A STUDY ON COMPARATIVE ADVERTISING IN SOCIAL MEDIA: EXAMPLE OF TURKEY AND POLAND

İHSAN EKEN

ABSTRACT

Developments on globalization and communication technologies has effected advertisement as well as many other areas. New advertisement channels has come out by the Improvement in communication technologies. Social media is gaining more importance day by day in whole world and in our country, and the market share is increasing in whole advertisement channels. Consequently, social media is turning into an important advertisement channel. One of the methods used in advertisement is comparative advertisement. In comparative advertisement, both the advertiser submits his product's good quality compared to competitors and the consumer can have a chance to compare the products and make a better choice. Conversely, if the comparison in the advertisement is not objective, misleading and false informative, the advertiser exploitation and consumer misleading can occur; if the comparative advertisement is banned this can prevent the positive effects that should be reflected to competition and the consumer. At that point, the limits of the comparative advertisement must be determined. Depending on this, to see the effects of social media and globalization easily, the study purposes to observe the comparative advertisements used on social media in Turkey and Poland by content analysis method.

Keywords: Social Media, Comparative Advertising, Turkey, Poland

INTRODUCTION

In the light of technological developments the world is as close to people as a “click”. In parallel with these technological improvements experienced, humans, as social creatures, happened to want to continue their social life through the internet. As a result of realization of this situation social media phenomenon, which makes it easier for people to have contact, emerge. Social media, by means of its ability of the continuous update, interactivity, openness to sharing and measurability, distinguish itself as the most common channel used by many people and institutions from different sectors.

Social media made it easier to reach consumers, which are desensitized to traditional advertisement stimuli. Brands, by means of properties served by social

* ieken@ticaret.edu.tr, İstanbul Commerce University
platforms, are able to reach their target masses really easily. Easiness of constituting the targeted mass and developing a strategy according to information gained by reaching really detailed information like tagged photos, gender, friends, trips, which series liked, which event joined, what they say on their walls, who liked them, tagged in which place, of consumers from these platforms is one of the most important advantages of social media. While social media platforms owning this huge knowledge provide convenience to brands by directing them in this respect, consumers are not obliged to see advertisements that do not interest them.

Social media provides huge contributions to economics all over the world. Big companies spend a huge amount of money for advertisements on social media and customer satisfaction. Only social media site Facebook provides 3.4 billion Euro contribution to English economy; companies, only to get the likes from users, establish their advertising budgets according to this (Kirkpatrick, 2011: p. 83). In this situation, an intense competition emerges between the companies. Companies that adopt success as a principle in this atmosphere of intense competition and their managers are attentive of acting towards the ethical values in the fields of activity of their institutions. One of the most problematic subjects that constitute advertisement ethics is comparative advertisement.

As product information provided by comparative advertisers is clear and detailed, it is perceived to be more reliable and valuable by consumers (Pechmann and Esteban, 1994: p. 404). Using provable comparisons decreases misunderstandings by providing clearer and detailed information about products to consumers and helps customers through their purchase decisions. Informativeness of comparative advertisements is important from the point of its effect on attitude towards advertisement and advertisement message (Pride, Lamb, Pletcher, 1979: p. 30).

This study aims to examine comparative advertisements published on Facebook in Turkey and Poland. Facebook is chosen because it is the most popular social media network around the world and in these two countries. When literature related to the topic is examined it is seen that there are severe problems for comparative advertisements because of the legal reasons in these two countries, Turkey and Poland. These problems will be overcome in time. In the scope of the study, mainly, the form of appearances of comparative advertisements is examined.

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Although we’ve met social media concept in 2000s, the first electronic message board (bulletin board), which is the first example of communication between “friends” in digital medium, was brought into service in 1979 and 1980s witnessed the development of many electronic chat mediums. And in 1990s Usenet, which has millions of users all over the world, was established. Six degrees of separation theory of Stanley Milgram that is based on the fact that everybody can establish a connection with anyone at most in six phases with the definition of “a friend of a friend” became the main idea of SixDegrees.com, which is the first social network site in today’s context, in 1997; although the site was shut down in 2001 with Web 2.0 technologies, the propagation speed of social network sites continued with the global sites like Ryze, Friendster, LinkedIn, Orkut and Facebook (Çoşkunkurt, 2013: p. 7).
According to Fisk (2010: p. 254); access in traditional media is controlled by time and place, content is produced, fictionalized and distributed for a fee. And experience has become professional and standard and it is based on processes and is foreseeable. The mass is passive and consuming. And social media access is open to anyone, anywhere, any time; content is produced by people on their own and shared with everyone for free. The experiences of people contains collaboration and this collaboration is based on human relations. The mass is defined as an active creator.

Increase speed of social media’s popularity is in parallel with the increase speed of investments of marketing experts in social media. Although brands were approaching social media tentatively with low budgets as it can be an internet balloon in the first years, increasing number of users provided it to obtain good reputation and to reduce concerns. Interactivity provided by the medium provides important advantages for marketing goals (Altinbaşak and Karaca, 2009: p. 468). In addition to this, a rapid increase graphic is observed in social media investments.

When we look at development of Turkey and Poland in social media, it is seen that both two countries are not really different from each other. In the study of Parker (2008, p. 163-181) where he makes projections of 216 countries’ social media advertisement investments, in worldwide social media advertisement investments, which is expected to be around the level of 26 billion Dollars in 2014, United States of America is waited to rank the first with its 8,358 billion dollars of investment and 32,10% share over the world. Aegis Global Advertising held a similar research. Also in Aegis’ research results that are similar to the results of Parker’s study were represented. In Turkey, the share of advertisement budget of 179 billion in the digital channel was 8,3% in 2011. This number increased to 231b in 2013 and this budget’s share in digital channel increases to 9,9%. Advertisement budget foreseen for 2014 is 257b dollar and its share in digital is 10,5%. In Poland the share of advertisement budget of 294b dollars in the digital channel was 9,9% in 2011 where in 2013 advertisement budget increases to 347b dollars and its share in digital advertisement is 12,3%. In Poland, advertisement budget foreseen for 2014 is 378b dollars and its share in digital is 13,2% (2013, pp. 197-204). Parker’s study (2008: pp. 163-181) is seen in Table 1.
Applications developed with the widespread use of social media enable constitution of most innovative social media tools each day. The most widespread tool of social media today is Facebook. This social network where anyone can join without any limitations pioneered re-shaping of advertisement rules. The most followed social media network in Turkey and Poland is Facebook. According to Global Digital Statistics’ report, 11.8 million people use Facebook actively in Poland. And in Turkey Facebook user number is around 36 million.

There are many applications that are needed to know about Facebook. These are; timeline and wall, centers of interaction, associating a person or a page with things shared like photos and videos by tagging them, inviting people to social events or using it to get information about approaching events, using applications that provides following updates of journalists, politicians, famous people or others open to anyone.

As social media get into our lives more and more each day, competition environment widens between the companies that give advertisements in this medium. In this medium where intense competition is experienced every institution is working hard to be successful within the ethical rules. One of the most problematic subjects that constitute ethical rules is comparative advertisements.

**COMPARATIVE ADVERTISEMENT**

They are all the advertisements that define the competitor or the product or service presented by the competitor directly or indirectly (www.galamarketlaw.com). Comparative advertisement defines competition to improve brand perception that claims superiority or that is known less (James and Hensel, 1991: p. 3). Comparative advertisement is defined to be a persuasive advertisement strategy that aims to communicate with the competition advantages of superior brands in verbal and visual.
market. Comparative advertisements are named to be contrary, negative, offensive and critic advertisement (Moore, 1999: p. 47).

Ash and Wee (1983: p. 14) states that it is better to define comparative advertisement to be advertisements that compares advertised brand with competitor brand/brands whose name is expressed clearly in terms of company properties like a product, service, price, position in the market or image and status. As it is said that the advertisement needs to compare some product properties in addition to specifying the competitor company’s name this definition is restricted.

FTC (Federal Trade Commission) defines comparative advertisement as a kind of advertisement that compares alternative brands in terms of objective and measurable properties or price and gives the name of or points out or gives distinctive information of the alternative brand (www.ftc.gov).

AAAA (The American Association of Advertising Agencies) emphasizes that comparative advertisements can give out necessary and beneficial information to consumers when its used honestly and fairly and these advertisements must not bend the truth and extreme care is needed on this subject. Because of this AAAA Council stated some specific rules for comparative advertisements (Belch and Belch, 2001: p. 732).

1. Advertisement’s purpose and connotations must be informative that would not end up with unjustified attacks to the competitors and denigrating the competitor product or services.
2. The product that is compared must be specified fairly and rightly.
3. Similar properties or properties of a product must be compared point by point. Brand’s identity must be one of the true comparison purposes.
4. If a competitive test is handled there must be no clouds about the truthfulness of the test, this test must be conducted by an objective test source independently.
5. All the claims in the advertisement must have a supportive source.
6. The compared property must have a value for the consumer or must be important about the effectuality of the product.

Comparative advertisement is an important and frequently used approach. The most important reason why comparative advertisement is used is that it is claimed to provide more information about brands in the market. Constitutes trust for the competitor by providing help for defiant brands whose position in the market is not known for seizing a place near widely-known and prestigious brands. In this way it encourages competition and production opportunity. Comparative advertisement can provide advantages in decreasing misunderstandings around which product properties are important for the consumers and when this format is used, bigger memorability emerges. This format forces producers to improve product quality. Comparative advertisement, at the same time, creates trust for challenge, encourages competition, and provides advantages about benefiting from innovation advantages and differentiation of product/brand (Barry, 1993: p. 21).
As comparative advertisements have advantages, they also have disadvantages. This format has the probability of creation of too much information in the nature of noise and this situation can create confusion in the target mass. Comparative format can also reduce advertised brand’s persuasiveness and credibility rather than improving. It can show advertisement as a bad behavior to the consumers. Comparative advertisement can be deceptive because of incomplete comparison and can cause relentless competition. In addition, it can cause the advertiser brand to be misunderstood, it can reduce the general credibility of advertisements and increase consumer skepticism (Hill and King, 2001: p. 39).

FORMS OF APPEARANCE OF COMPARATIVE ADVERTISEMENTS

Critical comparative advertisements; If the owner of the advertisement brings superior properties of his/her goods and services by criticizing one or more competitors’ goods and services, critical comparative advertisements are being talked about. It must be paid attention in these kinds of advertisements that to not to do unnecessary detract about competitors’ goods and services (Bozbel, 2006: p. 41). Every comparison made in advertisements does not mean that aforesaid advertisement is a critical comparative advertisement. In order to critical comparative advertisements to be mentioned, the owner of the advertisement must indicate that his/her good and services are superior than competing goods and services (Ürey, 2010: p. 31).

Personal comparative advertisements; the owner of the advertisement denigrate the competitors themselves rather than their goods or services. In these kind of advertisements the owner of the advertisement denigrates competitors’ for example experience, reliability, political moves, etc. aiming increase in sales of his/her goods or services (Bozbel, 2006: p. 42). Personal comparative advertisements are illegal as they have the aim of unnecessary absolute denigration of the competitor’s independent from their goods or services. In other words, it is not possible for personal comparative advertisements, which direct negative judgements towards competitors’ personality directly unrelated to the publicized good or services, to be accepted as reasonable in the system of law.

Comparative advertisements based on the reputation of the competitor; the owner of the advertisement emphasizes that his/her good or service is as good and quality as the competitor good or service. In other words, they are advertisements that owner of the advertisement equates his/her goods or services with the competitors’ goods or services (Bozbel, 2006: p. 42). Statements like “Product Y is as effective and strong as Product X” can be given as examples to these kind of advertisements. In these kind of advertisements the owner of the advertisement, rather than emphasizing the difference between his/her goods or services and competitors’ goods or services, emphasizes that his/her goods or services are as good as competitors’ goods or services and they have similar properties. In this kind of advertisements, advertiser promotes his/her goods or services by profiting from the reputation of competitors good and services in the presence of consumer (Ürey, 2010: p. 32).

Price comparisons; here, prices that will be paid to the owner of the advertiser’s goods or services are compared with the prices that will be paid for competitors’ goods
or services. Here the main issue is that prices must reflect their final forms that will be paid by consumers. Otherwise aforesaid advertisements can be qualified to be deceptive as the prices presented to the consumer do not reflect the reality. Consequently, the most important responsibility of these advertisements’ owner is to check current price data and reflecting that to costumer (Bozbel, 2006: p. 44). Within the frame of competition rules enterprises are free to specify their goods or services’ prices. Price comparison in advertisement must be done based on objective data. In the price comparison done between two competitors’ goods of the same kind, a new model good must not be compared with the competitors’ old model good (Ürey, 2010: p. 34).

In Alone at the top advertisements the owner of the advertisement emphasizes that his/her own goods or services are superior to all the other competitors' goods and services with its specific properties (Poroy and Yasaman, 2004: p. 284). Advertisements like “The world’s number one lipstick”, “The world’s best-selling facial cream” are examples to alone at the top advertisements. Aforesaid advertisements are really fragile. Yet, these advertisements definitely need to be based on scientific research and studies and must not contain exaggerated statements (Bozbel, 2006: p. 44).

THE LEGAL DIMENSION OF COMPARATIVE ADVERTISEMENTS

When we examine the legal dimension related to comparative advertisements we can see that every country has different applications. As it is the case of European Union’s regulations about advertisement, there are also some regulations in Poland. Firstly, according to the European Union, comparative advertisements must not be deceptive and must be aiming meeting needs or must be comparing goal directed goods and services. The advertisement must meet aforesaid goods and services’ one or some of important, related, verifiable, representative properties and in this framework it must compare their prices objectively. Besides that it must not cause advertiser and the competitor firm or promoter and competitor firm’s commercial brands, commercial titles, other distinctive brands, goods and services to be confused with each other. It would not damage the reputation of and would not denigrate competitor firm’s commercial brands, commercial titles, other distinctive brands, goods, services, activities, or conditions it is in. It must not use advantages based on competitor firm’s commercial brand, commercial title or other distinctive brands or specified starting points of competitor products unjustly. It must not represent products and goods, as the imitation or the duplicate of a commercial brand under protection or goods and services under a commercial title (No. 94/450/AET instruction 2a /www.tuketicihukuku.org).

According to comparative advertising in Poland; an advertisement, which enables recipients, directly or indirectly, to recognize a competitor, or products or services offered by a competitor, is a comparative advertisement. Such advertisement constitutes an act of unfair competition, unless it is not contrary to good practices, i.e. it jointly meets all below conditions (www.paiz.gov.pl):

- It is not misleading;
It compares products or services reliably, in a way which is possible to be verified and on the basis of objective criteria;

- Compares one or more material, characteristic, verifiable and typical attributes of those products and services;
- Does not cause confusions in the market concerning distinguishing between an advertiser and its competitor;
- Does not discredit products, services, activities etc. of a competitor;
- As far as products with a protected geographical designation or a protected designation of place of origin are concerned, it always refers to products with the same designation;
- Does not unfairly use neither a goodwill of a trademark, designation of enterprise and other designation distinguishing the competitor or a protected geographical designation/a protected designation of place of origin of a competitor's enterprise;
- Does not present a product or a service as an imitation of a product or service granted a protected trademark, a protected geographical designation/a protected designation of place of origin or other distinguishing designation.

Comparative advertisement is permitted if it is fair and true. According to Polish laws comparisons are made between my old and new price and my price and the price my competitor applies. Advertisers must always affirm their claims (International Advertising Clearence, 2004: p. 94).

In Turkey, in the Turkish Commercial Law No. 6102 comparative advertisement is regulated directly and explicitly. According to this, comparing itself, its goods, products, activities, prices in a way that is untrue, deceptive, unnecessarily disparaging or unnecessarily taking advantage from its reputation with others, goods, products or process and putting the third person front through similar ways is unduly competition (TTK, 55/a/b.5). Comparative advertisement is not illegal in itself. Contrarily, objectively delusive and outrageous exaggerated comparative advertisements are illegal. In our country, according to 5th clause of the Law on Consumer Production No. 6502 titled commercial advertisement and unfair trade applications (61st article) “comparative advertisement of competing products or goods that meets the same needs or that is for the same purpose can be made”. According to the 11th article of the Turkish Commercial Code (comparative advertisements): comparative advertisements can be made under the conditions that compared good, service or brand name is not given, compared goods or services have the same quality and characteristics or meet the same demand or needs, they are appropriate to honest competition principles and not deceiving consumers. Comparative advertisements that are banned in our country are deceptive comparative advertisements, unnecessary discredit and exploiting the reputation of competitor advertisements.

**METHOD**

Companies that use Facebook as the social media tool in Turkey and Poland and has the biggest number of likes by taking data from various social media sites and these companies’ advertisements on social media are aimed to be examined through content analysis of comparative advertisements Therefore this study is a descriptive research. In other words content analysis is converting similar data into the form that
readers can understand through the framework of some specific codings by bringing similar data together through these codings. (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006: p. 162).

**Purpose**

In today’s world technological developments are continuously improving. In the light of technological developments, new products and with these products competition emerges. In the atmosphere of competition, companies differentiate from each other through their advertising strategies. One of the strategies used is comparative advertisements. The aim of this study is an examination of comparative advertisements on Facebook, which is the most common tool of social media.

Usage of comparison in advertisement is thought to be affecting consumers and comparative advertisement is a device used in the advertisement sector frequently in order to attract attention of consumers. Comparative advertisements, which eases consumer decision when it contains objective information, are conducted within some specific laws in Turkey and Poland. In this research, how comparative advertisements used in the medium of Facebook are done through an application according to their style of appearance is important.

The most important restrictions on the research are the law clauses about comparative advertisements in both two countries. In both two countries, comparative advertisement does not have a long past.

**Findings**

While specifying the companies in Turkey and Poland Facebook liking numbers of sites like Socialbakers, Statista, and Wearesocial are taken and companies’ advertisements on the Facebook pages are examined. For the study, advertisements of Panda and Yandex from Turkey, Belvedere, Play and MediaMarkt firms from Poland on Facebook are investigated according to their appearance styles. Advertisements of these firms investigated are classified under five groups. These five groups own advertisements from critical comparative advertisements, personal comparative advertisements, price comparison, and alone at the top advertisements according to their form of appearance.

First of all, when we look at the advertisement of the Panda firm from Turkey, according to the appearance form; Panda is an ice-cream firm and is in competition with Algida. Against the advertisements and position in the market of Algida’s one of the best products “Magnum”, Panda represents “Magic” product. In the advertisement, more than the product, Panda advertises against Magnum’s campaign of pleasure. In the advertisement, it criticizes prizes, exaggerated promises and pleasure that Magnum gives out. Panda, in this advertisement, simplifies the product and says that the product is only a real ice-cream. Panda uses the critical approach as an appearance form in this advertisement.
The second example from Turkey of comparative advertisements, according to their form of appearance is Yandex’s “Ben ne bileyim Yandex miyim? (How should I know, am I Yandex?)”. Yandex is a search engine. Its biggest competitor is Google. In their advertisement campaign the advertisement compares its brand with Google without giving a name. It uses a boy as the advertisement figure in its campaign and it uses Google’s colors on the boy’s clothes. Although Google is shown to be the biggest firm, if it does not know something, it directs you to Yandex. In this way the image of being better than Google is given. Yandex uses its competitor’s reputation in this advertisement.

If we look at the Belvedere firm in Poland after Turkey, according to comparative advertisements’ form of appearance; Belvedere is Poland’s alcoholic drink (vodka) firm. Belvedere, in its advertisement, with the slogan “the most rewarded vodka portfolio,” says its brand is superior by differentiating its brand from other alcoholic drink brands. Belvedere shows the characteristic of alone at the top advertisement as its form of appearance as a comparative advertisement.
Another example from Poland, according to forms of appearances of comparative advertisements is MediaMarkt. MediaMarkt is one of the biggest electronic appliance shops in Europe. Because of this property of the firm, its price policy differentiates from other electronic appliance shops. MediaMarkt, in its advertisement shows that it is cheaper than other shops by proving this fact. MediaMarkt can do price comparison easily because of its enormity. Another price comparison like MediaMarkt is done by Play firm. Play is Poland’s telecommunication firm. As it is the biggest telecommunication firm of Poland, Play can also give its products for any price it wants. It can make a comparison in terms of price easily. In addition to this it presents options to its customers by making a comparison of two brands inside itself.

**Picture 3.4:** MediaMarkt and Play

Reference: [www.facebook.com/Play](http://www.facebook.com/Play) and [arbiter.pl/zdjcie/8713](http://arbiter.pl/zdjcie/8713)

**CONCLUSION**

From the time that internet emerged it happened to be an important tool for mass communication. Social media that emerged with the improvement of internet technology and its most important tool Facebook gained an important seat in people’s lives. People spend long time on social media and social media gives people the characteristic to be a Publisher. Because of this property of it, people spend most of their time on social media and this makes it an attraction center. With social media becoming an attraction center, companies also started to use it by improving their strategies according to this medium.

With companies using social media a cutthroat competition environment is comprised. In this environment of competition, various ways are tried for differentiation and convincing consumer. One of the ways companies apply is comparative advertisements.

Comparative advertisements are seen as tools that provides a presentation of the advantages that advertiser’s products or services have in terms of quality, price, property, etc. in comparison with competitor product and services to consumers in the most efficient way. In other words, comparative advertisements give an opportunity of seeing the differences and/or similarities between products or services. Comparative advertisements emerge to be the most effective and important advertisement kind which provides promotion of products or services belonging to businesses to consumers.
And when we examine legal arrangements concerning comparative advertisements with the acceptance of Law on Consumer Protection in 28th of November 2013 in Turkey and Poland entering to European Union in 2004 there are some changes about advertising in both two countries. After this date the ban about comparative advertisements was lifted.

It is seen that, comparative advertisements are done allusively, according to the regulation in Turkey by contrast with Poland and EU laws. The most important reason why this is held allusively is that giving brand names is still prohibited in comparative advertisements. In Turkish laws, it is not possible to use any element like the name of the competitor, competing product or service, competitor’s logo or anything that can associate with these in the advertisement. When we look at the Turkish brands that we examined, Panda and Yandex make comparisons by not giving names, but allusively. Panda makes a comparative advertisement allusively critically. In the same way, Yandex firm also makes the comparison by using the competitor’s reputation allusively.

When laws other than intimating comparison look according to Poland and EU can be made openly. When we look at Belvedere brand in Poland, it sees itself better than the other alcoholic drink (vodka) firms. While doing this it uses objective criteria. It says that it got many awards and these consist a good portfolio. While doing this it compares itself with more than one alcoholic drink (vodka) firm. It qualifies itself as alone at the top. When we look at Play and MediaMarkt brands’ advertisements, they are comparing prices. In Play advertisement, by writing prices of products clearly and specifying properties of the product, a right to choose is given to the costumer. And in the MediaMarkt advertisement product’s price is shown clearly and a comparison is made through price.

When we examine the advertisements from Turkey and Poland we can see that while Turkey is making comparisons allusively, Poland is making comparisons openly. In addition, as it is prohibited to give names in both these two countries, we see that comparative advertisements are made without using competitor’s firm’s brand name, logo or this kind of property of the brand.
REFERENCES


Altınbaşak, İ. ve Karaca E.S. (2009). Internet Reklamcılığı ve Internet Reklamı Ölçümlememesi Üzerine Bir Uygulama. Ege Akademik Bakış. 9.2, s.463-487


Moore, M.T. (1999). Campaigns enter phase 1 of ad war. USA Today, October 27, 16A


http://www.ticaretkanunu.net/ttk-madde-55/ Erişim Tarihi: 1 Temmuz 2014

http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/policystmt/ad-compare.htm  Erişim Tarihi: 1 Temmuz 2014
http://brandtalks.org/2014/05/magnumunellitonu  Erişim Tarihi: 4 Haziran 2014
http://arbiter.pl/zdjecie/8713  Erişim Tarihi: 1 Haziran 2014