

Full Length Paper

The Relationship between Superstitions, Metaphors, and Advertising

Sibel Akova, Maltepe University,
Communication Sciences Department, Istanbul, Turkey
akova@izocam.com.tr sibelakova@gmail.com +905333783551

Accepted 5 September 2011

The study evaluates superstitions and faiths that have maintained their contemporariness and occupy a significant place in people's lives from the different perspectives of believers and non-believers; exploring their reasons for remaining contemporary as well as the fields in which they are readily observed. The article addresses the concepts of superstitious faiths and behaviors, and their conceptual boundaries; the current and naive connection between superstitions, marketing and advertising, to fill a gap in the current discourse. The study does not make normative value judgments on what is superstitious; instead, it is concerned with why we need them, and how they are internalized as well as their proliferation. The goal is to probe how this sustainability and positioning as well as the need for their spiritual auras have been maintained across generations.

Keywords: Superstitious Belief, Mystical Marketing, Evil Eye, Blue Bead, Ritual, Semiotics.

INTRODUCTION

Superstition is essentially a concept that can be defined as the set of thoughts and beliefs that are incongruent with reality, and as a subjective concept that we can categorize as referring to the set of doings, behaviors, words, and beliefs that have different meanings for different individuals and cultures. A belief or practice that an individual or a culture considers to be superstitious, void or meaningless can be considered to be true by another. We know that a superstitious set of beliefs, which has been formed—or has emerged of its own accord—based on different perceptions and interpretations through time, exists in all societies, from the ancient Greeks to the Romans, from the Buddhists to the Hindus, from Jews to Muslims. In our daily lives, superstitions serve as a supporting power for the individual, and help her deal with the difficulties of her life conditions as she constructs her life. On the one hand, it helps offset the tensions and fears; and on the other, it serves as a sedative for the human psyche. It is for this reason that beliefs considered superstitious and perceived as rituals play a significant role in the Turkish daily life, as it presumably does in other societies. It would not be a vulgarized discourse to say that these rituals are also objects of consumption. For example, keys that open the doors of historical tombs, incenses, lead casting products, tomb candies, food and beverages that have been prayed onto and consumed before taking important exams, charms that have become trendy fashion accessories, prayed-upon-locks that are believed to prevent separations, and similar artifacts are bought and sold regularly. These artifacts, which may individually appear to have miniscule importance, also constitute a sizeable market for the superstitious and belief-related products. Given the frequency and pervasiveness of

rituals, the resulting market can be seen to command large sales volumes and rapid shelf turnover rates. The artifacts, which serve as supplements to all of these rituals, in a sense, meet the demands of different consumers. In Turkey, the most commonly held superstitious belief is the evil eye, and the related blue bead product worn to ward it off. The blue bead, metaphorically speaking, is the message of the individual. This message, in addition to its use as a product of superstition, is also used in advertising messages and codes today, introducing a post-modern approach of changes and transformation to marketing.

Symbols have great importance for the conceptual frameworks of religions and their history. As is the case in the matter of religion, symbols have a vital meaning for brands that are at the heart of marketing. Such symbols have a profound impact on people's purchasing decisions. Concepts such as rituals, superstitions, and religion affect our purchasing decisions, regardless of whether we are aware of this or not, and they influence and direct consumers, impacting their thoughts and emotions. Since the beliefs that we have are representative of our frames of mind, the weight of the sense of belonging that we have towards the brands that entail mystical elements steer us to consume the related products. Mystical elements include certain messages and codes. The blue bead metaphor is one of the most frequently encountered mystical elements that we see in marketing, advertising, and sales practices, in Turkey and it is worth investigating which messages are conceptualized alongside it.

It would not be wrong to define the pretention of belief as a perception toward one aspect of the individual's emotional world and a continuous organization of her knowledge. Belief refers to the collection of all of the meanings that an image represents for an individual. It is the collection of thoughts and knowledge of an individual about things, objects, images, metaphors, etc. As long as a perception or knowledge constitutes a standalone organization, we can talk about belief as a collection of organizations. Thus, we can say that it is complete and structured. The most important aspect of the concept of superstition is that it is subjective. With the transference of the different meanings across individuals and cultures, a belief or practice that is considered void or superstitious, based on its aspects and perceptions about it, can be considered true by another culture or individual who believes in it.

Given the difficulty in defining which beliefs and actions are superstitious, and the lack of a consensus on this matter, Islam, the dominant religion in the Turkish culture, and many rituals considered sacred within its scope leaves what is otherwise considered superstitious as the foundational reference points for the study. Based on this foundation, the study is confined to a particular superstition, the evil eye metaphor, the use of the evil eye metaphor as a marketing strategy, and its position, positioning, and coding within the advertising domain; in Turkey.

SUPERSTITION AND SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

All around the world, people who have different religions, beliefs, and thoughts; living in different geographical regions, under different conditions and with different social structures; having different traditions and cultures; coming from various ethnic backgrounds have believed in a variety of superstitions throughout history, including the beliefs in their social and psychological realities and have adapted and internalized these.

Despite the superior intelligence that they continuously strive to develop, and the high level of civilization that has been achieved through the development of science and technologies, human beings have not been able to resist the numerous superstitions that have governed and have been dominant in the important aspects of their lives since the history of their existence. They have always thought that these superstitions provide protection for their thoughts and consciousness thus they have always internalized rather than alienate them. This is a paradox, which on the one hand shows that human beings do not want to believe in the existence of the unknown, and are unwilling to disclose their belief in such, that they are ashamed of these beliefs which they cannot give up, but tend to hide them behind various excuses while on the other hand, they continue to make the various superstitions, beliefs, and energies a significant part of their daily lives.

Scholars of religious history report that almost all superstitions have arisen from loyalty to ancestors, and deep level influences which consider fire, water, forest, and trees; sacred. The perversity in the form of offering sacrifices to certain creatures at certain times of the year, believing that they possessed superior powers and aspects, and seeking their affinity, has been a common delusion throughout the human history. There have even been people who blamed prophets and believers who tried to save them from these delusions to be “bad omen” (Çakan, 2007: 14).

Although they might deny this, individuals have not been able to remove the influence of superstitious metaphors and the deep impacts of this energy from their subconscious or their lifecycles that they call fate and their daily lives. They considered their unhealthy thoughts, which, at times, have reached the extent of perversity, to possess some superiority, in their attempt to prove the correctness of their delusions; they would internalize their superstitions with innocent images as means of satisfying their egos.

Superstitions are void beliefs that entail believing in prophecies, and supernatural and irrational powers. Superstitions are not specific to Muslim countries and can exist in any place, even in countries that are materially and technologically advanced. For example, in France and the UK, placing money at the foundation of a house that is to be built is believed to bring fortune. Americans believe that leaving a coin in a house that they move from would be good, since it would prevent bad luck from happening to them and bring good luck to the new tenants. In most regions of France, people having fever leave a coin at a crossroads in the forest, believing that the fever or illness would be passed onto those who find the coin, immediately relieving those who had left it. Russians hate giving loans after sundown, because they believe no money would come into their house afterwards (Candan, 2010: 177).

Superstitions are metaphors which are incompatible with Islam but are perceived “as if” they were part of the religion in the daily life of Muslims. They are set forth by some parts of the society as almost a religious-appearing mediator between faith and science, destined to stay in a state of limbo when exposed to scrutiny, as it is both open to criticism and praise, which incorporate an awareness of the aesthetics of a range of different cultural structures.

Although humanity, which is undergoing a transformation from Homo sapiens to Homo videns,

possesses the beliefs and practices that can be defined and considered superstitious in all areas relating to the aesthetic, the perception of interchangeability between belief and faith, and the associated confusion about the terms leads to confusions in the auras of individuals. This situation creates a variation of superstitious beliefs and faiths that suggests they originate from within religion and are combined with its content. These ongoing variations create a confusion of the etymology of belief and faith on the one hand, and an unfortunate inference that entails association with religion, on the other. This, in turn, focuses those individuals with strong superstitious beliefs to continuously defend their beliefs. In the name of defending her belief, the individual can engage in the efforts to explain phenomena that she accepts to be irrational within rational compositions.

Robert Park, who recommends consulting dictionaries with regard to faith and superstition, claims that the word belief, has two distinct meanings in Townes' and these meanings are confused. He scrutinizes Townes' definition of the concept of belief as a strong adherence to religion based on spiritual belief, instead of "trust" and "evidence." Despite this definition, Townes himself could not delineate the concept with clear-cut lines.

Townes' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Hard_Townes) philosophy of belief stresses the need to understand the laws of optics in order not to be confused by imagination about concepts concerning scientists and belief rituals.

Some dictionaries degrade the concept of belief to detailed variations, but this is not enough to set forth the claim for two distinct meanings. Scientists use the word belief to refer to their confidence in the superiority of the laws of nature that start with the cause-effect law. The religious meaning of the word belief, however, refers to the existence of a divine power which executes phenomena and processes without regard to their physical causes. This is the definition of the superstitious belief. In short, these two meanings of the word "belief" are not only different, but actually directly opposite (Park, 2010: 5).

The strong connection between these concepts leads to confusion and a consequential interchangeability of these concepts causes a difficulty in defining them.

Wondering why and how this world has become what it is, humankind has always had the desire to overcome the misfortunes that could happen any time in their lives. The desperateness felt against illnesses and the need for cure, the pain that human beings had to endure, and the dangers present or that could manifest within the aura in which the individual lived constitute the basis for the need for superstitions. Superstitious beliefs and rituals have been resorted to since the primitive Pagan days to our day today, which continuously evolves and changes.

As Homo Sapiens' skills in attributing meaning to the series of unknowns that have been happening throughout the history of humankind, and that might happen any time, have been deemed insufficient, superstitions, which can range from creation discourses on mystical powers that cannot be seen or known to the constructs of the daily life, have turned into believable constructs to protect the humankind from the supernatural complexities that could enslave them. They were then practiced as rituals and were normalized so as to be deemed

natural, thus engraving them into the subconscious of the Homo sapiens. Transfer of superstitious faiths and beliefs, like the experiences that individuals accumulate in their lifetimes, to the next generations has made them sustainable through their being accepted without proof or any scientific ground to support them. Acquisition and acceptance of a superstition does not necessitate its being absolute or rational. In addition, experimental replication and observation is not possible for them. It would not be wrong to state that superstitious faiths and beliefs that are termed as fantasies are resorted, in addition to developing rational solutions, to sort out complexities, clarifying mysteries, and overcoming desperateness, in accordance with the needs of humankind. The frequent use of these constructs in daily life over the course of centuries has led to their being turned into rituals and be subjected to a natural selection of their own, by transferring them to the next generations, facilitating their sustainability. Within the chaotic and spiral cycle of life, beliefs that have a prescriptive nature affect the emotional world of the individuals, turning into a factor of power, and increasing people's commitment to and reliance on them. The power factor is supported by feelings of confidence and serenity and has increased in use with behaviors, thoughts and belief image metaphors that impact our lives. Manifestations of superstitious faiths and beliefs in life have thus served as protectors and safe havens for the individual subjected to the tensions created by the uncertainties of the future and the curiosity toward the unknown.

Human beings have always heeded beliefs that they inherited from the past ages, without knowing their roots and where they have come from. Some beliefs even turn into fads, every now and then. Some beliefs which date back to ancient cultures and extinct ways of life, still retain their validity in our day.

These beliefs can be considered an expression of changes from the cradle to the grave, and tensions and anxieties that surround human beings in the journey of life which is rife with uncertainties. Thus, we can also think of these beliefs as loyal friends who reassure us in our mystical lives filled with undecipherable rules. For Christians, beliefs were authentic "Pagan" rituals; for Protestants, beliefs were rosaries; and for Puritans, they were decorating a portion of the house for Christmas with ivy, mistletoe, and laurels (Lorie, 1997: 16).

Superstitions are hope. They represent hopes woven from losses and consolation, a fountain that prevents the joy of life from vanishing and the greatest helper for the continuation of hopes. They are a treasure, laden with symbols that entail all that is human. Accompanying the individual in her journey of life, they increase her strength to resist the hard conditions. They are a semantic ballad that beat out to the dance of the spirits which live and yet struggle to stand. Beliefs are "energy" that connects human beings to life... They are the ways of life of cultures.

In a study on religious life in Turkey, superstitions are termed as "a probable solution to problems that people cannot solve through positive ways." The study, which suggests that superstitions should not be considered a dimension of piety, has used gender, educational background, and age as independent variables. According to its findings, superstitions decrease with increasing educational background. The most common use of superstition is found in the 41-50 age group and women seem to be leading, at least with one percentage point, in resorting to such beliefs and practices (Doğan, 2006: 6).

[“]An indicator, be it an object, a word, or a picture, so long as it has a special meaning for a group of people is neither a thing, nor a meaning; it is both. The indicator is composed of that which indicates, a material object, and its meaning which is the indicated. These are only separated from each other for analytical purposes [“] (Williamson, 2000: 15). We can give meaning to what indicators represent by analyzing and interpreting how and in what way they are expressed. Many images or symbols which do not exist in real life and which are considered to be suppositional can be legitimized by interpreting them within the context of natural culture.

We can define the threats or hopes that cannot be seen but are believed to exist to be unknown; only the time, place, and circumstances in which one would encounter them cannot be guessed. The strong desire to know the unknown, on the other hand, brings these abstract concepts such as fate, death, or evil to concrete indicators and manifests an effort to make them visible.

As Barthes (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Barthes) said, “The reality of the object that is represented according to the rule of the theater is not enough. The meaning should be detached from the reality too: it is not enough to show the old jacket of a canteen lady to the audience to confer the meaning that the jacket is old; indicators of being old have to be invented by the director.” The unknown, similarly, does not threaten us with its existence only. For example, there is evil, but we can only define and ward against it by playing with the indicators of evil that we create (Onat, Yıldırım, 2001: 330).

We can list numerous concepts such as fate, love, goodness, evil, death... etc. as unknown images or concepts. Beliefs, which symbolize the desire to rationalize the unknowingness of the unknown, more so than making the unknown known, are a kind of consciousness woven with unified icons that originate from history.

In any dictionary, superstition is defined as superfluous, incorrect, and void beliefs that are not consistent with reality. Nevertheless, this explanation cannot explain where superstitions that are part of our lives come from. All superstitions, however, rely on an event, a way of thinking, or a reality (Türkoğlu, 2009: 8).

Even if our knowledge increases, emergence of new sources of uncertainties suggest that superstitions would paradoxically continue to exist in human life forever. The individual resorts to numerous methods, rational, logical, scientific, or superstitious to solve a problem that she cannot overcome or thinks she would not be able to overcome in her life or to meet a need of hers, with the goal of making the unknown known. Even if the said problem is not solved, this would protect the individual from the psychological fatigue that her failure would otherwise bring, she would also find consolation in the idea that she did all she could do in accordance with what she knew, could think of, or imagine, and would thus detach herself from a series of regrets, to maintain her inner peace. This situation is a leading element in preserving the structure of an individual's personality and integrity.

As a popular concept, the entry of “superstitions” to psychology has been with B. F. Skinner's work around the middle of the 20th century. In his conditioning experiments that he performed on pigeons, Skinner referred to the behavior of pigeons as if there was a

relationship between their behavior and the appearance of food, although there was none, as “superstitious.” According to Skinner, there are great similarities between this and human behavior. Developing his work on this matter, he elaborated on this issue in his work titled “Science and Human Behavior” and referred to the behavior as “superstitious” if there is a coincidental relationship between the reinforcer and the reaction. Despite some criticism that could surface, he insists that superstitious beliefs and behaviors are reactions that arise from coincidental operant conditionings and are reinforced with similar other coincidences that would later be passed on to next generations through verbal elements (Doğan, 2006: 3).

Skinner’s definition of superstitious belief is structured from sociological and psychological perspectives, and his descriptions are based on observation. The evaluation of superstition from a psychological perspective does not allow a void and irrational perspective. This is an irrational metaphor for someone who has no interest or belief in superstitious beliefs, whereas the irrationality discourse is quite disturbing for those who do have an interest and belief in such phenomena. Human life is enshrouded within the spirals of various mysteries and its structure is complex with multiple unknowns. Even the routine plans of an individual are filled with various unknowns, sudden risks and obstacles, curiosity, fear, need, and desperation. Superstitions serve the need of human beings to know about the distant future and protect one from powers unknown.

THE EVIL EYE AND THE BLUE BEAD AGAINST IT

Table 1a (<http://proje.capital.com.tr/reklamin-gercek-gucu-haberler/16249.aspx?3>.Page Accessed date: 14/1/2011)

How did you decide to use the blue bead element in the advertisements/logo? (How did you come up with the idea?)	<i>"The promise of the advertisement, in fact, was that 'Your hair will be so beautiful, they will always look.' At the end of the advertisement, we just wanted to show how confident we were in our promise. We reinforced our promise by saying 'for God's sake, let nothing happen to your hair to which everyone will admire; wear a blue bead.'"</i>
Did you have a specific target audience in the advertisements where the blue bead symbol is used?	<i>Our target audience was all women who used shampoo. Nevertheless, we specifically focused on young women, because we wanted them to turn putting blue beads on their hair into a fad and we also thought that young women would respond better to the promise that men would turn to look at beautiful hair.</i>
What were the criteria that you based your background and Market research?	<i>The shampoo market was a difficult one at that period in time. Consumers were highly loyal to their brands unless you could provide a new formula and a bold promise for benefit. Elidor was rapidly losing market share to the market leaders. Elidor was not in a position to make any improvements neither to its formula nor its bottles. Nevertheless, it could create difference in the way it communicated with the target audience. All women inherently know their hair is the best accessory. They also know that their hair would draw everybody's attention if their hair is in good shape that day. They feel happy and poised when they feel that their hair is drawing attention.</i>
How did you decide to use the evil eye metaphor (what is the story behind its use?) Did individual inclinations and consumers' beliefs play any role in determining the use of this metaphor?	<i>It came up during a brain storming session in which we were fishing for ideas. Our competitors were using people looking at girls who were flipping their beautiful hair in their advertisements. With a set up, however, we were able to capture this from within life and own the insight that "girls with beautiful hair is looked at." We decided to be natural. As we thought about the examples from real life, 'for God's sake, let nothing happen to your hair' emerged as an idea. We were also looking for a catchy visual metaphor. We thought that blue beads which belong to us and which has become a traditional belief in the society would be the best visual material to support our claim for being real.</i>
How was the decision to use the evil eye metaphor approved for use?	<i>The idea was so fresh and appropriate that it was accepted at once as soon as we presented it to the customer. It was greatly liked. To such an extent that the advertising budget allocated for that year was increased substantially to support the idea with a fully developed campaign.</i>
What was the feedback you received (Sales figures, consumer commentaries, etc.)?	<i>It quickly became a phenomenon. We got great feedback from consumers. Although there was no change whatsoever in the formula or the bottle, market share increased by 8% in six months. Our customer told us that an increase in the order of 1% was all that was possible in a year. We could not technically measure the impact of the blue beads on sales per se, but we started seeing blue beads on young women's hair. As a matter of fact, we frequently used blue beads as promotion material, to that end.</i>

According to Adorno, superstitious beliefs lack seriousness. Unlike serious religious beliefs, they operate on a rationality based on common sense, and do not ask of the believer anything, let alone a heavy requirement like religious faithfulness. Further, they uphold the natural sciences with the highest regard in their recommendations, often explicitly (Adorno, 2009: 24). Adorno classifies superstitious beliefs as secondary to religious beliefs. It is known that Occultism has been in existence throughout the history of the world within the category of secondary superstitious beliefs. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to make the claim that today occultism is being institutionalized and transformed into a post-modern, legitimate ideology, supported by means of mass media within the concepts of modernization and globalization.

Within all of these variations, Homo sapiens' desires to feel secure and make the unknown known, thinking that the routine is positive for her safety. She wishes that her curiosities would be taken care of, her fears alleviated, her mysteries and secrets illuminated, and her desperations eliminated. In this respect, it would not be wrong to state that superstitions come into being in thought, social life, behavior, and culture. From a certain standing point, superstitions are defined and structured as unproven, suspicious propositions regarding the future and life, in general. With respect to respective constructs, the individual resorts to superstitious beliefs that she wants to believe in, and lives subconsciously thinking she is protected and can resist the conditions of life. The individual's beliefs that make her think she is protected subsidize the tensions and fears, serving as a sedative or painkiller, in terms of the human psyche. We should also note that while superstitions provide motivation to make plans for the future, they also calm the individual down and encourage her to be determined and patient.

Although the phenomenon of the evil eye is considered to be superstition by some, it is impossible to deny its reality. Evil eye has a real effect, regardless of whether one considers it a superstition or not.

Supernatural compositions, experienced events –even if they contradict science, and real life cases are undeniable realities. There are so many interesting and mystical situations in the world that scientists cannot solve, even if all of their technical and technological efforts were focused on solving them. Moreover, they are denied, condemned, and are interestingly being tried to be eliminated by ignoring them. Events and cases that science cannot classify, give meaning to, and come up with solutions to, happen every day, at various locations around the world (Hani, 2003: 9).

These events that take place have the same aspects and qualities, even though their different variations are experienced.

The idea that people can be affected by the looks of others has been in existence throughout the history of mankind. The evil eye is one of those superstitions finding a space for itself in almost all cities, being valued, and commonly believed in. It would not be wrong to say that this belief has existed in all societies and cultures. We should point out that it has had its grasp on most cultures that came into being on the surface of the Earth.

Nevertheless, although the belief in the evil eye is not universal, it is very widespread and old. Studies into the power of magic appear in Sumerian documents as early as 3000 BC and sources in Assyrian, Ancient Greek, and Roman documents also refer to this power. The evil eye is referred to numerous times in the Bible and the Talmud and the Aramaic commentaries of the Old Testament have even more references to it. The evil eye appears in Nordic legends, Irish and Scottish myths, and many other European languages (Sheldrake, 2004: 251).

The evil eye belief is widespread in the Muslim world too. Many people believing in the evil eye think that some people have more evil eye than others, but these people may not be aware of this power that they either possess or unknowingly practice. While the power of the gaze changes from person to person, we can say that it is fundamentally dangerous and worthy of attention since it hosts feelings of envy, praise, love, affection, or admiration. Gazes filled with love and admirations are as dangerous as those filled with envy.

The evil eye used to be thought as a way of “fascinating,” a kind of spell cast with the eyes. The Latin word “fascinum” means a magical charm. This original usage still remains in the form of snake charm whereby which snakes can immobilize birds with their gaze. Medusa of the Ancient Greek mythology used to turn people into stone by here mere gaze. The mask of Medusa, which is also known as the head of Gorgon, was under the safeguard of the Goddess Athena and represented her magnificent power (Sheldrake, 2004: 251).

Individuals have developed ways to protect themselves from various troubles and dangers. They believe in the protective power of certain artifacts, such as the blue bead against the evil eye, to protect them from harm, like accidents, illnesses, and death. In short, protective objects that we can refer to as the blue bead, or set of beads, against the evil eye have had similar characteristics and structures in societies that believed in the evil eye from the past to today.

The word used in Turkish to refer to the evil eye, Nazar, is originally an Arabic infinitive based on the “N-Z-R” root. It has such meanings as “looking, seeing, perception of the eye, surveying, glancing, gazing, squinting, compliment, esteem, intention, waiting, thinking, contemplating, considering, paying attention to,…” It changed meaning as it passed onto Turkish, and have been being used in place of “ayn=eye” in Turkish. While nazar means evil eye in Turkish, it is used more along with such verbs as coming, being subjected to, and inflicting, to mean coming to the [evil] eye, being subjected to the [evil] eye, inflicting the [evil] eye (Kuzey, 2007: 4).

“There is an evil eye belief held in public and used colloquially as ‘coming to, being subjected to the evil eye’. It is believed that the person to whom the evil eye targets, or her belongings or property would be harmed in some way. Thus, some precautions are taken to ward off the evil eye” (Türkoğlu, 2009: 49). It would not be wrong to define inflicting the evil eye (laying the evil eye upon somebody or something) as negatively affecting an individual or object by gazing at it with intense feelings of jealousy or envy, with a possible feeling or intent to harm it.

“We all know the sudden spiritual distress that is referred to as “being subjected to the evil eye”

or “being struck by the evil eye” which is not microbial and manifests itself most commonly as a sudden headache. Expressions like “she has been struck by the evil eye” try to convey this distress. Medicine accepts such phenomena too, and explains them as “the rays emitted by human eyes, which are intensified during staring with slight attention and possibly jealousy, that can impact the working mechanism of the atoms of the targeted organism” (Çakan, 2007: 89). One of the most commonly observed superstitions in various cultures remain the evil eye.

“The blue colored beads or other objects that serve the same purpose are called “evil eye beads”. “Evil eye charm” is a more general term used to protect somebody from the evil eye” (Kuzey, 2007: 4). “Being struck by evil eye happens for two reasons: the first is strong enmity; and the other is somebody’s finding another person or object beautiful” (Abdurrahman, 2006: 13). In this case, providing support for the issue of the evil eye from the sciences of psychology and sociology would not be wrong. While it affects the individual psychologically, it is also within the field of interest of sociology since it is a widespread belief across societies.

Those who have been struck or those who do not want to be struck by “the evil eye” wear evil eye charms. Evil eye charms can be put on animals as well as objects of value to individuals, such as a house or a vehicle. Evil eye charms can be in any color, but the preferred color is blue.

According to another perspective and school of thought, the evil eye charm is always blue. If it forms a set with other means of protection such as the eye bead, amulet, black cumin, and a religious praise amulet, this is referred to as an “evil eye set.” Undoubtedly, the blue beads are worn as a precaution against the evil eye. There are other types of protection used alongside it. The most commonly resorted colloquial methods against the evil eye are lead casting, salt sprinkling, burning harmal seed, or having a mullah utter a protective prayer upon the person. Nevertheless, these activities are neither beneficial from the viewpoint of the science of medicine, nor are welcome religiously. Since they continue superstition, such behaviors are condemned by our religion (Kömürcü, 2005: 68).

All cultures include materials aimed at protecting against the unknown and providing security. Scarabs in ancient Egypt or horseshoes in England are examples of such charms. Blue beads have been produced and put on by people in Anatolia for over 3500 years, against the evil eye and to bring good luck and fortune in every aspect of peoples’ lives.

The blue bead is made by shaping the liquid glass through a traditional manufacturing process. This material and the manufacturing process provide the manufactured glass bead to reflect the view of the molten liquid in it. This blue bead’s representing the unknown in this way can be associated with other Superstitions like fortune telling with coffee or casting lead. Nevertheless, the material that is cast here does not represent the evil itself, but rather a stand against it. Instead of a reading of the unknown, the creation of an icon against the evil eye is the issue here. In this respect, the blue bead is a safety precaution, for it serves as a decoy and a shield against the evil that can come from the unknown (Onat, Yıldırım, 2001: 332).

The blue bead has been turned into a symbol by the Homo sapiens, who feel the need to

protect herself from the dangers that can come from anybody, and mystical powers in life. It has been transferred from generation to generation and is still used as an indicator. The blue bead can thus be termed as an indicator, from a visual standing point.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BLUE BEAD, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

The relationship between advertising and superstitious beliefs such as the evil eye is a topic of intense debate. Undoubtedly, the main reason for that is the lack of consensus on the exact definition of the evil eye. Whether different definitions made in different periods of time, according to different perspectives can serve as bases for definitions today is a topic that is open to debate itself.

Human beings are social beings and they live in social environments. The social environment that we refer to impacts the thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs of human beings throughout their lives and can lead them to transformation.

“Advertising [...] is an important factor in the modern market structures, [as] an indispensable element of daily life. According to Marshall McLuhan, advertising is the cave art of the 20th century. Many people learn about new ideas, product, services, or institutions through advertising in our time, carrying what they see and hear in advertisements to their daily lives, and even to their conversations with friends” (Elden, 2009: 136). While advertisements pull us, consumers, into a world which needs more interpretation, they also allow us to uncover the mask of the secret universe of riddles that is composed of codifications of objects as indicators, thereby allowing us to gain awareness.

Table 1b (<http://proje.capital.com.tr/reklamin-gercek-gucu-haberler/16249.aspx?3>. Page Accessed date: 14/1/2011)

Was the interest in the product increased?	<i>Indeed. Market share continuously increased during the three-year long campaign. We almost caught up with the market leader, with whom there was a wide gap of 14% difference in market share before the campaign. With the blue bead campaign, we decreased this gap to 2%.</i>
Was there a verbal communication between the product and the notion of evil eye? Why?	<i>We do not have results of any research to that end. We do not know whether it is used in daily life, however, the jingle of the advertising clip was liked a lot and young people started singing it.</i>
What did you aim by using the blue bead as an element? Did you achieve the goals after the advertising campaign?	<i>We used the blue bead to support the effective power of the promise on individuals. It was the guarantee that everybody would look at your hair. The goal was achieved. Our promise, supported by a local element, convinced people. Demand for the product increased.</i>
Did the blue bead element appear only in the slogan? Did you use the evil eye image in both the slogan and the product?	<i>No, it did not appear in the slogan. Our slogan was "They will always look." Blue beads were used in the advertising clips, our posters, and on shampoo bottles, that is the product packaging and promotion material.</i>
Why did you not include the blue bead in the slogan, whereas you included it in the packaging? The response we got helped clarify the connection between the slogan and the visual material:	<i>The slogan often speaks the promise of the brand. Our promise was that "your hair will look so beautiful with Elidor that everybody will be staring at your hair." It was crystallized as "they will always look." Since the blue bead was a visual icon and spoke to our visual memory, we used it in all visual materials. This response helped us think about and analyze the effectiveness of the construct that the blue beads did not appear in the slogan, whereas it appeared in the packaging.</i>

Institutions that would like to make their brands more enduring combine their brands and religion, using icons that can create associations between them and the brands, to create a synergy for brand perceptions. Institutions that are aware of the importance of the audio, video, and synergy for brand perceptions, and that would like to engage in advertising activities based on mystical, religious, or superstitious beliefs which would lead to emotional connotations through audio and visual combinations, use the blue bead metaphor to grab people from their soft spots. Inadvertently or otherwise, they create feelings of responsibility, duty, and sense of belonging, as well as fear from the brand.

Aside, rituals have a very close connection with our thoughts on purchasing decisions. Products and brands that have connotations with rituals and superstitious beliefs are much closer, compared to products and brand that do not. In a fast-moving world that is devoid of serenity, we all seek stability and familiar things. Product rituals provide us with the delusion of comfort and a sense of belonging. "Rituals help us differentiate brands. The attraction of stability and the sense of familiarity are so strong that most consumers are committed to the brands and products that provide these to an almost religious extent. Purchasing a product is a behavior that has become more of a ritual, than a conscious decision" (Lindstrom, 2009: 100).

The common goal of all major religions across the world is to cater to the emotions of their followers. Brands are as important as symbols are in each religion... The cross, the angel, white

dove... Such symbols have a profound impact on our purchasing decisions. Just like beliefs, symbols serve as an impulse to move out of our daily behaviors and create an opportunity of pleasure, making us feel ourselves special and giving hope to us, consumers. The issue of mysticism too is one of the authentic and important aspects of religion. A mystical and unknown concept is as powerful as a known concept. It arouses a sense of curiosity to discover it. Similarly, a product that is adorned with mystical elements arouses a sense of curiosity in the consumer. Concepts like ritual, superstition, religion impact our decisions to purchase, whether we are aware of their impact or not, and process our thoughts in our minds. Since our beliefs are representative of our thought structures, the weight of our connection to products that entail mystical elements leads us to consume these products. Beliefs have clear visions. Products are imposed with the same vision when mystical elements are used.

It should not be forgotten that the practices performed as sacred elements have a market share of their own. There are "specialist" charm manufacturers for special purposes that pertain to health, wealth, and love.

Those who do not have sufficient and true knowledge about a faith purchase their material which they would put to use in these domains and thus those who are engaged in the trade of this business deliberately exert effort to keep such practices alive. The products that would be purchased are crystallized with meanings, symbols, and life styles.

Tour operators who would like to draw domestic or foreign tourists to the locations that they cater to contribute to keeping these beliefs and practices alive among people by using the supposed aspects of the sacred locations around these localities.

As a matter of fact, the individual fame of the source of these superstitious beliefs and practices are important to keep them alive, since these individuals reinforce the belief in the magical practices. Every superstitious belief has some version of stories in which some people had witnessed miraculous healing powers of individuals who lived at one of these locations.

Individuals who are alienated in the society create a group spirit around a common goal during the practice of a superstitious behavior, thus forgetting their loneliness. The belief system that they create amongst themselves reinforces their feelings of interior serenity and safety, enriching their emotional worlds.

ANALYSES OF SAMPLE ADVERTISEMENTS THAT INCLUDE THE BLUE BEAD METAPHOR

Consumption entails the consumption of ideas, and images on TV and on advertisements. Symbolic meanings influence the consumers when they purchase their clothes, automobiles, disks, pre-recorded video cassettes, and home furnishings. The items that are purchased are not mere objects that would have simple, direct, and utilitarian use, but convey a meaning that allows the consumer to display who she aims to be. Consumption goods are the elements of a method that is constructed by people with their identity feelings and use of the symbols within the boundaries of consumption (Bocock, 2009: 59).

One of the most prominent brands that use the blue bead metaphor in its logo and campaign activities is Elidor. Elidor started an extensive transformation campaign that was new, and yet familiar, in 2001 to strengthen its brand. Elidor's brand that offers solutions to various hair types and needs organized a new advertising campaign with the main slogan of "Your hair will be so beautiful, they will not be able to keep their eyes off," and used the blue bead which has an important place in Turkish culture as a metaphor coded in their advertisements, visuals, and other campaign material.

We will now analyze Elidor's advertisement titled "Your hair will be so beautiful, they will not be able to keep their eyes off" that serves as an example for our study.

Elidor's Advertising Clip:

The Subject of the Advertising Clip: (General plan) a redheaded woman carrying a basket approaches a dark, straight haired woman sitting by the lakeside on a summer day. (High angle) they are lying on the grass, blowing soap bubbles with a toy that they hold in their hands. (Close up) The woman with dark, straight hair is playing with the blue beads that are in the redheaded woman's hair. (High angle) both women are lying on the grass, taking blue beads from a glass jar that is filled with blue beads. (Off-voice) "*Your hair needs not one, but four different vitamins.*" (Close up) Both women are selecting blue beads from the jar. The redheaded woman is putting beads on the black, straight haired woman's hair. (Off voice) "*Provitamin B5 so that your hair strands would not be broken,*" at the same time a woman shows the tips of her hair strands. (Off voice) "*Vitamin PP so that your hair will grow healthily,*" at the same time (Head plan) the woman with wavy, red hair is looking at the black, straight haired woman's hair to which blue beads are attached. "*Vitamin A so that it will shine,*" (High angle) the woman with the straight hair flips her hair. "*Vitamin E so that your hair will be stronger,*" (Close up) a hand holding blue beads is seen. (High angle) blue beads fall onto the hair of the woman lying on the grass with spread hair. (Off voice) "*Presenting the Elidor multivitamin doping, with different essentials for each type of hair*" (Close up) Elidor shampoo bottles are seen. "Beauty for me with an Elidor that is custom-made for my hair," rolling camera shows Elidor bottles having different colors in the frame. Women, looking at the screen over their shoulders and a curtain embroidered with numerous blue beads in the background are seen as the camera backs out. The off voice saying "They will always look" is heard at the end of the advertising clip, in line with the main slogan "Your hair will be so beautiful, they will not be able to keep their eyes off!"

Time of the Clip: Now, in a summer day

Location of the Clip: At the lake side, in a rural environment. A white background that helped highlight the blue beads is used extensively. Colors of the clothes of the actors were chosen from light shades used in summer.

The reason Elidor highlighted blue beads in its advertising campaign is that it aimed to draw attention to blue beads that are thought to protect from the evil eye, which is a widely practiced superstition in the Turkish culture.

“The blue bead” campaign arose from this point. The campaign, in short, suggests that “Those who chose the right type of Elidor for their hair can bring out the beauty specific to their hair. This is such a beauty that it necessitates putting blue beads on one’s hair.”

Elidor’s advertising campaign is one in which the blue bead metaphor and the action of staring are matched with the slogan “Your hair will be so beautiful, they will not be able to keep their eyes off!”, thus making a very effective use of semiotics, the concepts that show and are shown being expressed in the most concrete way possible. See Table 1c.

Table 1c (<http://proje.capital.com.tr/reklamin-gercek-gucu-haberler/16249.aspx?3>. Page Accessed date: 14/1/2011)

As the blue bead indicator was used, can we say that mystical dialectics took place in your marketing strategy? Can we presume that the concept of mystical marketing played a role in your advertising strategies?	<i>Mystical dialectics should be used very carefully in countries like Turkey where there are plenty of taboos, restrictions, and sensitivities toward values. Since blue beads are not considered to be negative by any sections of the society and its use would not invoke the threat of its being perceived as an example of exploiting our spiritual values, and since it is a practice that is still in daily use and not left in memories, we did not see any reason why we should not use it? Nevertheless, we cannot say that this situation is valid for all mystical concepts, or religious or spiritual values. Advertisers, in fact, frequently implement auto-censorship on themselves regarding these matters due to these concerns.</i>
Have you used such objects as blue beads that are perceived to be superstitions in your prior Marketing Strategies?	<i>No. We were using strategies and advertising ideas used abroad. The blue bead campaign was the first local project in a long time.</i>
Comparing other advertising campaigns in which the blue bead indicator was used with your campaign, how would you evaluate the success of your campaign?	<i>There was no other brand that used the blue bead as much as we did. Sausage and yogurt brands used them every now and then, but since they were not able to create this much of awareness since they did not have a strategic approach to support the promise with it.</i>
All major religions in the world have the common main aspect of catering to emotions. Symbols, like they do in religious rituals, constitute the leading element for brands. What do you think about the extent to which such symbols influence the purchasing decisions of consumers?	<i>Symbols that are matched with the right product, not attacking any value, and which are accepted by the majority of the society can be rapidly accepted and can influence the purchasing decision substantially.</i>
Do you subscribe to the view that “rituals, habits that are considered to be as if they were religious beliefs, and behavioral patterns that are sanctified by individuals help sort out brands”?	<i>Absolutely. A very fundamental example for that is the use of Football totems by practically all brands in their communication. The consumer takes action when she sees roles and people who are similar to herself, approve her behavior, and dream like herself.</i>
What kind of a connection do you see between the view that institutions that would like to make their brands endure would bring their brands together with religious rituals, using the necessary icons to connote the related brands and to create a synergy in brand perceptions, thus using mystical elements in their future Marketing Strategies and visions too, and the future of your brand?	<i>The future of the brand has already changed. Now it is communicating the formulas developed by worldwide famous experts. Surely, a major factor in achieving this state is the construction of successful advertising strategies and campaigns in which the blue bead image, which is one of the superstitious metaphors, are used. Of course, executing campaigns that are based on images such as the blue bead would play a significant role in achieving success. Using symbols that include mystical elements in Marketing Strategies to achieve the goals set and bring together the brand and the consumer to create loyal consumer bodies would play an important role to that end.</i>

CONCLUSION

The superstitious metaphors that were analyzed do not only affect the individuals and their futures, but also shape the futures of the Marketing world and its construct as well as the Marketing discipline, itself. It is believed that superstitions which have occupied an important position throughout the history of mankind would continue to exist as long as the humankind does... From the viewpoint of advertisers, creating somatic pointers in the minds of consumers is cost-effective, simple and practical to implement. Since somatic pointers create connotations between two seemingly irreconcilable elements, they leave a deeper mark in our minds and attract our attention. They allow us to perceive and give meaning to the substantive connections between these elements, helping us establish connections.

It is observed that in every passing day, emotional branding is gaining prominence today, as it has done in the past. Today, leading advertisers and global advertising agencies design advertising campaigns which cater to multiple senses through the weaving of original recipes, successfully combining superstitious beliefs with technological elements, thus influencing the masses at higher rates to create brand loyalty. It is impossible to deny the effect of advertisements that fuel up the hunger to purchase. It would be appropriate to state that while mere looks could have been enough to impact purchasing decisions in the past, existence in global markets of today depends on using superstitious elements and metaphors that affect our perceptions and are habitual to our senses in creating sustainability and brand loyalty to ensure the existence and future of brands.

REFERENCES

Abdurrahman, H. (2006). *Nazar ve Sihir*. İstanbul: Pamuk Yayıncılık

<http://kitap.antoloji.com/nazar-ve-sihir-sir-005-kitabi/> VIEW ITEM

Adorno, T. W. translated by Ülner, N. and Tüzel, M. and Gen, E. (2009). *Kültür Endüstrisi, Kültür Yönetimi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları

<http://www.iletisim.com.tr/kitap/k%C3%BClt%C3%BCr-end%C3%BCstrisi-k%C3%BClt%C3%BCr-y%C3%B6netimi-1330.aspx> VIEW ITEM

http://books.google.com/books/about/K%C3%BClt%C3%BCr_end%C3%BCstrisi_k%C3%BClt%C3%BCr_y%C3%B6netimi.html?id=lqdjcgAACAAJ VIEW ITEM

http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:FShQfVMmo28J:www.tanokan.org/2011_01_01_archive.html+K%C3%BClt%C3%BCr+End%C3%BCstrisi+-+K%C3%BClt%C3%BCr+Y%C3%B6netimi.+İstanbul:+%C4%B0leti%C5%9Fim+Yay%C4%B1nlar%C4%B1.&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&source=www.google.com VIEW ITEM

Bocock, R. (2009). *Tüketim*. Çeviren; İrem Kutluk. Ankara: Dost Kitabevi

<http://www.rob389.com/tuketim-robert-bocock/dp/en/11/9789757501053> VIEW ITEM

Candan, A. (2010). *Bid'at ve Batıl İnançlar Ansiklopedisi*. İstanbul: Düşün Yayınları

<http://www.kitapsepeti.com.tr/kitap/bid-at-ve-batil-inanclar-ansiklopedisi-p487767.html> VIEW ITEM

Çakan, İ. L. (2007). *Hurafeler ve Batıl İnanışlar*. İstanbul: Rağbet Yayınları

<http://www.idefix.com/kitap/hurafeler-ve-batil-inanislar-ismail-lutfi-cakan/tanim.asp?sid=DMCIB30M82IQT4Q5E9V8> VIEW ITEM

Doğan, M. (2006). Thesis: Halk Arasında Batıl Olarak Nitelendirilen ve Kutsal Mekanlarda Uygulanan İnanç ve Davranışların Sosyal Psikolojik Açından İncelenmesi. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*.

<http://www.belgeler.com/blg/12q6/halk-arasinda-batil-olarak-nitelendirilen-ve-kutsal-mekanlarda-uygulanan-inanc-ve-davranislarin-sosyal-psikolojik-acidan-incelenmesi-a-study-on-the-believes-and-behaviors-that-are-applied-in-sacred-places-and-qualified-superstitious-among-the-people-in-terms-of-social-psychology> VIEW ITEM

Elden, M. (2009). *Reklam ve Reklamcılık*. İstanbul: Say Yayınları

<http://www.kitapyurdu.com/kitap/default.asp?id=447214> VIEW ITEM

Hani, G. (2003). *Nazar: Her Yönüyle Nazar Tahlihi*. İstanbul: Arı Sanat Yayınevi

<http://www.kitapyurdu.com/kitap/default.asp?id=83885> VIEW ITEM

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Hard_Townes

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_Barthes

<http://proje.capital.com.tr/reklamın-gerçek-gücü-haberler/16249.aspx?3> Page Last accessed 14th January 2011

Kömürcü, D. (2005). *Büyü, Fal, Burç, Muska ve Nazar*. İstanbul: Şamil Yayıncılık

<http://www.nadirkitap.com/buyu-fal-burc-muska-ve-nazar-duran-komurcu-kitap1433827.html> VIEW ITEM

Kuzey, M. (2007). Thesis: Kur'an ve Sünnet'te Nazar. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü*

<http://www.belgeler.com/blg/1a69/kuran-ve-sunnette-nazar-the-evil-eye-in-koran-and-sunna>

Lindstrom, M. (2009). *Buyology*. İstanbul: Optimist Yayınları

<http://www.netkitap.com/kitap-buyology-ciltli-martin-lindstrom-optimist-yayinlari.htm> VIEW ITEM

Lorie, P. (1997). *Batıl İnançlar*. İstanbul: Milliyet Kitapları AD Yayıncılık AŞ

<http://www.tikla24.de/kitap-batil-inanclar-2.html> VIEW ITEM

<http://turkoloji.cu.edu.tr/YENI%20TURK%20DILI/1.php> VIEW ITEM

Onat, E. and Özgencil-Yıldırım, S. (2001). *Göstergebilim Tartışmaları*. İstanbul: Muntilingual Yayınevi

<http://kitap.antoloji.com/gostergebilim-tartismalari-kitabi/> VIEW ITEM

<http://en.eren.com.tr/goster/kitap/kitap.asp?kitap=225091&SID=111239924029> VIEW ITEM

Park, R. L. translated by Pekünlü, E. R. (2010). *Batıl İnanç: Bilim Çağında İtikat*. İstanbul: Kültür Üniversitesi Yayınları

<http://kitap.antoloji.com/batil-inanc-bilim-caginda-itikat-kitabi/> [VIEW ITEM](#)

Sheldrake, R. translated by Düz, O. (2004) *Biri Beni Gözetliyor*. İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları

<http://www.idefix.com/kitap/biri-beni-gozetliyor-rupert-sheldrake/tanim.asp?sid=XIX3UQZ20B2G0OFOWDJ6> [VIEW ITEM](#)

Skinner, B.F. (1953). *Science and Human Behaviour*. New York: Macmillan

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B._F._Skinner [VIEW ITEM](#)

<http://www.bfskinner.org/BFSkinner/Home.html> [VIEW ITEM](#)

Türkoğlu, B. (2009). *Batıl İnançlar: Adet ve İnanışlar*. İstanbul: Astral Yayınları

<http://www.idefix.com/kitap/batil-inanclar-berrin-turkoglu/tanim.asp?sid=CEMMFJUYP2H48KGHWIO0> [VIEW ITEM](#)

Williamson, J. translated by Fethi, A. (2000). *Reklamların Dili, Reklamlarda Anlam ve İdeoloji*. Ankara: Ütopya Yayınları

<http://www.kitapyurdu.com/kitap/default.asp?id=46300> [VIEW ITEM](#)