

CONTENT ANALYSIS IN MARKETING: DECODING MESSAGES SENT BY COMPETITORS AND ENHANCING MARKETING STRATEGY BASED ON OBTAINED INSIGHTS

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Abstract: The analysis of messages in marketing plays a critical role in comprehending and optimizing marketing strategies. Examining the content of messages utilized in marketing campaigns allows for a deeper understanding of how companies engage their target audience and shape their decision-making processes and behaviors. This research paper aims to investigate the significance of content analysis in marketing, its application in competitor analysis, and its potential for enhancing marketing strategies based on insights gleaned from competitor messages.

Key words: content, communication, message, analysis, strategy, competition

Introduction

Communication is a tool through which market participants transform their goals and marketing strategies into tangible activities that influence the target market. It serves as a vital means for conveying brand identity, product benefits, and engaging with consumers, ultimately shaping their decision-making processes and behaviors. W. Glenn Griffin (Griffin W.G (2018)), emphasizes the role of communication in marketing as a transformative method for market participants to interact with their target audiences and achieve their objectives.

While the goals and strategies of long-standing market participants are often visible and apparent, it is important to recognize that they are susceptible to change. In a dynamic market environment, shifts in consumer preferences, emerging trends, and competitive forces necessitate continuous monitoring and analysis of participants' objectives and marketing strategies. By analyzing the messages, they communicate, we can proactively identify changes in their goals and strategies, enabling us to refine and improve our own marketing strategies to maintain competitiveness (Ichikawa M, Hori A, Inada H, et al (2023)).

Methodology

The methodology employed in this scientific paper encompasses a combination of desk research studies, the examination of cases from other markets, and the author's practical experience. It involves the analysis of messages from the domestic market, for which the author had access to reliable market data. By placing these messages

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in the appropriate context, the author aimed to decode the communication efforts of competitors accurately. The desk research component involves gathering and analyzing existing literature, reports, and studies relevant to the topic of analysis. Additionally, the author explores case studies from other markets to gain insights and draw parallels to the domestic market. Furthermore, the author utilizes their own practical experience and knowledge of the market to enhance the analysis. By integrating these approaches, the methodology ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded exploration of the messages emitted by competitors.

Scope of Research Study

Specifically, this study focuses on two types of messages: overt messages, which may indicate repositioning efforts, struggling sales, or the introduction of a new brand structure; and subtle messages in communication, which may signify shifts in marketing strategy or changes in communication focus.

We wanted to explore the impact of various types of information provided within the content provided by competitors and understand the shifts in their marketing strategy.

Introduction

Content analysis is a research method that involves systematic and objective examination of textual, visual, or audio materials to extract meaningful insights and identify patterns or themes within the content (Krippendorff, K. (2019)). It is widely used across various disciplines, including social sciences, communication studies, marketing, and media studies. The primary goal of content analysis is to provide a rigorous and structured approach to analyze and interpret the underlying meanings, representations, and discourses present in the collected data.

Various methods are employed in content analysis to systematically analyze and categorize the data. Quantitative content analysis involves the use of coding schemes and statistical techniques to quantify the frequency, distribution, and relationships of specific content elements. On the other hand, qualitative content analysis focuses on in-depth interpretation and understanding of the content, aiming to identify emerging themes, patterns, or contextual nuances. These methods can be used independently or combined in mixed methods approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data.

The significance of content analysis lies in its ability to uncover hidden insights, reveal trends, and generate evidence-based findings. It allows researchers to identify dominant messages, representations, or narratives within a given dataset. According to Neuendorf (2017), content analysis offers "a systematic and replicable approach to examine large volumes of data efficiently". It enables researchers to explore social, cultural, or ideological dimensions embedded within the content, making it a valuable tool for understanding public opinion, media effects, consumer behavior, and communication strategies. Moreover, content analysis can inform decision-making processes, shape policy development, and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in various fields, (Weber, R. P. (1990)).

Message analysis in marketing involves a systematic examination and interpretation of the content conveyed through various marketing channels. It encompasses a comprehensive understanding of linguistic elements, visual components, tonality, context, and objectives conveyed through marketing messages. Through this analysis, key messages, values, branded elements, and strategies employed by companies can be identified, providing crucial insights into their marketing approach.

Types of messages in marketing

In today's fast-paced consumer-driven world, effective communication plays a pivotal role in shaping brand perception and influencing consumer behavior. Companies employ various marketing communication channels to convey their messages to consumers, whether it be through packaging, branding, advertisements, public relations efforts, or even at points of purchase. Understanding the different types of messages utilized by companies in their marketing communications is essential for comprehending their strategies and their impact on consumer decision-making processes.

Based on over 20 years of extensive marketing communication practice across Central and Eastern European countries, and through in-depth analysis of messages using desk research, I have identified and classified five types of messages in marketing communications based on the content they convey (Table 1.).

Table 1. Types of messages used by companies in marketing communications, that can be identified based on content type criteria.



Analysis of Informational Messages

Informational messages are aimed at providing consumers with factual details about a product or service. Companies often use this type of message to highlight product features, specifications, or benefits. Whether through product packaging, website descriptions, or brochures, informational messages aim to educate consumers and provide them with the necessary knowledge to make informed purchasing decisions.

By examining the content and structure of informational messages, marketers can gain insights into consumer perceptions, preferences, and decision-making processes.

One example of an informational message in marketing is a product packaging label that clearly lists the ingredients and nutritional information of a food product. By analyzing this message, marketers can determine whether the product meets the desired dietary preferences of consumers, such as being gluten-free or organic. They can also identify any potential allergens or ingredients that may be of concern to specific consumer segments.

Another example of an informational message is a detailed specification sheet provided in an advertisement for an electronic device. By analyzing this message, marketers can gain insights into the technical features, capabilities, and performance metrics of the product. This information allows them to understand the product's positioning in the market, compare it with competitors, and identify unique selling points. Marketers can also use this analysis to identify the target audience's preferences for specific features and tailor their messaging to highlight those aspects that resonate most with potential customers.

In conclusion, analyzing informational messages in marketing, whether found on packaging labels or in advertisements, provides valuable insights into consumer preferences, needs, and decision-making processes. By understanding how companies convey factual details about their products or services, marketers can refine their marketing strategies, tailor messaging to target audiences, and effectively communicate the benefits and features that are most important to consumers.

Analysis of Emotional Messages

Emotional messages are designed to evoke specific emotions or feelings within consumers. By tapping into consumers' desires, aspirations, or fears, companies aim to establish a deep emotional connection with their target audience. These messages often leverage storytelling techniques, appealing visuals, and persuasive narratives to create an emotional bond that resonates with consumers and influences their purchasing behavior.

Analyzing these messages helps marketers understand how companies use emotional appeals to influence consumer attitudes, behaviors, and brand loyalty. By examining the content, tone, and visual elements of emotional messages, marketers can derive valuable insights into consumer perceptions, preferences, and emotional responses.

An example of an emotional message is the case of Serbian coffee brand Doncafe and their red coffee mug. Doncafe established the red coffee mug as an object with strong emotional value for consumers. After a period of discontinuation, started in 2006, the company reintroduced the red mug to the market, after 17 years. This decision was driven by the deep emotional connection that consumers had developed with the red mug over the years, as they kept and used them in their homes. Analyzing this emotional message, marketers can infer that the red mug remains a symbol of familiarity, nostalgia, and emotional attachment for consumers. By reintroducing it, we can see that Doncafe returns back to the roots, with old branding

elements that emotionally resonate with traditional target audiences - with traditional message.

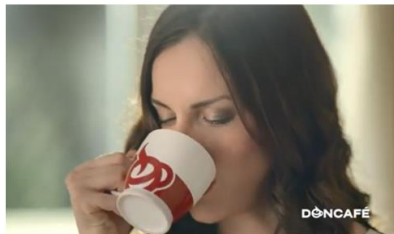
By analyzing messages in which the emotional element plays a key role, we can conclude that Doncafe intends to maintain traditional messaging towards target groups with traditional attitudes in the future. Additionally, the various coffee brands within this manufacturer's portfolio will be more focused on their respective target audiences.



DONCAFE TV AD, 2004



DONCAFE TV AD, 2006



DONCAFE TV AD, 2015



DONCAFE TV AD, 2023

Figure 1. Overview of Doncafe TV ads from 2004 to 2023

In conclusion, analyzing emotional messages in marketing provides insights into how companies strategically utilize emotions to create memorable brand experiences and foster consumer connections. Emotional messages can evoke feelings of desire, happiness, nostalgia, or any other emotion relevant to the brand's positioning. By understanding the emotional responses triggered by such messages, marketers can refine their marketing strategies, strengthen brand loyalty, and build long-lasting relationships with consumers. The case of Doncafe and their red coffee mug demonstrates the enduring emotional impact that certain objects can have on consumers, even after a significant period of time.

Analysis of Persuasive Messages

Persuasive messages are intended to convince consumers to take specific action, such as making a purchase or engaging with a brand. Brands employ various tactics, including promotional offers, discounts, testimonials, or social proofs, to persuade consumers that their product or service is the best choice. Persuasive messages rely on the principles of persuasion, such as scarcity, authority, and social influence, to nudge consumers towards a desired behavior.

Analysis of persuasive messages in marketing involves examining the content that aims to influence and persuade consumers to take specific actions or adopt attitudes. One example of a persuasive message in marketing is when a premium brand consistently offers price deals or discounts in its advertising and packaging. This strategic shift in pricing suggests that the brand may be undergoing a repositioning strategy. By focusing on lower prices and promotions, the brand aims to attract a wider audience and potentially expand its market share. This analysis, combined with other information, might reveal the brand's intention to adjust its marketing approach and target new customer segments.

Mercedes-Benz launched the Model 190, in 1982. The Model 190 was positioned as the smallest and most affordable model in Mercedes-Benz's portfolio at the time. This new launch was significant as it signaled Mercedes-Benz's intention to enter the medium price segment of the automotive market. The Model 190 was designed to cater to customers seeking a more compact and car option with lower price, yet maintaining the brand's reputation for luxury, quality and craftsmanship.

Die Neue Mercedes-Klasse. 190/190E.
Werte, wie sie Ihnen nur ein Mercedes im kompakten Format bieten kann.



Das Mercedes-Prinzip: keine Kompromisse bei der Qualität.
 „Kein Zweifel: Ein echter Mercedes“, urteilte die „Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung“ (8. 12. 1982) über die Neue Mercedes-Klasse, bei der Kompakt und Komfort kein Widerspruch mehr sind. Fahrer, die sich ein dynamisches, beweglich-wendiges Fahrzeug wünschen, aber nicht auf die Spitzentechnik und die grundsätzlichen Vorzüge eines Mercedes

... „Es dürfte keinen Zweifel geben, daß der 190/190 E neues Vorbild für die Mittelklasse wird.“ So resümierte das „Handelsblatt“ (9. 12. 1982), nachdem es den neuen Mercedes-Modellen diese Vorzüge attestiert hatte. „Mit ungewöhnlich gutartigen Fahreigenschaften, hohem Komfort, hervorragender Dämpfung von Motor- und Windgeräuschen, hohen Fahrleistungen und überraschend niedrigem Verbrauch auch in der Praxis steht der Name Mercedes-Benz beim ‚Kleinen‘ tatsächlich für so etwas wie eine neue Dimension.“

Die Fahrwerkstechnik der Neuen Mercedes-Klasse im kritischen Urteil.
 Bestnoten bekamen die neuen Mercedes-Modelle 190 und 190 E in der Presse für die Fahrwerkstechnik, für Fahrsicherheit und Fahrkomfort. Der Stern (23. 11. 1982) dazu: „Doch das Beste am 190er ist sein Fahrwerk. Die Führung der Vorderräder übernehmen Dampferbrühe auf Dreiecks-Querlenkern. Die angetriebene Hinterachse nennt Daimler-Benz ‚Raumlenker-Achse‘, weil jedes Hinterrad durch fünf unabhängige, auf engstem Raum angeordnete Lenker geführt wird. Vorzüglicher Gerdauflauf, neutrales Fahrverhalten mit leichter Tendenz zum Untersteuern, gute Seitenführung dank negativem Sturz, keine störenden Nickbewegungen beim Bremsen und Beschleunigen.“

Die „Süddeutsche Zeitung“ (3. 12. 1982) schrieb: „In der Praxis demonstriert diese Achse (gemeint ist die Raumlenker-Hinterachse) ... einen direkten Kontakt zur Straße mit einem Komfortverhalten, wie es bis dato bei Fahrzeugen dieser Klasse noch nicht anzutreffen war.“

Komfort auf Mercedes-Niveau.
 Der Sitz- und Raumkomfort der Neuen Mercedes-Klasse läßt jede Einschränkung vergessen, die bei herkömmlichen kompakten Automobilen nötig war. Bei der Neuen Mercedes-Klasse sind auch Kompaktheit und Viertürigkeit kein Widerspruch.

Die Anzeigenelemente sind vorbildlich ergonomisch. Der Geräuschpegel des Innenraumes stellt eine leise Revolution für Automobile dieser Größe dar.

Ein echter Mercedes, der seinen Preis leant und ihn sicherlich auch wert ist.“
 Die „Rheinische Post“ (4. 12. 1982) schrieb in einem großen Testbericht über die Neue Mercedes-Klasse:

... ein echter Mercedes mit der dem Hause eigenen Charakteristik, der seinen Preis leant und ihn sicherlich auch wert ist.“

Mercedes-Automobile sind bekannt für ihr überdurchschnittliches Maß an Werterhaltung, für beispielhafte Zuverlässigkeit und unübertroffenen Wiederverkaufswert. Auch von der Neuen Mercedes-Klasse können Sie mit Recht diese Vorzüge erwarten - und sicher sein, in etwas investiert zu haben, das sich auszahlt.

Das Erlebnis Neue Mercedes-Klasse läßt nicht lange auf sich warten.
 Ihr Motor temperament, die reaktionsschnelle Wendigkeit, das Ausmaß an Komfort und Sicherheit lassen sich schwer beschreiben. Aber schon auf einer Probefahrt unbeschwert erleben. Rufen Sie bitte die nächste Mercedes-Benz Niederlassung oder Vertretung an. Sie kann Ihnen einen kurzfristigen Terminvorschlag machen. Vielleicht wird schon Ihre Fahrt in den nächsten Urlaub zum ersten großen Erlebnis mit der Neuen Mercedes-Klasse.

Mehr Informationen über die Modelle 190/190 E erhalten Sie, wenn Sie diesen Coupon an Daimler-Benz AG, Abteilung VOI/VP-V, Postfach 202, 7000 Stuttgart 60, schicken.

Name _____
 Straße _____ Nr. _____
 PLZ _____ Ort _____



 Mercedes-Benz
 Ihr guter Stern auf allen Straßen.

Figure 2. Newspaper ad from Mercedes 190 launch campaign in 1982. Headline: “Value that only Mercedes in compact format can offer you”

Another example of a persuasive message in marketing is when a brand utilizes emotional appeals to connect with consumers on a deeper level. For instance, a skincare product advertisement might emphasize the emotional benefits of using the product, such as feeling confident, beautiful, or rejuvenated. By highlighting these emotional outcomes, the brand seeks to create a strong association between the product and feelings, ultimately influencing consumers' purchasing decisions.

Analyzing such messages allows marketers to understand the shifts in marketing strategy towards new trends and directions for future product developments.

In conclusion, analyzing persuasive messages in marketing provides valuable insights into the strategies employed by brands to influence consumer behavior. The example of a premium brand offering frequent price deals signifies a potential repositioning effort, indicating a shift towards a more price-sensitive market segment. Emotional messages, on the other hand, leverage consumers' emotions to establish a deeper connection and drive purchasing decisions. By comprehending the persuasive techniques utilized in marketing communications, marketers can enhance their own strategies, better engage with their target audience, and ultimately achieve their marketing objectives.

Analysis of Branding Messages

Branding messages focus on building and reinforcing a company's brand identity and image. These messages aim to communicate the values, personality, and unique selling proposition of a brand. Companies use consistent visual elements, taglines, slogans, brand storytelling and other branded elements to create a distinct brand identity that resonates with target audience.

Analysis of branding messages in marketing involves examining the strategic use of brand elements and messaging to convey a desired image and perception of a product or company. It aims to understand how brands communicate their unique value proposition and establish a distinctive position in the market. Analysis of branding messages, we can draw conclusions about the brand's intended target audience, brand personality, and shifts in competitive positioning.

One example of branding messages can be observed in the case of the Serbian coffee producer Grand and their brand Aroma. Over the years, Aroma has undergone several shifts in its branding strategy. Initially positioned as a traditional coffee brand with a focus on quality and heritage, Aroma was the key selling driver after it was launched. Later, it was repositioned to appeal to a younger, more modern audience, with shift in branding from product brand to sub-brand. In the last modification, in 2019, the umbrella brand Grand overtakes the role of a main sales driver, and Aroma gets the role of a descriptor. This shift in branding messages, reflected in packaging and advertising, indicated a desire to capture a new segments market and adapt to changing market dynamics.



Figure 3. Evolution of Aroma coffee packaging by Grand: 2006-2019. Changes in branding elements with shifts from Product Brand to Sub-brand in 2017, and a move towards the descriptor role in 2019, while Grand assumes the role of the primary selling driver.

Another example of branding messages can be seen in luxury fashion brands. Chanel is known for its timeless elegance and sophistication, which is consistently conveyed through its branding messages. From iconic packaging designs to visually striking advertisements, Chanel consistently communicates a sense of luxury, exclusivity, and craftsmanship. A significant part of Chanel's brand value lies in exclusivity and the premium aesthetic that is noticeable in all communication messages. These branding messages help establish Chanel as a high-end brand, appealing to affluent consumers who seek prestigious and aspirational products.

From these examples, we can conclude that branding messages play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and establishing a brand's identity. They reflect the strategic decisions made by companies to position their brands in a particular way, targeting specific market segments and conveying desired attributes.

Analysis of Socially Responsible Messages

Socially responsible messages focus on communicating a company's commitment to social or environmental causes. Such messages highlight corporate social responsibility initiatives, sustainability efforts, or charitable partnerships. These messages not only appeal to consumers who value ethical practices but also contribute to building a positive brand image and enhancing brand reputation.

Analysis of social responsibility messages in marketing involves examining the ways in which companies communicate their commitment to social and environmental causes. One notable example is the brand Patagonia, which has consistently integrated social and environmental values into its marketing communications. Their messaging emphasizes their dedication to environmental preservation, fair labor practices, and sustainability throughout the supply chain. By highlighting their eco-friendly materials and initiatives, Patagonia appeals to consumers who prioritize social responsibility and environmental consciousness. This sends a clear message

that the company is committed to making a positive impact beyond just selling products.



Figure 4. Patagonia ad asking customer to reduce, repair, reuse or recycle their clothes, rather than buying a new one.

Another example of social responsibility messaging can be seen in the marketing efforts of the beauty brand Lush. Lush is known for its strong stance against animal testing and its commitment to using ethically sourced ingredients. Their packaging and advertising often feature messages advocating for animal rights and promoting environmentally friendly practices. By aligning their brand with these values, Lush appeals to consumers who prioritize cruelty-free and sustainable products. The inclusion of such messages can create a strong connection between the brand and socially conscious consumers, fostering loyalty and driving purchase decisions. New generation of consumers do pay attention to the aspect of social responsibility and prefers to buy sustainable products, (Liu C, Bernardoni JM, Wang Z. (2023).

From these examples, we can conclude that companies that effectively incorporate social responsibility messages into their marketing communications can differentiate themselves from competitors and attract consumers who align with their values. By openly communicating their commitment to social and environmental causes, brands can build trust, establish a positive brand image, and create long-term relationships with consumers who prioritize social responsibility. Additionally, such messaging can serve as a catalyst for positive change, encouraging other companies to adopt more sustainable and socially responsible practices in their operations.

Conclusion

This study has successfully demonstrated that through the analysis of content in marketing, we can uncover crucial information emitted by competitors. This information enables us to understand their goals, strategies, and predict the directions of their future actions. The findings of this study highlight the value of content analysis in marketing for gaining insights into competitor behavior. By carefully analyzing competitor messages, companies can decode their underlying intentions, market positioning, and engagement strategies. This knowledge empowers companies to make informed decisions, refine their marketing approaches, and proactively adapt to changes in the competitive landscape. It also enables them to anticipate market trends, identify opportunities, and establish stronger connections with their customers.

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