Chapter 13
Violence Narration in Digital Advertising

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ABSTRACT

Human beings exist through creating narratives. In this process of existing, number one narrative is violence. Today, considering that media is included in the process of producing meaning as a means of reaching information, the significance of knowledge and experiences the human beings obtain via media should be mentioned. In this process of building meaning, violence narrative is involved in the content of many visual texts from the news, the movies to commercials. Even if media doesn’t cause tendency to violence directly, it plays an important role in getting used to violence and internalizing it. In addition to this, expecting the media to give up violence narration seems like a naïve solution regarding the commercial value of it. In this context, questioning the ethics of the connection between media and violence is necessary. In this study, it is aimed to question the ethics of violence narration based on the exemplary advertisements in the commercials on television and viral advertising.

INTRODUCTION

When M. Heiddegger (2013) described language as the house of existance, he didn’t mean just the existential world of a human but also the establishment of the world one lives in. Human beings create narratives, they cannot keep on their lives without creating any (Yilmaz, 2010, p. 320). From the hunting drawings in the caves to the data in the social media networks, everything is related to the need of narration for humans. Human beings, who were incompetent of living alone in the nature, set up collective unities throughout the history and overcame the incompetency they lived by. While the information, skills and experiences that progressed cumulatively and enabled the culture to form, the transfer of this cumulative process was possible via narration the human beings created.

In this process, one of the narrative genres that represent the state of human beings is violence narration. Myths, legends, religious texts and laws portray the war of “good” against “evil”. In these kinds of narratives, violence is undesirable but necessary as a means to defeat evil. While the violence
imposed by the evil is identified with “death”, “destruction”, “dark forces” and “immorality”, the good makes everyone happy with “freedom” or “happy tomorrow” by imposing violence. Likewise, also in religious texts, violence is prohibited with strict orders, however, committing violence in the name of the religious purposes isn’t seen as violating the law but the order of the Creator. From another perspective, in legal texts and foundation laws, government’s Weberian description “only authority to use force in legitimate limits” is introduced in a framework of monopolization and institutionalization of violence. The government uses force in the name of security of its citizens within the limits defined by law via the institutions incorporated.

One of the spaces used violence as a narrative genre frequently is media. It’s obvious that violence narration often takes place in the movies, TV series, the news and the commercials. Unlike the universal theory of “Powerful Effects”, the representation of violence in media and the negative consequences of it, the relationship between media and violence is much more complicated than a one-way process. Particularly the research on presentations of violence on television is in tendency of refuting the approaches that display it as a scapegoat after human beings effective and rapid adaptation of television to the world of narration. In addition to this, it can’t be denied that television is one of the most effective means of creating daily narratives. As Bifo Berardi (2007) states, after television has become a part of life, children have started to listen to their tales and stories not from their mothers but from television. Therefore, the effective role of media as a means of narration, in the process of judging the negativities as a result of violence, has transformed it into a primary suspect. The question that must be asked at this point is: How can removal of the content that represents violence in media resolve the problem of negativities?

Undoubtedly this question and alike, both in the theoretical context and by the results of empirical research, are frequently discussed, and attempts have been made for eliminating violence and domination especially imposed on subordinate groups. Violence narration, for media, is a narrative that has a highly commercial value and doesn’t have any hardship to find a recipient. Thus, it’s hard for media to give up violence narration for financial reasons. Moreover, even if media denies pure violence display in terms of social responsibility, it’s true that violence continues to exist in various forms. Regarding to this subject, while mentioning the violence phenomena in media, it’s necessary to consider complex violence patterns, not just mere violence.

VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE NARRATION

The aesthetical power of violence narration owes a lot to modern technology as Benjamin points out (2007, p. 137-138). Violence creating paranoid people via technology keeps the fear alive and enables the legitimacy of violence and internalization of the violence narration. Violence as a means of narration represents the serious at all times. The news about wars, sorrows and sufferings and all kinds of petty crimes compose the most important subjects of daily life. Undoubtedly, death or the risk of death embedded in daily life revealing fear, sympathy and care has a significant place in this process.

In fact, violence has played a role during the whole adventure of humankind’s development. In this context, it’s possible to deal with violence as a founding element of the social. As Nietzsche says, “If one has power, why does he/she need to have a contract?” (2011, p. 102). Indeed, this point stands out as an important starting point of the hypothesis claiming to be supported throughout the study. Violence has always been a way of expression for humankind throughout history. As Nietzsche admits, notion of punishment includes the evil pleasure of watching other people suffer and even make the others suf-
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