

An Analysis of PHD and Master's Thesis on **Marketing Communication Conducted Between 1999-2023 in Communication** Research

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ABSTRACT

Marketing communication is a process that covers both consumer behavior and businesses' development of new marketing strategies. For this reason, marketing communication is a comprehensive subject area that has gained a significant place in academic studies, especially in the last 20 years, and on which scientific research has been conducted. Both the growing capacities and production volumes of businesses and the changing consumer make it necessary to carry out marketing studies. In this context, the aim of this study is to conduct detailed research on the theses completed in the national literature in the field of marketing communication. In this context, as a result of the detailed examination conducted through the National Thesis Center (YOKTEZ), 64 master's and 17 doctoral theses completed on marketing communication between 1999 and 2023 were identified. 8 of these theses could not be accessed (since they were not accessible via YOKTEZ), and 81 of them were evaluated using the content analysis method. In the study, data provided from documents; It is discussed under seven subheadings: type of thesis, gender, university, department, method, data collection and analysis technique and year category. As a result of the analysis, information was obtained about the nature, trends and prominent elements of academic postgraduate theses in the field of marketing communication. In particular, it is noteworthy that female researchers have a higher rate of writing master's theses on marketing communications and that the highest number of theses are in the field of Public Relations and Promotion. These findings show how important factors such as gender and field of expertise in the field of marketing communications are reflected in research.

Keywords: Marketing, Marketing Communication, Content Analysis, PhD and Master's Theses

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Introduction

In the past, the traditional sales-oriented marketing approach did not attach much importance to knowing consumers and having information about them. However, today's developments in transportation, information and communication technologies and intense competition in the market have changed the rules of marketing and necessitated the conduct of studies aimed at consumers who have become much more conscious. Along with the radical change that has occurred in the production processes and marketing and distribution stages, the increase in traditional advertising costs has brought the communication element to the forefront of marketing activities due to the decrease in the effectiveness of the planning of marketing communication activities of the media in terms of time and reach (Erdem, 2009, p.43). For this reason, many innovations have been added to the marketing tactics used by brands as a competitive strategy. On the other hand, competition improves both the use of technological applications to reduce the differences in methods used between brands and the strategies used to achieve marketing goals and reach target audiences. "Serious transformations have occurred in the world of objects with the joint efforts of new communication technologies and the advertising industry. Revealing the continuous consumption activity on the individual has become possible with a very cleverly developed 'desire strategy" (Öcal, 2020, p.3).

Every day, many products or services use different methods such as advertising, public relations, sponsorship, point of sale activities, promotion, etc. The tactics used to reach the minds of consumers who are exposed to these messages by sending many brand messages also differ and cause brand wars (\$im\$\setaek\$, 2007, p.135-136).

These developments make it easier for products and services to reach consumers. It is important to understand and implement the importance of marketing activities in order to gain a competitive advantage and maintain its existence by providing a positive attitude towards the product or service in the consumer. In parallel with the developments, it is necessary to follow and implement innovations in the field of marketing communication in order to gain sustainability and competitive advantage.

When the current structure of communication research is examined, it can be seen that research has been conducted on the impact of new communication technologies on societies and the quality and quantity of the messages given through these tools. Internet-mediated applications are among the recent research topics in this field. Different topics such as the use of the internet, what is used and how it is used, interactive use, and internet publishing are among the research topics that attract great attention (Aziz, 2005, p.18). Marketing communication plays an important role in the process of businesses reaching and interacting with consumers.

While the traditional marketing approach does not care about having information about consumers, today the level of knowledge of consumers has increased with the influence of technology and competition. With this change, innovations have been added to marketing tactics in the competitive strategies of brands. Rivalry, it has reduced the differences between brands by increasing the use of technological applications and improving marketing strategies. Knowing and following the innovations in marketing communication is important for the success of marketing activities. In recent communication research, especially the impact of the internet on societies and its interactive use are among the important issues. This study was carried out to reveal the effect(s) of academic research on the marketing communication strategies of businesses.

Marketing Communication

Marketing requires both the development of a good product, pricing it correctly, and making it available to consumers whenever they want, as well as doing different things. Because, for consumers to be informed about the existence of the product, they need to be convinced of the superiority of the product. As a requirement of this situation, every business feels obliged to prepare an effective communication program by considering consumers or the competition (Kotler, 1984, p.258). When the

development process of marketing is considered, marketing has focused on consumer satisfaction with the production period, the product beautification period, the sales period and finally the modern and socially responsible marketing approach period. With the concept of marketing communication, it is the organization of all stages of products and services produced in accordance with the needs of the consumer, from the idea stage to the process of being placed at the point of sale, in accordance with the logic of communication. It is only possible to differentiate among similar products and services through a communication strategy. In a medium where "how" it is said, not "what" is said, makes a difference, everything that determines the strategy must be marketable. Being marketable also means more profit and satisfaction (Altunbaş, 2007, p.157). In this regard, marketing communication is considered as a fundamental issue in terms of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage in the 21st century (Kitchen & Schultz, 1997, p.1-24).

Also, today, with the development of technology, there is a global The market has emerged, and the diversification of media has made it difficult to reach target audiences, while at the same time making it easier for businesses to collect and store information about consumers thanks to their marketing communication methods and techniques. The collected data is transformed into information, enabling businesses to establish long-term relationships with consumers. By establishing long-term relationships with consumers, many companies create customer loyalty, retain their existing customers and carry out activities to gain new customers. The necessity of holistic use of marketing communication tools such as consumer behavior, advertising, public relations, sales development, personal selling, direct marketing, point-of-purchase communication, sponsorship, trade fairs and exhibitions has given rise to the concept of integrated marketing communication (Erdem, 2009, p.43). In other words, marketing communication is a process that includes the product itself, its brand, package, price, distribution points and all communication variables. Consumer expectations and wishes are a determining factor in the product to be produced and through which channels to communicate. For this reason, the product communicates with the consumer through its packaging (packaging communication), price (price communication), method (advertising communication) and distribution place (distribution communication communication) (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2005, p.36). Because, while they must know marketing communication by examining all communication elements thoroughly, they must also be aware that applications may include different approaches. Advertising, promotion, sales promotion, packaging etc. Activities that constitute the marketing communication mix, such as, should be used as a whole to achieve communication objectives (Odabaşı, 1989, p.85).

Marketing communication includes communication activities related to announcing companies' establishment data, products and services to consumers. As a result of these activities, it covers a multifaceted study by including the communication processes of other elements of the marketing mix in order to influence customers' attitudes and purchasing habits towards the brand (Tosyalı & Sütcü, 2018, p.241).

Digitalization and With the impact of globalization, companies are constantly changing both their managerial and functional structures. The main phenomenon of marketing communication, the process of transferring the goods and services of businesses to customers, is also affected by innovations in this direction. Businesses have successfully completed the migration process from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 environment. The promotion mix suitable for this environment has been reproduced in an innovative and modern style to include advertising, public relations, sales promotion, individual sales and direct marketing strategies. During the transition from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0, especially with the introduction of Metaverse, it is thought that the form of marketing and communication activities to be carried out for individuals will be renewed and be suitable for new media channels (Özalp et al., 2023, p.161).

Purpose and Features of Marketing Communication

The purpose of marketing communication is to inform people about the messages of companies or non-profit institutions by making announcements or promotions through communication channels. Even though these tools are designed to influence a specific target audience, they have the potential to

influence all stakeholders. All organizations should take this into account when these activities are planned and remain in harmony to create a holistic image in the minds of target audiences (Bozkurt, 2013, p.38-39). In this context, the purposes of the most frequently mentioned marketing communication can be listed as follows (Odabaşı, 1995, p.26):

- a) Increasing or supporting the amount of sales,
- b) Providing insight into products and services or increasing awareness,
- c) Improving the image of the product,
- d) Conducting incentive activities to increase sales,
- e) Creating an impact on the approaches towards the product or service,
- f) Promoting the product or service To inform or train about,
- g) To introduce new products by presenting them.

The aims of marketing communication are to create awareness about the product, to persuade, to arouse desire, to create sympathy, to create loyalty, and to realize sales. In the marketing communication process, feedback is provided through marketing research (Cemalcilar, 1983, p.348). With the developments in the concept of marketing, the modern marketing approach has brought communication to the center of marketing activities. The communication between the producer and the consumer does not end with selling the product just once. In this respect, the main purpose of the communication between the producer and the consumer is to create a loyal customer community because they are always willing to buy the product, communicate with the brand and trust the brand (Elden et al., 2005, p.33).

Regarding the concept of marketing communication. The explanations made indicate that there are various features. These features can be explained as follows (Kitchen et al., 2004, p.23):

- a) The primary goal of marketing communication is to create an impact on the behavior of the target audience through communication activities. It should start and continue backwards to the brand's communication officer. In other words, institutions must have an understanding from the outside in.
- b) Integrated marketing communication should evaluate all centers where the business or brand has relations with its customers as a message and distribution channel and use all communication techniques in this context.
- c) Collaboration should be made in a coordinated manner to create a strong brand image.
- d) Integrated marketing communication is effective in correctly managing the relationships established between the brand and its customers.

As a result, integrated marketing communication, it provides effective communication and customer relationship management by combining all the communication centers of the brand.

Research

Purpose and Importance od the Research

The aim of this study is to examine in depth the master's and doctoral theses in the field of marketing communication at the national level. In this context, it was determined that a total of 89 theses were published through the National Thesis Center (YOKTEZ) within the specified time period; 81 of these were taken into consideration. During the analysis process, the data obtained from the theses were examined in seven different categories such as gender, university, department, methods used, data collection and analysis techniques and the year the theses were presented. This analysis was carried out in order to understand the characteristics and trends of academic studies in the field of marketing communication, to evaluate the quality of research conducted in this field and to guide future research.

Marketing communication has become an area that has attracted increasing academic attention in recent years has arrived. This study systematically examines academic studies in the field of marketing

communication, increasing knowledge in this field and contributing to the academic literature. Additionally, the results of the study can serve as a resource guide for academics, students, and professionals who wish to conduct research on marketing communications. This is important to see if similar studies have been done and to access existing information.

Research Method

In this study, the studies obtained by researching the master's and doctoral theses on marketing communication in the fields of communication sciences in Turkey with a multidimensional perspective in YOKTEZ, and the data were examined with the qualitative research method. In this regard, detailed research was conducted at the National Thesis Center (YOKTEZ) on marketing communication in January 2024, and 81 doctoral and master's theses completed in the field of communication research between 1999 and 2023 were accessed and examined. The data collected was analyzed using the content analysis technique, which is a qualitative method.

Content analysis is an analytical method. Analysis means examining a whole by breaking it down into its parts. Content analysis is used by different branches of science as a method of understanding and thinking. For example, in chemical substance analysis, voter behavior analysis, political party program analysis, or course analysis, the aim is to identify the parts that make up a whole and understand that whole better. Content analysis is a method used in the fields of social and behavioral sciences both to examine written contents and to understand the internal structures of communication changes by examining their structures and forms. The main purpose of content analysis is to determine whether certain features are present in certain content and how often they are present. Each content analysis is performed for a specific purpose. Before starting the analysis, it must be precisely determined which features will be detected in the content. A certain theoretical basis is required to determine the features to be sought in the content. According to this theoretical basis, it is determined which features will be determined in the content and how the collected data will be interpreted (Bortz, 1984, p.26-235).

In the study, gender was determined in which university, in which department, in which year, with which method. The data collection and analysis technique used and how many theses were made are explained in numerical and percentage ratios. In this context, the study; it is important as it serves as a resource for all researchers who will work in the field of communication. It was also carried out with the aim of helping universities and departments to make their own situation assessments based on their doctoral and master's theses. In this regard, answers to the following questions were sought by using the content analysis method of master's and doctoral theses in the fields of communication sciences and marketing communication, which were completed in the national literature and published in YOKTEZ:

- a) What is the distribution of thesis studies conducted on marketing communication in the fields of communication sciences and scanned in YOKTEZ according to years?
- b) Which universities contribute the most to marketing communication?
- c) Are the thesis studies on marketing communication mostly done at the master's or doctoral level?
- d) What is the distribution of thesis studies on marketing communication by gender?
- e) In which department of communication sciences have most of the thesis studies on marketing communication been conducted?
- f) Which research method has been most frequently used in thesis studies on marketing communication?
- g) Which data collection techniques were most commonly used in thesis studies on marketing communication?

Results

This study, which aims to trace the innovations in marketing processes in academic studies, focuses on which topics are researched and how through master's and doctoral theses. As a result of the analysis,

data regarding the gender, type, University, Department, method used, data collection and analysis techniques and publication years of the theses discussed are presented in the tables below.

Table 1. Statistical Data Obtained from the Theses Examined According to Gender, Type, University, Department, Method Used, Data Collection and Analysis Techniques and Years

	Gender	Туре	University	Department	Method	Data collection Tecnique	Year
N valid	81	81	81	81	81	81	81
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Range	1.00	1.00	22.00	12.00	2.00	13.00	22.00
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	2.00	2.00	23.00	13.00	3.00	14.00	23.00

Table 1 shows that theses studies on marketing communication have been carried out in a total of 24 years, according to two genders, two thesis types, doctoral and master's degree, 23 universities, 13 departments, 3 methods, 14 data collection and analysis techniques and year range.

Table 2. Distribution of Theses According to Gender Variable

Valid		Frequency	Precent	Valid Percent
	Man	28	34.6	34.6
	Woman	53	65.4	65.4
	Total	81	100.0	100.0

When the doctoral and master's theses published in the field of marketing communication are examined in terms of gender variable in Table 2, it is seen that 53 (65.4%) are women and 28 (34.6%) are men.

Table 3. Studies Conducted Regarding the Type of Theses

Valid		Frequency	Precent	Valid Percent
	Masters	64	79.0	79.0
	PHD	17	21.0	21.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0

In Table 3, the ranking of doctoral and master's theses published on marketing communication is as follows. It is seen that there is a ranking of 64 (79.0%) at the master's level and 17 (21.0%) at the doctoral level.

Table 4. Distribution by Universities

Valid

	Frequency	Precent	Valid Precent
Ege University	15	18.5	18.5
Marmara University	10	12.3	12.3
Atatürk University	8	9.9	9.9
Kocaeli University	1	1.2	1.2
Selçuk University	8	9.9	9.9
İstanbul University	2	2.5	2.5
Bahçeşehir University	5	6.2	6.2
Maltepe University	1	1.2	1.2
Anadolu University	1	1.2	1.2
Ankara University	4	4.9	4.9
İzmir Ekonomik University	2	2.5	2.5
Firat University	2	2.5	2.5
Sakarya University	10	12.3	12.3
İstanbul Kültür University	2	2.5	2.5
Atılım University	1	1.2	1.2
İstanbul Bilgi University	2	2.5	2.5
İstanbul Aydın University	2	2.5	2.5
Necmettin Erbakan University	1	1.2	1.2
Medipol University	1	1.2	1.2
Gedik University	1	1.2	1.2
Galatasaray University	1	1.2	1.2
Gazi University	1	1.2	1.2
Total	81	100.0	100.0

Looking at Table 4, the university that published the most theses in the field of marketing communication is Ege University, with 15 (18.5%), followed by Marmara University and Sakarya University with 10 (12.3%), Atatürk University and Selçuk University with 8 (9.9%) respectively and Bahçeşehir University with a rate of 5 (6.2%) appear to be a remarkable ranking.

Valid

Table 5. Distribution by Departments

	Frequency	Precent	Valid Precent
Public Relation and Cinema	51	63.0	63.0
Radio, Television and Cinema	6	7.4	7.4
Communication and Sciences	1	1.2	1.2
Public Relations And Advertaising	5	6.2	6.2
Communication Arts	3	3.7	3.7
Advertising and Brand Communication Management	4	4.9	4.9
Press and Publishing	4	4.9	4.9
Journalisim	1	1.2	1.2
Advertising	1	1.2	1.2
Communication	2	2.5	2.5
Management Communication and Public Relations	1	1.2	1.2
New Media and Communication Management	1	1.2	1.2
Marceting Communication and Advertising	1	1.2	1.2
Total	81	100.0	100.0

As seen in Table 5, the department with the highest number of thesis studies in the field of marketing communication is the Department of Public Relations and Promotion, 51 (63.0%), 6 (7.4%) in the Department of Radio, Television and Cinema, and 6 (7.4%) in the Department of Public Relations and Advertising. It is seen that there is a remarkable ranking with a rate of 5 (6.2%), in the Department of Advertising and Brand Communication Management and in the Department of Press and Publishing with a rate of 4 (4.9%).

Table 6. Distribution by Methods of the Theses

Valid		Frequency	Precent	Valid Precent
	Quantitive	28	34.6	34.6
	Qualitative	49	60.5	60.5
	Mixed	4	4.9	4.9
	Total	81	100.0	100.0

As seen in Table 6, when we look at the methods used in theses published in the field of marketing communication, the qualitative research method is 28 (60.5), the quantitative research method is 49 (34.6) and the mixed research method, where both methods are used together, is 4 (4.9). It seems that there is a sequence.

Table 7. Distribution by Data Collection Techniques of the Theses

Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	Survey	27	33.3	33.3
	Semi-Structured Interview	14	17.3	17.3

Semiotic Analysis 12 14.8 14.8 1 1.2 **Content Analysis** 1.2 **Literature Review** 3 3.7 3.7 14 17.3 17.3 **Focus Group Study Content Analysis and Semi-Structured Interview** 1 1.2 1.2 **In-Dept Interview** 3 3.7 3.7 **Survey and In-Dept Interview** 1 1.2 1.2 **Survey and Semi-Structured Interview** 1 1.2 1.2 1 1.2 1.2 **Case Study Descriptive Analysis** 1 1.2 1.2 2 2.5 **Bibliometric Analysis** 2.5 100.0 Total 81 100.0

Looking at Table 7, the most commonly used data collection techniques in published doctoral and master's theses are as follows. It can be seen that there is a ranking of the most used data collection techniques, with survey technique 27 (33.3%), semi-structured interview and focus group interview techniques 14 (17.3%), and semiotic analysis 12 (14.8%).

Valid

Table 8. Distribution by Years of the Theses

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
1999	1	1.2	1.2
2003	1	1.2	1.2
2005	2	2.5	2.5
2006	2	2.5	2.5
2007	2	2.5	2.5
2008	6	7.4	7.4
2009	3	3.7	3.7
2010	7	8.6	8.6
2011	1	1.2	1.2
2012	1	1.2	1.2
2013	1	1.2	1.2
2014	6	7.4	7.4
2015	5	6.2	6.2
2016	2	2.5	2.5
2017	7	8.6	8.6
2018	3	3.7	3.7
2019	12	14.8	14.8
2020	4	4.9	4.9
2021	5	6.2	6.2
2022	7	8.6	8.6
2023	3	3.7	3.7
Total	81	100.0	100.0

Looking at Table 8, the highest publication rate of completed doctoral and master's theses in the field of marketing communication by year is as follows. It is noteworthy with a ranking of 12 (14.8%) in 2019, 7 (8.6%) in 1010, 1017 and 1022, 6 (7.4%) in 2008 and 2014, and 5 (6.2%) in 2015 and 2021. It seems that there is a ratio.

Conclusion

In this study, 81 open-access doctoral and master's theses completed in Turkey on marketing communication between 1999 and 2023 and published in YOKTEZ were accessed and examined using the content analysis method. When the content analysis results were examined, they were examined in 7 categories: Gender, university, department, method, data collection technique and year. Some of the prominent findings of the study are as follows: It was observed that the gender doing thesis work in the field of marketing communication was (56.4%), and mostly women wrote theses in this field. It was observed that the highest number of graduates were completed at the master's level in the field of marketing communication (79%). It was observed that the university where the highest number of thesis studies were conducted in the field of marketing communication was Ege University (18.5%), followed by Marmara and Sakarya Universities (12.3%). The department where the most thesis studies were done in the field of marketing communication was in the field of Public Relations and Advertising (63%), followed by the Department of Public Relations and Advertising (6.2%). It was concluded that qualitative research methods were used as a method in the field of marketing communication (60.5%), followed by quantitative methods (34.6%). In addition, it was concluded that the most commonly used data collection techniques in studies conducted in the field of marketing communication were surveys (33.3%), and semi-structured interviews and semiotic analysis techniques (17.3%). When examined by years, the first thesis study scanned and accessible in YOKTEZ in the field of marketing communication was published in 1999. In the following years, thesis studies were carried out in the field of marketing communication, but it was observed that the highest number of thesis studies were completed in the field of market communication with 12 in 2019.

In this study, doctoral and master's degree studies in the field of marketing communication in Turkey were examined. These theses have been examined comprehensively. The findings of the study provide important information about the nature, trends and important points of academic studies in the field of marketing communication. In particular, it is noteworthy that the rate of female researchers writing thesis in the field of marketing communication is high and that most of the thesis studies are in the field of Public Relations and Promotion.

An important contribution of this study is to provide researchers who will work in the field of communication sciences with a comprehensive understanding of marketing communication is to provide perspective. Additionally, it serves as a guide for future research. It may be recommended to expand the scope of the study and include other scientific studies published in the field of marketing communication and evaluate them within a broader framework. It is also important for future research to focus on more specific issues, conduct in-depth analyzes and include different research methodologies. In this way, studies can be conducted to provide more comprehensive and in-depth information in the field of marketing communication.

Informed Consent: An informed consent was not obtained for this study.

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