate psychological background. The goal of the film is to illustrate the message that leaders are insufficient individuals. For young people, this gives the impression that they can rebel and break the law. Peter, who was brought up with a more traditional outlook and humanistic beliefs, prefers to uphold justice by playing by the rules to the administration’s detriment. He won’t know until it’s too late that his managerial style actually focuses on persuasion, healthy thinking, or managing by perception of the other person. The youngster genuinely won the hearts of the crowd with his demeanor and actions.

The fact that there are successful and unsuccessful magicians in the country and that there are people who follow and believe in them can be interpreted as an expression of how helpless people actually are. When unhappy and desperate people encounter a real miracle one day, they cannot find any other way than to gather around it. Because no one has the power to create their own miracle or change their life or perspective on life.

Conclusion

The principles that are the cornerstones of the societies in which they live must be understood by all young people in Europe. These principles are codified in legally binding agreements and are subject to dynamic regulation by the European Court of Human Rights. Values change throughout generations, which necessitates respect between generations and awareness of one another’s

issues. These principles cannot be taught in the traditional sense since they are not ‘facts’ that can be taught or memorized. Through actions and experiences, young people come to comprehend the nature of national and cultural values. All children and adults should be aware of fundamental ideas like striving to understand others, showing respect for them, and refraining from making fun of or demeaning them. All actions taken by individuals with the intention of excluding or marginalizing one another are actions against human rights and human dignity, which must be taught in homes, schools, and the general public. It is important to stress more clearly that leadership is about more than merely winning people over. Intelligent leaders must be problem-solvers who are aware of the sensitivity of people, animals, and the environment as a whole. Young people should, in a sense, be patient and find sensible answers to problems rather than rebelling, despite the fact that this is occurring in non-democratic nations. According to Posey, (2014) some orphans in children’s literature rebel in order to survive, but this rebellion can serve a deeper purpose. The audience may discover a spiritual dimension in the narratives through the characters’ rebellious acts in *The Magician’s Elephant*.

The narrative highlights relational spirituality, suggesting that life-changing connections can develop compassion and a renewed sense of purpose. Panaou and Mathis (2019) state that agency, voice, and identity are the very things that can keep us alive in a rapidly changing world where authority is becoming more and more repressive and undemocratic. They emphasize that our desire to live, act, and hope are strongly tied to our feeling of agency, or our capacity to establish our identity, use our voice, and make a difference in the world. Peter was born into such a gloomy world and made his wishes come true through his own actions and empathy. He proved to be a better citizen even if he was not taught it appropriately. He even demonstrated that he could be a better leader than those leading the country. The narrative emphasizes the perception that the world could get better only with youngsters. It looks like a call for the younger citizens who give to and receive from their local and global communities work to be heard on important problems and to participate in crucial decision-making processes. Against the whole efforts of imposing a tailored one, creating one’s self-identity is somewhat crucial and a solid sense of identity is the first step toward empowerment. Reflecting what they feel or experience and telling their story, people can accomplish this in a significant way, it may even be heard louder by larger communities.

The perception of identity and the psychological state that children may have gone through under the exceptional circumstances brought on by the war are examined in this study. It is arguable whether the narrative is actually appropriate for kids or not because, as should not be neglected, there are several

political ideologies and perceptions hidden deep within the heart that young kids cannot understand. The narrative has different stratifications to be followed by both the children and adults.

Traditional practices involve splitting children from their families, giving them distinct identities, and attempting to raise them according to predetermined patterns of the past, which now stands for a viewpoint and the militarist framework. Children can only escape from this firm reality by resisting the urge to enter a fantastic universe and holding onto the hope that their imagination will somehow assist them. The study offers details on leadership frameworks as well such as the various forms of leadership seen throughout the movie's plot and the leadership shown by the young hero. Different perceptions are formed by type; in this case, the ideas of citizenship and democracy are crucial and prominent. Social issues, facts, circumstances, and extraordinary situations could make us think and act differently, but as demonstrated in the narrative, people should retain their capacity for rational thought and safeguard not only themselves but also the people and animals in their immediate surroundings as well as the sustainability of life.

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