

Campaign Title: Healthmetre

Brand: Turkcell

Company(s) Involved: Turkcell, R/GA London

Category: Mobile, Transformation

Summary

Turkcell - Turkey's largest telecommunications company - is on a mission to facilitate all the aspects of people's lives, from connected homes to health management, through its suite of connected products and services.

This is the story of how Turkcell lived its mission by tackling a global health problem that is particularly acute in Turkey: diabetes. The disease contributes to 1 in 3 deaths and affects 1 in 7 Turks.

But diabetes in Turkey is shrouded in misunderstanding and stigma and diabetics deal with this potentially fatal disorder in isolation from their family, friends and doctors.

This is the story of how Turkcell created a way to help diabetics by removing the shroud around the condition and changing inertia into action.

Turkcell Healthmetre turned one of the world's most ubiquitous behaviors - taking food pictures on Instagram - into a way to manage diabetes.

Treatment compliance increased, blood sugar levels decreased, and Turks had a way to tackle diabetes together, because of Turkcell Healthmetre.

Marketing Challenge

Diabetes is a global problem. But in Turkey it's a crisis.

In the early 2000s, diabetes affected about 7% of the Turkish population. Within only a decade, this figure nearly doubled to 13%.¹

Diabetes contributes to one in three deaths in Turkey.²

And it costs Turkey 8.7 billion Turkish lira a year; that's about 3 billion U.S. dollars.³

Why is diabetes such a huge problem for Turkey?

In a word: misunderstanding.

Only one-in-five Turks know what causes diabetes.⁴

So despite being the youngest population in Europe (half of them are aged below 30⁵), Turks eat a carb-heavy diet, are relatively sedentary and are the earliest adopters of on-demand technology in Europe. So diabetes strikes.

Launched in 1994 with the aim of bringing mobile phone services to Turkey, Turkcell is now Turkey's biggest mobile telecommunications company, accounting for 40% of Turkey's mobile telephony market.

In 2013, Turkcell started a mission to transform from a telco into a brand that facilitates all aspects of your life through its connected products and services.

In 2015 Turkcell set its sights on tackling Turkey's biggest lifestyle problem: diabetes.

¹ "Deadly diabetes in 'unrelenting march,'" BBC, 2016.

² International Diabetes Federation, 2016.

³ Management of diabetes and diabetes policies in Turkey, Globalization and Health, 2013.

⁴ Turkish Diabetes Foundation, 2016.

⁵ Turkey's Population Young and Rapidly Expanding, Euromonitor, 2012.

Methodology

Our initial hypothesis was that there was a chasm between the diabetic and the medical system, created by inaccessible or expensive doctors, lack of education and means, or government apathy towards to the situation. Or all of the above.

We were wrong. The Turkish medical system is excellent. Turks are educated and connected. The government encourages people to eat well and exercise.

So we took an ethnographic approach. We shadowed young Turkish diabetics and living the life, we realized how easy it was to eat carb-heavy meals daily and not move much, trying to keep cool.

We got blood glucose testing kits. We wrote stuff down. We set daily targets. We downloaded diabetes apps. We wrote stuff down. We took pictures of everything we ate and drank. We took blood daily. We wrote stuff down. We noted carbohydrate loads. We wrote more stuff down.

And we discovered the key insight: the diabetic's journal was a constant, dreary reminder of lonely vigilance. Like homework you had to do forever, whilst everyone else could go out and play.

Journals toyed with you (you'd forget exactly what you'd eaten by the time we wrote it down); were deflating (all stats, no human UX); were disconnected (the doctor couldn't see it); were unwanted (a photocopied, grubby doctor's sheet). And totally unshareable, with no easy way to share your progress and get encouragement for your efforts.

But when we compared our crude notes and pictures, we started to learn from each other, to get ideas and advice from each other and to encourage each other. We became invested in each other's daily goals. We nudged each other. We were more compelled to stay on track - to not give in to indulgence or ignore warning signs - because we were accountable to our friends as well as ourselves.

And diabetes stopped being so lonely. Others could empathize; accommodate; motivate.

At this point we realized: transforming the journal into a more social experience was the way Turkcell could offer to make a difference in diabetics' lives.

Creative Execution

On our journey, a behavior we observed over and over - and exhibited ourselves - was sharing photos of the food we had eaten that day.

The food pic is social currency. Why people take food pics remains beyond us, but these pictures could become incredibly powerful when seen as data points.

They were reliable (a picture-perfect reminder of what you'd eaten), motivating (is there a more human data point than a #nofilter shot of your food?), and most importantly, shareable (you can send them instantly to doctors, family and friends).

And these photos could make diabetes so much better understood. Share images of what you eat, and we're out of a world of needles and glucose readings and into a world of positive, vivid imagery.

So we turned to the godfather of photo sharing and the spiritual home of the food pic, with 30 million active Turkish users⁶: Instagram.

By leveraging Instagram, we could give food pictures a new role: sharing for advice.

Turkcell Healthmetre is the first diabetes app that tracks your condition via a photographic journal, powered by Instagram.

It is an entirely new way for diabetics to track what they eat, through a behavior they already love, and that enables them to share their eating habits, so that their doctor, family and friends can support them by keeping them on track.

The app syncs with a wireless reader, to take instant blood measurements. Those measurements can be mapped to Instagram images, easily shareable with your doctor and friends, who can give you advice and support as you go, via Instagram's 1-to-1 messaging functionality.

⁶ Socialbakers 2016.

Turkcell made the app available to all its customers, and stores their data in the cloud, so it could be easily accessed and transferred when they needed it.

Business Results

Turkcell Healthmetre is the world's first diabetes management system to harness the power of social media to help people form better, life-long habits.

R/GA and Turkcell were able to create an entirely new way to tackle a problem that risks overwhelming the youthful population of Turkey.

It's certainly not job done, but the results so far bear out the value of Healthmetre. Istanbul University figures show that amongst diabetics who use the app:

- Treatment compliance increased by 54%
- Blood sugar levels decreased by 13%
- Complication forecasts decreased by 24%

By encouraging Turkish diabetics to share their daily eating habits, via a platform they know and love, Turkcell is fulfilling its mission of being a brand that facilitates all aspects of people's lives, and changing diabetes from a problem no one wants to talk about, to an issue that Turkish people can tackle together.