

# A hen who doesn't lay golden eggs?! Fairy tale advertisements and their strategies<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** Fairy tales, as well as advertisements, draw on human desires and focus on the ways to fulfill them. Fairy tale advertisement is a genre that uses either the plot or motifs from known fairy tales to affect the behaviour and attitudes of the audience.

In this article, advertisements that are derived from or related in other ways to fairy tales were analysed. The material for the study, taken from the Estonian advertisement competition Golden Egg and covering the years 1998–2012, consists of single advertisements and ad campaigns that make use of fairy tale motifs. All the ads were nominated by different advertisement companies; this indicates that that using fairy tales in ads is a viable strategy for attracting the potential consumer.

The analysed ads use fairy tale motifs either from a positive (i.e. affirmative of the original motif / plot) or a negative perspective (i.e. a more subversive attitude that includes an ironical stance towards the fairy tale). Out of different ad formats, TV-advertisements follow a similar structure: the initial plot of the fairy tale is changed by a caption that designates a turn in the story, and in the final frames, the product is presented. All the analysed ads use widely known plots / motifs which makes them accessible for different audiences and cultures. This strategy was also applied in the video clips advertising Estonia at the Eurovision song contest (2002).

**Keywords:** advertisements, Eurovision, fairy-tale, ideology, legends, opposition

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## Introduction

Fairy tale is a genre that has throughout centuries offered an escape from everyday routine. Also advertisements, ontologically similar to fairy tales, can fill the same function – they create a picture of something desirable, and also provide the information about how to attain it. In the renowned classic study “Magic for Sale” by Linda Dégh and Andrew Vazsonyi (1979), the authors stress that although the media change and transform, human longing for magic can be seen as eternal. Moreover, the way that fairy tales present the world – *Weltanschauung* of the fairy tales – displays parallel traits to the features of advertisements which resemble, as Dégh and Vazsonyi have stated, “Märchen in ideology, application of paraphernalia, and even in structure” (1979: 49–50).

Folklore in the media is meant to be a “psychological magic wand” (Zipes 1987 [1979]: 120). Patrica Anne Odber de Baubeta, in her article “Fairy tale motifs in advertising” (1997), states that fairy tale advertisements exhibit a feel-good factor, and that also fairy tales themselves are “amusing, attractive and accessible”; fairy tale characters are usually simple people with whom the audience can easily identify themselves (Odber de Baubeta 1997: 37, 44). Besides, both genres are mediators of a desirable world.

Nevertheless, there is an essential difference between fairy tales and ads: fairy tales try to change attitudes covertly, whereas advertisements advise the audience openly about what should be done and what should not.

In my previous studies, I have analysed the use of traditional fairy tales in jokes, providing the term “fairy tale jokes” to designate the emergent genre (Järv 2008; 2012). These studies have shown that fairy tale protagonists are easily adapted as joke characters, although as the result of this, the set of meaning fields usually changes and is no longer entirely compatible with the fairy tale. Fairy tale jokes should convey the message relying on known motifs – then the audience will be able to grasp the meaning at once, without any further explanations. The same applies to advertisements that have to be short and convincing, and refer to a well-known source material.

## Prologue: Eurovision clips advertising Estonia

Advertisements based on folklore can be used in a national public relations campaign. Analysing Slovenian material, Simona Klaus (2010) describes a number of such instances. While organising the 2002 Eurovision song contest, Estonia opted for introducing the country in the form of “fairy tale postcards”: short advertisement clips in between the songs. Short video clips shown before

each new performance featured known fairy tales which had been given a new twist. The aim was to reach the foreign television viewers by using a common layer of European folk tales, spiced up with typically Estonian humour and self-directed irony (Modern fairytale 2002). For example, the widely known fairy tale “Hansel and Gretel” (in the international Aarne-Thompson-Uther tale type index, type ATU 327A) was used for a clip carrying the slogan “Countless Internet connections”, depicting the two children who, caught by the witch, send home an e-mail, using the Wi-Fi connection in the old witch’s hut. Another fairy tale used in these advertisements, “Snow White” (ATU 709), sparked off the slogan “So many beautiful women”. In that clip, the stepmother discovers that there are so many beautiful women in Estonia that she will need to send a number of boxes, filled with apples, to eliminate them. The clip “Three Little Pigs” (ATU 124) presents a twisted version of the Estonian sauna culture: a man disguised as a wolf enters a moving sauna bus where the protagonists, three men (or actually “pigs”) throw water on the stove. The pigs play a practical joke on the wolf and he is left outside the bus stark naked, whereas the sauna bus drives off with the pranksters. The ad ends with the English language slogan “Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia” and this is followed by a phrase only understandable to native speakers, stating “Hot Estonian guys” (*Kuumad eesti mehed*), comprising a fair amount of self-irony (as the saying “Hot Estonian guys” refers to the stereotypical slowness of the Estonians as seen through the eyes of the neighbours, see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** In the Eurovision clip “Three little pigs”, Estonian sauna culture was presented with a self-ironical slogan “Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia” (in English) / “Hot Estonian guys” (in Estonian) (Modern fairytale 2002).

All together 24 video clips with 24 different slogans were created on the basis of different fairy tales, among them motifs from contemporary literary ones (e.g. Hans Christian Andersen's literary fairy tales "The Ugly Duckling", "Thumbelina" and "The Little Mermaid", Carlo Collodi's "Pinocchio", and Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein").<sup>2</sup>

In this way, Estonia was "cleverly mixing myth and nation with cultural tourism" (Bohlman 2004: 4), as Estonian culture, lifestyle, nature, and technical innovation was introduced not through the usual genres (e.g. documentary clips) but through advertisements that drew on a well-known layer of culture. So advertisements addressed at the foreign audience gained an ideological layer. The fairy tale ads promoted national culture and identity, which have been central features of the Eurovision song contest (see e.g. Bolin 2006: 200–202).

Wolfgang and Barbara Mieder have maintained that different genres of folklore (fairy tales, legends, folksongs, tall tales, riddles, and proverbs the advertisements) have a familiar ring that lures the audience and have "withstood the test of time" (Mieder & Mieder 1977: 310). The same aspect makes the message come across as more attractive for the audience when fairy tales

<sup>2</sup> Clips are available also on the webpage <http://www.youtube.com/user/Eurovision2002>; last accessed on 17 May, 2013. The clips and their English slogans used for introducing Estonia at the Eurovision song contest (here supplied with the ATU tale type numbers / authors' names) were the following:

1. Aladdin [ATU 561] – Anything can happen in Estonian clubs...
2. The Ugly Duckling [Andersen] – Young Estonians flying high
3. The Three Bears [Southey] – No parking spaces... theatres everywhere
4. Hansel and Gretel [ATU 327A] – Countless Internet connections
5. Frankenstein [Shelley] – Tartu University – one of the oldest in Europe
6. The Three Brothers [e.g. ATU 530, 545A *et al.*] – Nation of Champions
7. The Goldfish [ATU 555] – Freedom
8. The Frog Prince [ATU 440] – 10 000 years of untouched nature
9. The Missing Princess [ATU 306] – Fall in love with Estonian folk-dance
10. Thumbelina [Andersen] – Famous Estonian conductors
11. Cinderella [ATU 510A] – Young Estonian fashion
12. The Magic Carpet [ATU 653A] – Everything at the press of a button
13. The Three Little Pigs [ATU 124] – Sauna – extreme heat from Estonia
14. The Little Mermaid [Andersen] – "In every port of the world you can find an Estonian sailor." – Ernst Hemingway (see also Kalmre 2013, this volume, for additional thoughts on the quote)
15. Sleeping Beauty [ATU 410] – Old Town... new experiences
16. Bluebeard [ATU 312] – Football... beer... castles
17. Princess Who Would Not Smile [ATU 572\*] – Estonia – it's a small world
18. Pinocchio [Collodi] – Living Estonian handicraft
19. Ali Baba & the 40 Thieves [ATU 954] – Forest – Estonian treasure
20. Beauty & the Beast [ATU 425C] – Beaches of golden sand
21. The Pied Piper [ATU 570\*] – Endless Estonian hospitality
22. Snow White [ATU 709] – So many beautiful women
23. Little Red Riding Hood [ATU 333] – Homemade bread for meat eaters
24. Puss in Boots [ATU 545B] – White nights... shooting stars

are used in ads, although in order to be even more successful, the traditional plot of the fairy tale should include a new twist (e.g. Wi-Fi connection in the witch's house). The interplay of tradition and innovation is essential, as Mieder & Mieder (*ibid.*) have also stated. So the best source material for advertisements would be proverbs due to their short form and simplicity. This ensures that the message is brought to the audience in the shortest and clearest form possible.

## **Overview of the material: The Golden Egg advertisement competition**

In the present article, Estonian advertisements that are derived from or related in other ways to fairy tales will be analysed. The material for the study, taken from the advertisement competition Golden Egg and covering the years 1998–2012, consists of clips that make use of fairy tale motifs. The competition has been held from 1998 (see for example McKenzie 2012: 190). The material is archived online at <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv> and includes the prize-winning ads until 2002 and all the nominated ads from 2003 on. The competition is open to all advertisement companies in Estonia, the company that nominates an advertisement must pay a fee for every ad or campaign, which seems to ensure that only those that are considered worthwhile will be nominated. Only ads produced in Estonia by Estonian authors / advertisement companies are eligible for the competition. Best ads are nominated in different subcategories. Thus, the website comprises those advertisements (all in all 5152 by the end of 2012) that are valued highly by the advertisement agencies which created and nominated them.

For the study, I searched the Golden Egg competition database with the search words relating to well-known Estonian fairy tale characters and some other meta-level cue words connected with the genre. The same method of data collection was used in my previous study on fairy tale jokes – that study was based on the material retrieved from a joke database (see Järv 2008: 118–119). Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta bases her research of Portuguese folktales, Grimm and Perrault collections translations, and literary tales on a restricted number of vocabulary items, i.e. recurring single words or phrases (Odber de Baubeta 1997: 46–47). These can be called markers and they fall into eleven subcategories: time, space, action and movement, human and animal actors, distinguishing characters, change of circumstances, psychological climate, objects, magic, and rewards. In my study, I concentrated on one of these, the category of “human and animal actors”.

Although this method does not enable researchers to include plots that do not mention fairy tales directly but only allude to them, the ads where fairy tale motifs prevail can be identified with relative ease. This is not comparable to extensive content analyses that delve into vast amounts of material, as has been at times carried through by Estonian folklorists (e.g. in ethnic humour, Laineste 2005: 24–25; Krikmann 2004; 2009). By searching the Golden Egg database by a list of characters taken from best-known fairy tales gives a suitable corpus, as advertisements tend to use fairy tales that are generally known. It has been stated that people today are familiar with less than twenty fairy tale plots, i.e. the “core material”, which has been published time and again throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see e.g. Dégh 1989: 54).

The search resulted in a total number of 12 different fairy tale advertisements or ad series was made. This brought together motifs or topics that in most cases were represented in more than one advertisement, as well as different advertisement formats like billboards, TV-ads, even fairy tale books. It is worth mentioning that all the 12 ads were introduced by different advertisement companies. This indicates that many companies have turned to fairy tales for inspiration and considered them valuable source material for ads.

The title of the Estonian advertisement competition, Golden Egg (from here on referred to as GE)<sup>3</sup>, fits well with the whole concept of using fairy tales. The image of the golden egg resembles the tale about a hen who laid quite peculiar eggs: those made of solid gold (fairy tale type ATU 219E\*\*, “The Hen that Laid the Golden Eggs”). Similarly, Estonian tale tradition has been influenced by another version of the story, entitled “Golden egg”, written down by the Estonian writer Juhan Kunder (see for example Kunder 2007 [1885]: 34.html). In this, he uses the motif known from the fairy tale ATU 312, “Maiden-Killer” (“Bluebeard”), where a man, alluring the girls, initially assumes the shape of a golden egg.

In the material used for this study, one advertisement has used the image of the golden egg itself<sup>4</sup>. The investment company Admiral Markets began their TV ad (advertising their trading accounts) with an image of a goldfish in an aquarium, moving the focus on a young man enjoying his coffee, and then following him as he walks up to a hen laying golden eggs. The voice behind the

<sup>3</sup> In the present article, the following structure is used when referring to the advertisements in the GE database (all the ads included in the dataset of this study were last accessed on 24 May 2013): the English title of the ad (and the name of the ad in the GE database) – the name of an advertisement company who nominated the ad – address of the index web page linked to that particular ad (the year of the advertisement is at the end of the reference). The names of the copywriters and others involved in creating the ads are also listed in the database.

<sup>4</sup> “Golden Egg” (“Kuldmuna”) – Imagine – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=594&year=2012>.





**Figure 2.** *The probability of gaining profit from an hen laying golden eggs is 0,0001% (Imagine).*

camera tells the viewer that the probability of gaining profit with the hen is 0,0001 per cent, whereas while trading with the investment company account, the chances are much higher; as high as 100%. The recipient is influenced by the reference to “exact” numerical data. Fairy tales mainly use formulaic numbers (see e.g. Jason 1977: 93–99). It is worth mentioning that in the web ad of the same campaign<sup>5</sup>, the story is constructed as an online game where the player can catch the golden eggs. There the chances to gain profit with the hen are reduced to 0,00000001% – the number was actually visually shorter in the TV ad, but it can generally be longer in visual media (see Figure 2).

## Advertisements that build on fairy tales

Advertisements, by their nature, are designed to be believable. In their discussion about advertisements and fairy tales, Dégh and Vazsonyi also address the issue of fictionality: fairy tale is pure fiction, which cannot be believed by definition as it is unfit for the conveyance of belief (Dégh & Vazsonyi 1979: 49). They thus conclude that fairy tale ads are similar to legends rather than fairy tales, although we may not recognise their presence in the ads (*ibid.*: 66–67). Dégh and Vazsonyi differentiate between *Märchen*-stimulating tale-like parts and the legend-like parts and find that *Märchen*-like parts tend to be rational, whereas legend-like parts are irrational; the former carry an overt message,

<sup>5</sup> “The game of the golden egg” (“Kuldmunamäng”) – Imagine – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=604&year=2012>.

and the latter a covert one (*ibid.*: 67–68), the aim of which is to influence the largely adult audience to consume the advertised product.

Fairy tales depict a way of thinking that implies a certain worryless state of mind – solutions come to the heroes generally regardless of their own efforts. The main character does of course worry and may often be baffled and unable to act at difficult moments, but the solution will usually appear in front of him. This is delivered by a magic adviser and is consistent with the principles of a fairy tale. Odber de Baubeta (1997: 45) describes strategies of advertisements which tend to imply that the advertised products make life better – they persuade the consumer to buy something that will change his life.

An extensive fairy-tale inspired campaign was that of the telecommunication company Elisa, presented in 2011, entitled “Elisa fairy tale” (“Elisa muinasjutt”)⁶. Different characters that bring to mind various fairy tales act in the ad campaign.

Researchers have noted the multiplicity of character roles and fairy tale plot elements (Proppian functions) and motifs in ads (e.g. Dégh & Vazsonyi 1979: 54–55; Mick 1987) when talking about the structure of advertisements. Fairy tale advertisements in our material (those in video format) share a similar structure – a fairy tale -like situation is disrupted by a slogan / punch line, and then the product advertisement follows in a new setting. This is particularly visible in Elisa advertising campaign. All the ads from this campaign share a basic structure:

- Their characters emerge from an opened fairy tale book;
- The ads in the campaign use typical fairy tale characters – king, merchant, prince, princess, knight, queen, fisherman and his wife (who own a wish-fulfilling goldfish) – all of which allow the audience to identify with the target group of the ads, depending on their position in the society;
- All characters are equipped with a relatively positive adjective (respectively: the Smart King, Clever Merchant, Valedictorian Prince, Chattering Princess, Busy Knight, Parsimonious Queen, Wise Old Woman and Quick-witted Old Man). The only character carrying a slightly negative connotation is the Chattering Princess, although with regard to the company who ordered the ad (the telecommunication company) this may be turned into a virtue instead;
- The ads use the typical opening formula “Once upon a time...” (“*Elas kord...*”);
- The first sentences of the ads, tied to the opening formula, are descriptive and typical of fairy tales. The second sentence usually connects the introductory part with some activity which is essential to a telecommunication

⁶ “Elisa fairy tale” (“Elisa muinasjutt”) – Brilliant Marketing Communications OÜ – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=1078&year=2011>.



company – the Smart King gets help from his smart phone, the Chattering Princess understands the significance of low-cost calls, etc.;

- The ads use the prevailing Estonian ending formula “If they are not dead, ...” (“*Kui nad surnud pole, ...*”) is replaced with character-specific additions (e.g. “If she is not jogging...” (Princess), “If he’s not at a meeting” (Merchant), “If he’s not sleeping” (Knight); the second half of the sentence continues to promote the advertised assets of the company (“...he/she is still talking”);
- The ads end with a suggestion to visit an office of the advertised telecommunication company / to join the telecommunication company.

In addition to TV ads, Elisa campaign goods were advertised in print ads by using phrases like “Good price like in a fairy tale”, “Christmas offers like in a fairy tale” (i.e. fabulous price). The form of this ad campaign (including formulaic messages like “If he hasn’t switched off his mobile phone, it still continues to help him”) targeted at a wide audience.

In 2011, another campaign based on fairy tale motifs was launched when the biggest meat processor in Estonia, Rakvere meat factory, used the slogan “Rakvere Christmas Fairy Tale” (“Rakvere Jõulumuinasjutt”)<sup>7</sup>. The consumers got a calendar / fairy tale book when they bought Rakvere meat products. The book told a story that continued through the twelve months. Its main character was a piggy who by the end grew into a Brave Estonian Pig (*Vapper Eesti Siga*). The text is put together as a collage from different fairy tales known in Estonia – the pig meets seven dwarfs, kills a dragon, uses a long braid of hair to climb to the castle of the Evil Queen to save the Beautiful Sow (*Imekaunis Emis*). The campaign also included a video borrowing fairy tale motifs, entitled “Happy ending” (“Õnnelik lõpp”), where the porcine couple are kissing and in the background there is a castle, a galloping unicorn, and a fully lighted Christmas tree (see Figure 3). For example, fairy tale movies are often related to Christmas time and to the positive values the season and holidays imply. The campaign was also ironical, in that it chose the pig to be the main protagonist of the happily ending story, although pork is regarded as a part of the traditional Estonian Christmas dinner. Nevertheless, the ad never mentions the word “meat”, and the advertised goods are called “winter products” instead<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> “Rakvere Christmas Fairy Tale” (“Rakvere Jõulumuinasjutt”) – Kontuur LB OÜ – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=1628&year=2011>.

<sup>8</sup> In a previous Rakvere Meat Factory ad from year 2007, a pig receives Christmas presents in its pigsty. It opens all the presents (different electronical gadgets etc) and is most pleased with the potatoes. After this, a picture of meat products follows, but these two parts (the pig in its pigsty and the products) were visually clearly delineated. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLgae6QNw4>; last accessed on 17 May 2013.



**Figure 3.** A frame from the ad “Happy ending” (Kontuur LB OÜ), where the amorous porcine couple is set to the background of a castle.

Another telecommunication company, Tele2, based its billboard ad on the following principle: if three friends become Tele2 clients, the person gets a mobile phone (not any phone, but a fabulous one, as the ad promises) for free<sup>9</sup>. In one of these ads, the wolf is carrying the three little pigs to a better future (to become the clients of this telecommunication company; see Figure 4); the name of the company is visible on a stylised signboard. On another billboard ad, a girl (probably Goldilocks) is pushing the three bears out from the bed with the same intent. A third version of the advertisement shows characters taken from a novel by Alexandre Dumas, not from fairy tales – three of the four musketeers are sitting on donkeys and the fourth shoves them to join the advertised telecommunication company. The musketeers were chosen to complement the advertisement campaign probably because the reference to fairy tales functions here as a metaphor for something miraculous, besides number three is foregrounded in the tale, which is a common feature to a number of fairy tale ads.

One more extension built on a known fairy tale is the advertisement of Farmi dairy products: a TV ad that uses the fairy tale “Sleeping Beauty” (ATU 410)<sup>10</sup>. The advertisement is an animation dubbed by an actor. Sleeping beauty, whose fate has been decided by a curse which states that she would prick her finger with a spindle and fall asleep for a hundred years, does find the tower and the spinning wheel, but nothing happens when she pricks her finger, because she

<sup>9</sup> “Tele 2 series” (“Tele2 seeria”) – Newton Marketing OÜ – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=1636&year=2011>.

<sup>10</sup> “Sleeping beauty” (“Okasroosike”) – TBWA\ Estonia – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=386&year=2008>.



**Figure 4.** The wolf is pushing three little pigs towards a better future<sup>11</sup> (Newton Marketing OÜ).

has always liked the yoghurt that the ad is advertising, and this makes her strong and healthy. The ad ends with the slogan: “Farmi – good like a fairy tale” (*“Farmi – muinasjutuliselt hea”*).

Some of the fairy tales in the material are entirely new inventions, and in some cases they may be presented as independent products. A company manufacturing food products, Kraft Foods, created the ad “Barni fairy tale book” (*“Barni muinasjuturaamat”*), that presented an actual book entitled “Barni and the secret of the chocolate river” (*“Barni ja šokolaadijõe saladus”*), where the chocolate bear Barni is involved in adventures, being accompanied with other characters like jam frogs, Choco-monkey, etc<sup>12</sup>. The book was nominated for the GE competition as an advertisement product. It exists as a 38-page publication (Kuningas 2009), complete with its own ISBN code, and has been translated into Latvian and Russian. The book was given to those customers who collected stickers from campaign products<sup>13</sup>. It is important to note that whereas other ads in analysed material were meant for grown-ups, abovementioned yoghurt and chocolate bear ads were evidently directed at children.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, the Polish version of the story of Three Little Pigs is called *Trzy Małe Świniki*, where conventionally the feminine grammatical gender of the Polish word *świnia* (‘pig’) is used (or more precisely the diminutive *świnika*), which indicates the feminine gender of the pig characters in the Polish tale [editors’ remark].

<sup>12</sup> “Barni fairy tale book” (*“Barni muinasjuturaamat”*) – IDEA AD AS – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=740&year=2010>.

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_detailpage&v=1gGIC7nBU7g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=1gGIC7nBU7g) (in Estonian), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDkicnOwSWg> (in Latvian); <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHhTCuCYoTA> (in Russian); last accessed on 17 May 2013.

## Advertisements that oppose to fairy tales

The majority of the 12 ads in our dataset were based on an opposition between fairy tale world and reality. In a number of ads using fairy tale motifs, a deliberate opposition is felt: this underlines the statement that life is not like a fairy tale and fairy tale objects do not function in real life, although life can be made better with the help of the advertised objects. Sleepwell, a company manufacturing mattresses, used an idyllic situation in its cross-Baltic campaign entitled “Sleepwell fairy tales” (“Sleepwelli muinasjutud”). In this campaign, the wolf has taken the role and position of the mother goat and reads aloud to the seven kids. The latter cavort around; one of them has peacefully fallen asleep (see Figure 5)<sup>14</sup>. The grandfather clock known from the fairy tale “The Wolf and the Kids” (ATU 123) stands empty in a visible place behind the sleeping kid who does not have to flee from the wolf. For those less familiar with the fairy tale, the situation is explained below the picture – the dreams that one sees while sleeping on the mattress are “even more wonderful than a fairy tale – goodness rules the world and the wolf is not evil”. The ad cleverly combines the situation of telling/reading a fairy tale (while the addressee of the fairy tale is on the verge between being awake and sleeping), as well as depicts the wolf not as a dangerous and evil character, but occupying a grandfatherly position instead, complete with reading glasses and home slippers. The ad campaign was recognised also in the GE competition, where it received a Silver Egg award for its printed ads and Bronze Egg for the illustrations.

In another ad from the same campaign, the wolf is drinking tea or coffee with the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood. The peaceful co-existence of the usually antagonist characters is reinforced by the image of the cat with a happy bird sitting on its head. Contrary to the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” (ATU 333), the girl with the red hat is swinging merrily on a swing, instead of being eaten by the wolf. As in the ad featuring the wolf and seven kids, an explanation is provided for the audience below the picture. The grandmother has put a bag by her chair, which implies that she has just safely received her wine and cake, unlike in the fairy tale plot.

The campaign also featured a third ad where the wolf and seven kids are flowing around in a dreamlike world, or, alternatively, resting on pillows, to reinforce the message (the value of the mattresses) to those who had already seen the other three ads from the campaign.

The use of oppositions is frequent in folk tales and this seems to be the case in ads as well. Furthermore, advertisements appear to stress the oppositions

<sup>14</sup> “Sleepwell fairy tales” (“Sleepwelli muinasjutud”) – Angels – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=367&year=2012>.

**Figure 5.** *The wolf reads aloud to the seven kids, which stands in opposition to the original fairy (Angels).*

on another level – the characters who were in opposition in the fairy tale plot may now become best friends, and it is evident then that the original value judgements, including those regarding fairy tales themselves, are no longer valid.

Building up the ad as an opposition to a known fairy tale is also used in the ad campaign of the security company Falck. The slogan illustrates perfectly the idea of opposition, stating literally that “Life is not a fairy tale” (*“Elu pole muinasjutt”*)<sup>15</sup>. The plot relies on the widely known literary fairy tale “Goldilocks and the Three Bears”, where the story is usually presented from the point of view of the main character, the girl. In the ad campaign, however, the viewpoint of the three bears is used instead – it displays images of the house of the three bears with the traces of a visit from a group of some obviously more brutal guests than Goldilocks. The three separate print ads use the quotes from the fairy tale, namely “Who has been eating from my bowl?” (accompanied by a picture of a broken bowl), “Who has been sitting on my chair?” (and a picture of a vandalised chair, see Figure 6) and “Who has been lying on my bed?” (and a picture of a brutally dishevelled bed with a muddy footprint on the sheets). In addition to typical elements of the fairy tale, the ads introduce photos of a variety of documents in the background – e.g. a copy from a passport, an ad of an insurance company, etc. The general tonality of the pictures is dingy. This should prepare the audience for the thought that nothing can be taken for granted and in order to be fully protected in one’s home, security service is needed against potential intruders.



<sup>15</sup> “Life is not a fairy tale” (*“Elu pole muinasjutt”*) – Indigo Bates / Red Cell – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=39&year=2004>.





**Figure 6.** In the ad of a security company, a widely known motif from a fairy tale “Goldilocks and three bears” is used, e.g. “Who has been sitting on my chair?” (Indigo Bates / Red Cell).

An interesting parallel is that in the original version of the story by Robert Southey, dating from 1837, the intruder is a “little old woman”. The story stresses her not so polite behaviour in the following way:

*She could not have been a good, honest old Woman; for first she looked in at the window, and then she peeped in at the key-hole; and seeing nobody in the house, she lifted the latch. The door was not fastened, because the Bears were good Bears, who did nobody any harm, and never suspected that anybody would harm them. [...] But she was an impudent, bad old Woman, and set about helping herself. So first she tasted the porridge of the Great, Huge Bear, and that was too hot for her; and she said a bad word about that... (Southey 1848: 328).*

We can assume that the creators of this ad campaign have, although probably unintentionally, brought into daylight the original layer of the tale, where an unpleasant guest (as seen from the point of view of the bears) vandalises the house. Following up on that thought, we can say that although the ad has been built on the opposition of fairy tale truth versus real life, fairy tales have some truth in them: an intruder has indeed broken into the house. The original story ends with the disappearance of the unwanted guest:



*Out the little old Woman jumped; and whether she broke her neck in the fall, or ran into the wood and was lost there, or found her way out of the wood and was taken up by the constable and sent to the House of Correction for a vagrant as she was, I cannot tell. But the Three Bears never saw any thing more of her* (Southey 1848: 329).

There are more similar examples of how ads turn the fairy tale world upside down. A social ad campaign ordered by Estonian Health Insurance Fund to advocate the harmfulness of alcohol (“Little Red Riding Hood”) portrays Little Red Riding Hood as an opposite of the fairy tale character<sup>16</sup>. The campaign presents all the known motifs of the fairy tale from a slightly tilted angle – grandmother has a stuffed wolf by her bedside, and while she bends to look into the basket that Little Red Riding Hood has brought her, her grandchild sprawls in the rocking chair. The grandmother continues to ask questions from her (instead of the usual process that goes the other way round), similar to the ones known from the fairy tale “Little Red Riding Hood” (ATU 333), but alluding to the fact that her granddaughter is not feeling well: “Why is your face red today?”, “Why are your eyes so foggy today?”, ending with the question that comes after grandmother has taken an inventory of the basket: “Where is the wine? Again?”. Little Red Riding Hood is only capable to snivel as she is so drunk (see Figure 7). The unattractive face of Little Red Riding Hood is followed by a pictogram of a sad face and a slogan: “Drinking makes women unattractive”. This in turn is replaced by a smiley and the slogan: “Say “No!” to alcohol”.

We have to keep in mind here that the main purpose of the story of Little Red Riding Hood has always been to warn the listeners (see e.g. Holbek 1997: 236–237, 311–314), and so the main tonality of the ad campaign agrees with the initial aim. However, here the danger is not placed outside the person but is present within her, i.e. the evil is not in our environment, embodied in the character of the wolf, but depends on our own desires and corruptedness.



**Figure 7.** Social anti-alcohol ad campaign asks Little Red Riding Hood “Where is the wine?”; she only snivels in response (Zavod BBDO).

<sup>16</sup> “Little Red Riding Hood” (“Punamütsike”) – Zavod BBDO – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=3320&year=2008>.

Another social ad included in this study was also based on an opposition to fairy tales. It is noteworthy that ads that use the positive image of fairy tales deal mostly with the subject of food and communication, whereas the negative topics relate to social environment, e.g. the security of homes and vehicles. The anti-drugs campaign paid by the National Institute for Health Development<sup>17</sup> from the year 2008, entitled “Fairy tale” (“Muinasjutt”), uses a fairy tale-like framing: a thick book with a pink cover opens in front of the viewer and a page filled with calligraphic handwriting appears, whereas the voice behind the screen starts the story with: “Once upon a time...”. The voice recounts a story about a girl who takes drugs before going to a party, “just for fun”. On the next pages of the fairy tale book, the viewer sees pictures of the girl who finds herself “in some doghole, blacked out, half naked and molested”. A moral follows: “Yes, this is how fast drug fairy tales end!”. In this ad campaign, fairy tales are used as a negatively loaded fiction.

Presenting the fairy tale world as untrue does not always mean opposing it. The Estonian Fish Farmer’s Association campaign “Fish does good” is a nice example of that. The main morale of the fairy tale ATU 555 (“The Fisherman and His Wife”) is that one should not wish for too much and that three wishes is the usual number that the fish grants; this is a recurring motive also in present-day fairy tale jokes. In the television commercial, the man catches a gold fish and asks it to fulfil three wishes (cf ATU 555). The fish asks to be eaten, and says that this will fulfill all the wishes.<sup>18</sup> The print ads from the same



**Figure 8.** Turning the fairy tale upside down: The fish asks to be eaten instead of being asked for three wishes (DDB Eesti AS).

<sup>17</sup> “Fairy tale” (“Muinasjutt”) – Division – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=1746&year=2008>.

<sup>18</sup> “Fish does good TV” (“Kala teeb Head Tele”) – DDB Eesti AS – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=201&year=2007&type=ad>.

campaign carry a slogan “Each fish fulfils three wishes” (*“Iga kala täidab kolm soovi”*): eating fish will make one beautiful, strong, and smart, so one should eat fish (see Figure 8). Similar to the meat factory ad, the main protagonist of the ad is asking the people to eat it up. The suggestion to eat fish in order to be granted three wishes may sound strange from a realistic point of view, but it works well in the case of advertisements.

Whereas the previous examples in our dataset were constructed as an opposition to fairy tale, “Fish does good” uses a fairy tale and introduces an unexpected twist primarily for humorous purposes and for catching attention. This is similar to fairy tale jokes that refer to fairy tale plots quite frequently and apply the technique of opposition. For example, a fairy tale joke may be constructed so that the innocent Little Red Riding Hood is presented as a dangerous vamp or a carnal creature, or that her grandmother has a big mouth for similar reasons (see Jones 1984: 112–113 about Little Red Riding Hood jokes; Järv 2008). The aims of these two genres – fairy tale jokes and ads – are different: in the case of ads, the use of fairy tale motifs is not to cause amusement but to stress the necessity of a certain product or a frame of mind in an opposition to the ideal world of fairy tales. Nevertheless, a certain amount of parody is inevitable in using the fairy tale plots.

The tale of “Three little pigs” which forms the basis for an advertisement in the 2008 GE competition<sup>19</sup>, sets off rather similarly to its animal tale “Blowing the House In” (ATU 124). At first, the pig is seen making himself busy around his thatched house. The idyllic scene is disturbed by a wolf who blows the house in with a remarkable speed (fast tempo is quite a common feature of advertisements in general). As the pigs run to the second house, the wolf blows in the house made of wood. Although the pigs who have managed to flee to the stone building feel quite secure and start picking on the wolf, their last shelter is also blown in. The plot and the animation ends with the wolf sitting by the fireside, smacking his lips and scratching his belly, while two tied-up pigs are waiting for their turn (see Figure 9). The frame switches to text, saying “If only everybody did their job as well as a Volkswagen” (*“Kui ainult kõik teeksid oma tööd nii hästi kui Volkswagen”*). A picture of a car appears, and from a certain angle this resembles a house that cannot be blown in. The viewer is presented the same attitude as discussed before: One should not believe a fairy tale, and the advertised product certainly promises better solutions to one’s problems<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> “Three little pigs” (“Kolm põrsakest”) – A Film Eesti OÜ – <http://www.kuldmuna.ee/arhiiv/index.php?page=entry&id=37&year=2008>.

<sup>20</sup> Volkswagen has been using folklore in its ads especially in the 1970s, when among other examples the ad slogan “Ugly is only skin deep” was employed (see Falassi & Kligman 1976; Mieder & Mieder 1994: 314 for more details). Its 1993 campaign presents a postmodern mix using the princess character and fairy tale formulae which has been analysed by Odber de Baubeta (1998: 49–50), who also mentions the oppositional stance that the advertisement takes.



**Figure 9.** *The fairy tale plot of the advertisement ends with a wolf scratching his big belly, while two tied-up pigs are waiting for their turn (A Film Eesti OÜ).*

It is possible to speculate that the inspiration for this ad came from the aforementioned Eurovision ad clip about the three pigs and the sauna bus which turned out to be an unconquerable fortress on wheels; besides, both ads were in opposition with the original fairy tale. But the latter example (vehicle ad) uses a simpler opposition which is likely to be more easily understood than the sauna bus plot. The Volkswagen ad illustrates perfectly one of the reasons why fairy tales are used in the advertisements in the first place. Global companies make a profitable choice when they use the same ad in different countries, and fairy tales, forming a well-known layer of every culture, are quite universal in this sense. In a similar vein, the same ad, created by an Estonian advertisement company, is also used abroad, and nothing other than the translated slogan has been changed.<sup>21</sup>

As a rule, only well-known fairy tales are used in ads. Simona Klaus (2010: 300) has pointed out that using globally known fairy tale plots in Slovenian advertising is a common practice, which implies that same motifs can be used in different countries to the same effect. However, the adaptation process may not always be easy. For example, the reception of a Chanel ad from 1998 that pictured the wolf that had fallen under the spell of Little Red Riding Hood and was in her chancery<sup>22</sup> was analysed by a group of scholars from the perspective of the psychology of perception in a study by Bulmer & Buchanan-Oliver (2006). It is clear from the results that different cultures perceive the ad in a different way – for example New Zealanders sensed the irony and the inversion of the traditional fairy tale; this interpretation supports the message of the advertise-

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_k820fnp98](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_k820fnp98); last accessed on 17 May 2013.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnwHS3wc1B8>, last accessed on 17 May 2013.

ment and the aims of the advertising company. At the same time, the ironic intent of the ad was not perceived by immigrants (*ibid.*: 63).

Oppositions like the ones described here seem to be a part of a general tendency, present in other contemporary fairy tale ads as well. In 2012, an advertisement for the Guardian, the British newspaper<sup>23</sup>, gained international attention for a controversial retelling of the story of the three little pigs with the aim of spurring discussion and creating resonance. The plot of the advertisement is set in a contemporary urban environment where the public opinion blames the pigs of executing the wolf. They are then taken to the court, and only the subsequent investigation of integrated media brings forth the truth. The aim of the Guardian advertisement was to promote its new concept of media as open journalism, where the construction of news is born in cooperation between professional journalists and bloggers and other social media. The generation and circulation of news has changed into an open-ended process “with stories evolving and developing over space and time” (Powell 2013: 15). Information that spreads globally is constantly re-constructed in the course. Similarly, the audience may interpret and reconstruct differently (or fail completely to interpret) the meanings of fairy tale ads. Moreover, the interpretation of fairy tales may change through successful adaptations like illustrated retellings, fairy tale books, fairy tale jokes, fairy tale advertisements, etc.

## Conclusion

Estonia communicated an ideological and innovative message as it decided to advertise the country through humorously recycled fairy tales at the 2002 Eurovision song contest. The ad clips aimed at delivering a positive message about the country and propagate its merits such as pristine forests and beaches, technical innovation, etc. This highly public and visible one-time campaign turned my attention to other ads that refer to fairy tale motifs as a way to attract the audience. In this study, ads that use fairy tale plots were analysed. The material was retrieved from a database of an advertisement competition, entitled suitably the Golden Egg. Most of the ads included in the analysis were a part of a bigger campaign. All the analysed ads were nominated by different advertisement companies. This indicates that this is a general tendency, not an individual penchant of a small group of copywriters. The material consisted of different forms of advertisements: billboards, print ads, TV-ads, even a fairy tale book. Out of these different formats, TV-advertisements follow a similar structure: the audience witnesses a fairy tale -like situation, which is suddenly

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDGrfhJH1P4>, last accessed on 17 May 2013.

disrupted by the punch line, and the final frames of the ad present the product that is being advertised, usually in a new setting. In most cases, a caption that comes as a punch line signifies a turn in the plot, after which an opposition is introduced – the fairy tale turns out to be untrue; moreover, even the whole plot, idea or world view of the fairy tales can be recast as wrong.

As a general observation, the analysed ads used fairy tale motifs either from a positive (i.e. affirmative of the original motif / plot) or a negative perspective (i.e. a more subversive attitude that includes an ironical stance towards the fairy tale). Furthermore, a notable trend emerged from the material: ads referring positively to the source fairy tale advertise primarily products connected with food and communication (e.g. mobile phones), whereas the ones displaying a negative attitude towards their source address mainly social issues (e.g. security of cars and home, social environment).

Often the ads use configurations that are based on the number three principle: three bears in the vandalised house, three pigs in their unsafe buildings, etc. In addition to that, the ad itself may follow a three-stage structure.

Most of the studied 12 ads use humour. Although fairy tale ads, based on widely known fairy tales, seem to be adjustable to different languages, some problems may emerge. An ironic attitude, for example, may not be understandable for different audiences; this is especially valid for the social advertisement campaigns that were analysed in this study. All in all, fairy tales are and probably will be an inexhaustible source for advertisements, even though the actual effect of these ads may be more unpredictable than for example in the case of using proverbs. The videos, pictures and other formats that are born from the combination of the genres (fairy tales and advertisements) are attractive and catch the attention of their audience by creating a number of different layers of interpretation through their use of humour, irony, and the cultural-historical background of the source fairy tales.

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