

ORIGINAL ARTICLE**PRESENTATION OF RISK AND RISK PERCEPTION IN INSURANCE ADVERTISEMENTS IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF 1963 HAYAT MAGAZINE**

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Abstract

In parallel with the development of the insurance sector in Turkey, there has been an increase in the number of print advertisements. This increase has been reflected in the content of advertisements in direct proportion to the development of both the insurance sector and the advertising sector. It is possible to see the traces of this development, especially in the presentation of risk and risk perception in advertisements. This study aims to reveal how insurance advertisements presented risk and risk perception to the public in the past. Insurance advertisements published in Hayat Magazine in 1963 were selected through convenience sampling. Then, common codes were extracted from the advertisements through content analysis conducted independently by two researchers. The advertisements emphasizing risk and risk perception presented with any visuals were determined by criterion sampling from purposive sampling methods and 3 advertisements meeting these criteria were analyzed by both content analysis and visual semiotics analysis methods. Within the framework of its limitations, the research highlights two main themes in the presentation of risk and risk perception in insurance advertisements: 1- Risk and risk perception are presented to society with content based on fear of the future. 2- The contents mostly emphasize socio-cultural elements and life practices.

Keywords

Insurance, advertising, Turkey, risk, fear.

JEL Classification

M30, M31, M37, M39.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, people have felt the need to feel safe and, therefore, protect themselves from risks. This is also due to the difficulty and uncertainty of predicting the future. Although making the future predictable and eliminating risks is a desirable goal, people have realized the impossibility of achieving this in an increasingly complex world. They want to be prepared and reduce possible losses. The insurance industry is directly related to risk. However, uncertainty will always exist in human life; as Masci (2011) notes, “while risk can be covered by insurance, uncertainty normally is not.”

Just as risk is defined differently in different disciplines, there are also differences in the perception of risk. There is a significant difference between the factors that the first humans perceived as risks in the environment and today’s perception of risk factors. As the environment grows more diverse and intricate, uncertainties escalate, and in direct correlation with this uncertainty, variations arise in the perception of risk.

Due to human nature, the perception and degree of risk increase in accordance with events and situations that are physically close to them, that they think will occur soon in time, or that have just occurred around them. Moreover, in these events, people may want to feel safe and insure themselves, even if they have not suffered any losses. The surge in insurance uptake following an earthquake might be attributed to the availability bias, wherein individuals may alter their financial choices and acquire insurance coverage even in the absence of any personal losses (Lin, 2020).

How risk has been perceived in different periods since the first human being is the subject of a very comprehensive study, but its periodical analysis can give us different clues. The way risk is explained to the public by insurance companies can provide clues about how risk and risk perception are presented by the media and how the public perceives them. Therefore, advertisements are the best sources for analyzing such a situation.

Based on this characteristic of advertisements, this study investigates how the insurance sector presents risk and risk perception to society in Turkey through advertisements. The 1960s were a period of accelerated developments in both the advertising and insurance sectors in Turkey. The sample of the study consists of print advertisements published in *Hayat Magazine*, one of the popular magazines of the period, in 1963, which includes risk and risk perception.

2. LITERATURE

The insurance sector, which has undergone different stages in various geographies worldwide, can be divided into two periods in terms of its historical development in Turkey: the pre-Republican and post-Republican periods. Historically, practices resembling insurance can be found both in the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. The number of companies in the insurance sector, which has developed and progressed over time, approached 40 in 1932. Engin and Karakuş (2020) state that these companies were affiliated with the Ministry of Trade in 1939, but they were not established with private capital. “In 1942, Doğan Insurance Company, the first insurance company with private capital, was established. The transition from single-party rule to multi-party rule in 1950 facilitated the opening of private insurance companies.” (Engin & Karakuş, 2020)

Especially with the establishment of different advertising agencies and the increasing number of companies, it can be said that advertising turned into a large sector after the 1960s (Aslaner & Aslaner, 2020). The same years witnessed an increase in private investments in Turkey and the beginning

of the planned development period after the 1961 Constitution (Engin & Karakuş, 2020). Additionally, the Press Advertisement Agency was established in 1961, and the “Regulation on Insurance Adjusters” was published in 1965. All these developments can be characterized as positive and accelerating developments for both the advertising and insurance sectors.

It is true that economic and social progress influenced this development in the insurance industry, and in the same years, there was a parallel development in advertising. The change in the economic structure stimulated the number of companies, which, in turn, stimulated the advertising sector and, in parallel, the insurance sector. It is also known that advertising has an impact on the sales volume in the insurance sector and contributes to the formation of a positive image in the public. Moreover, although the degree of advertising intensity increases demand, it does not depend on the type of customer targeted by insurance companies (Fier, 2016). Even if advertising is targeted at a specific type of customer by the insurance company, it can generally lead to an increase in demand in the entire sector.

The choice of advertising medium, message content, and format are critical components for the success of insurance advertising (Aduloju, 2009). The media medium changes and differentiates depending on the media tools of the period in which the advertisement is published. While new media tools and digital media platforms are popularly used as advertising media today, it is seen that popular magazines and newspapers, and partially television, were chosen as the medium when television had not yet entered Turkey and was just becoming widespread. In terms of content, it can be said that the unique characteristics and socio-political and economic developments of each period are reflected in the content of advertisements. In this respect, it can be stated that the fact that the message content carries the social, political, economic, and cultural characteristics of the relevant period is directly proportional to the desired effect on the target audience.

‘Risks are defined as the probabilities of physical harm due to given technological or other processes. Hence, technical experts are given the pole position to define agendas and impose bounding premises a priori on risk discourses’ (Beck, 1992). In the global risk society, no one now knows or can precisely calculate the extent of the risks we face due to our collective technologies and innovations (Jarvis, 2007). “Risk inherently contains the concept of control. Pre-modern dangers were attributed to nature, gods and demons. Risk is a modern concept. It presumes decision-making. As soon as we speak in terms of ‘risk’, we are talking about calculating the incalculable, colonizing the future” (Beck, 2002). In terms of insurance advertising, it can be said that the use of risky situations to attract the attention of the target audience is common. Risky situations are also given an emotional context within the message to create the desired effect. Emotional responses to risky situations are often different from cognitive responses to the same risks. When such differences occur, emotional reactions often guide behavior. Emotional reactions to risk can affect decisions and behaviors (Loewenstein et.al., 2001).

The elements of fear and shock advertising, which are particularly prevalent in insurance advertisements, can serve as examples of these emotional responses. “It is desired to arouse strong emotions in the target audience with shock advertisements that try to attract the attention of the target audience suddenly with an unexpected approach in a routine life flow” (Darıcı & Çetinkaya, 2021). Risk inherently embodies uncertainty, anxiety, and fear about the future. Even a future projection of the losses to be experienced after the occurrence of the risk may cause an emotional reaction. An expectation or confidence that this loss can be covered is an example of the effect that advertising can have on people. In addition, the compensation paid by the insurance company when the loss occurs can be perceived as a symbol of consolation by people (Hsee, 2000). Symbolically, there may be elements in advertisements that can trigger such emotional responses.

For these reasons, the way the content is presented in advertisements and the periodic characteristics contain clues about both society and the sector. Analyzing these contents and studying their perceptual responses can shed light on the relevant period and provide information about the sector and its development.

3. RESEARCH

This research was conducted using a qualitative model. The study is limited to insurance advertisements published in Hayat Magazine in Turkey in 1963, which were selected by the convenience sampling method. There are only 10 insurance company advertisements in the issues of Hayat Magazine for the relevant year. All of these advertisements belong to Doğan Insurance Company.

The advertisements were independently analyzed by two researchers using content analysis, and common codes were extracted. Content analysis is a research method that can be applied for various purposes across different disciplines (Öğülmüş, 1991: 213-228) and serves as an observation technique in social or sociological research. Content analysis involves a systematic examination of written or visual materials, enabling the derivation of repeatable and valuable inferences from the data within a message.

In the independent coding of 10 advertisements by two researchers, a total of 34 codes were extracted. Subsequently, these codes were compared, leading to the identification of 6 common codes. These codes are as follows: tradition, daily life, risk, culture, fear, and competition.

Following this, three of these common codes, selected as criteria, namely “containing risk and risk perception” and “presented with visuals,” were chosen using the criterion sampling method. Subsequently, both content analysis and the visual semiotics analysis method were applied to identify the indication, signifier, and signified and to analyze these codes in the advertisements.

Semiotics, in this respect, “when used for visual tools, deals with the way of understanding the design in front of us. In other words, it tries to find and reveal the codes of the messages that the design directly and indirectly conveys to us in order to make sense of the design” (Özdemir, 2007: 38). Visual contents related to risk and risk perception presented by advertisements to society were made meaningful with this method, and the messages they conveyed were coded. Then, all the findings were interpreted by the researchers, and the results of the research were presented.

3.1. Content Analysis

Picture 1

Doğan Insurance Ads



These advertisements appear in the third, eighth, and fourteenth issues of Hayat Magazine, published in 1963. All three advertisements are positioned on the right edge of the page, from top to bottom. The advertisements are 5 cm wide and 30 cm long.

It is observed that all of the advertisements belong to Doğan Insurance. It is difficult to say that there was a clear strategy regarding the content and message of the advertisements during this period. In insurance advertisements, the emphasis on competition is sometimes on the fact that policies are similar but not the same, and sometimes on trust. There are also quotes from daily life, proverbs, and traditional discourses.

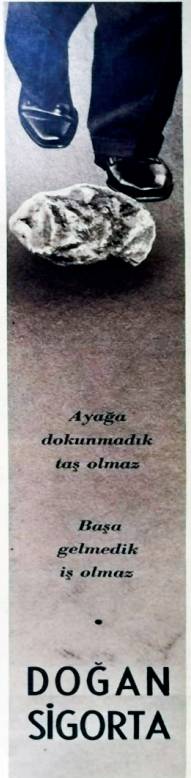
Risk and risk perception are generally presented through elements of fear about the future. To reinforce this, it is seen that they are supported with commonly used proverbs. The advertisement, which includes the Turkish proverb “Ayağa dokunmadık taş olmaz, başa gelmedik iş olmaz” (a proverb explaining that people can face obstacles and risks that they are not aware of and that these can create various problems and troubles for that person), is also supported with a visual drawing.

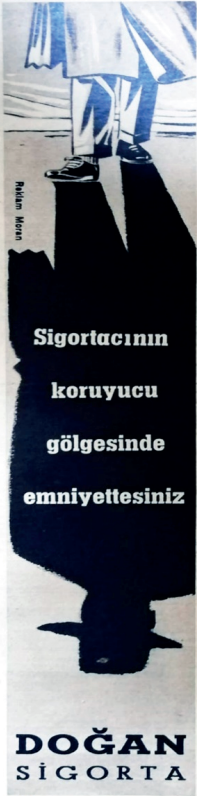
Another advertisement features the slogan, “You are safe in the protective shadow of the insurer.” It is seen that the advertisement features a drawing of a character in an overcoat and a hat, which were frequently featured in detective, detective, detective, and inspector-themed comics of the period. The slogan takes place in the shadow, while the drawing of following feet and the darkness trigger the perception of the presence of a protective character following you from behind against risks.


In the other advertisement, a chain concept was used. In the broken part of the chain, the logo of Doğan Insurance Company is placed instead of a link, emphasizing the company’s protective role and guarantee against risks. This is reinforced at the bottom of the advertisement by stating that “every office, agency, and producer throughout the country is a link in this chain of security.”

In the advertisements analyzed in general, it is seen that risk and risk perception are supported by references to cultural and sociological elements and life practices as well as drawings and visuals. In addition, risk is conveyed by using the element of fear, especially through the uncertainty of the future.

3.2. Visual Semiotic Analysis

Indication	Signifier	Signified
	Human	A person's feet and shoes from the knee upwards. One foot is slightly elevated to give the impression of walking lightly. The shape of the shoes and the cloth pants give the impression of a possible male. The painted and polished appearance of the shoes suggests a wealthier person or businessman for the period.
	Object	A big stone. The stone here represents a possible risk. It represents a risk so great that a person could trip over this stone and fall.

	Indication	Signifier	Signified
 <p data-bbox="363 389 373 456" style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Nahin Moran</p> <p data-bbox="379 533 533 725">Sigortacının koruyucu gölgesinde emniyettesiniz</p> <p data-bbox="357 936 539 994">DOĞAN SİGORTA</p> <p data-bbox="347 1008 459 1016">REKLAMCILIK 225 90</p>	Human	The feet and full shadow of a person walking, with part of their coat showing.	Considering the movement given to the image and the overall design, it depicts a person coming from behind. The shadow is drawn longer and more comprehensively, referring to the protective power. This perception is also reinforced by the text.
	Object	Overcoat and hat	There are references to the detective, detective, and inspector comics of the period. It observes you like a detective who is constantly following you. It protects you against dangers you are not aware of.

	Indication	Signifier	Signified
 <p data-bbox="363 1904 491 1948">yürür yarıyım bir baba, saatle ve prodüksiyonuz bu emniyet zincirini bir halkandır</p> <p data-bbox="347 1955 443 1964">REKLAMCILIK 5128 34</p>	Object	A broken chain	A chain that appears to be strong by emphasizing the thickness of its lines, but is broken right in the middle. It shows that no matter how reliable it looks, there is always risk and even such a chain can break.
	Object	Doğan Insurance Company Logo	The Doan Insurance Company logo in the place of the broken chain demonstrates that the insurance company foresaw the risk and that it anticipated the break by replacing the link. As a matter of fact, it reinforces this with the emphasis in the advertisement text.

4. CONCLUSION

The research focuses on two primary issues about the portrayal of risk and risk perception in insurance commercials, taking into account its own limitations and parameters: 1- Risk and risk perception are presented to the public through content based on fear of the future. 2- The content mostly emphasizes socio-cultural elements and life practices.

The findings indicate that, on one hand, the insurance sector was developing, while on the other hand, insurance advertising was also progressing. During that time period, insurance commercials predominantly featured content related to services and goods, lacking a strategic approach due to the absence of an established insurance culture. Discussing the existence of a strategy in terms of advertisement design and message content proves challenging.

It is seen that the message contents related to risk and risk perception are built based on “fear” and that they refer to uncertainty about the future. It can also be said that elements of the socio-cultural structure and life practices of the relevant period are included in the advertisements, and generally proverbs and expressions commonly used among the people find a place in the advertisements.

Compared to other advertisements in the relevant period, it can be said that insurance advertisements are quite weak in terms of content due to reasons such as the fact that sectoral development has not yet fully formed. It can also be stated that the drawings used in the analyzed advertisements are consistent with the slogan and advertisement content in their own context. However, despite this consistency within each advertisement, the presence of a strategic deficiency in general is also noticeable. It can also be said that there is a certain degree of competition, but this is presented in a very limited way in the advertisements.

A periodic analysis of insurance advertisements can reveal much unexplored data from the relevant period. Looking at advertisements as a tool reflecting the period may also allow us to discover data on different sectors and social structures. In this respect, insurance advertisements can provide valuable information on both the development of the sector periodically and what kind of advertising strategy should be followed in the future. It is hoped that this research will both guide academics and provide insights and guidance to practitioners in the future.

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How to cite this article: Darıcı, S., & El Ouahabi, S.E. (2023). Presentation of risk and risk perception in insurance advertisements in Turkey: The case of 1963 Hayat magazine. *International Journal of Insurance and Finance* 3(2), 45-52. <https://doi.org/10.52898/ijif.2023.9>