

THE CHANGING GROUND OF ORGANISATIONAL LEGITIMACY IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: STATE POLICIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DISCOURSE IN THE BEER SECTOR IN TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

Organizations strive to achieve objectives such as survival, growth, and profitability, and being perceived as legitimate by their institutional environment significantly facilitates these goals. Organizations that lack legitimacy often encounter operational pressures and constraints. One of the key tools organizations use to gain and sustain legitimacy is organizational discourse. This study examines how firms in the brewing sector in Türkiye have historically constructed and adapted their discourses to strengthen their legitimacy, particularly in response to shifting regulatory and societal pressures. Using archival data from Cumhuriyet and Milliyet newspapers, the study explores how both firms and the state engaged in discursive strategies through fundamental institutions such as the state, religion, health, and family. The findings highlight the state's dominant role in shaping market dynamics, as well as the reciprocal relationship between institutional structures and corporate discourse. By analyzing these interactions, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between structure, agency, and discourse in the process of legitimacy construction.

Keywords: Social Institutions, State and Government, Discourse, Organizational Legitimacy, Brewery Sector

JEL Codes: M10, M19, L21

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INTRODUCTION

The acceptance of businesses as legitimate by influential actors and institutions within their operational context is essential for their long-term sustainability. Legitimacy is shaped not only by established norms and societal expectations but also by firms' strategic efforts to influence and reconstruct these perceptions in their favor. This process is particularly critical for businesses operating in industries that face normative or regulatory challenges. In such cases, firms must actively engage in legitimacy-seeking behaviors to ensure their continued existence. This study examines how beer producers in Türkiye construct and disseminate discourses to establish, strengthen, and maintain their legitimacy within the constraints imposed by state policies.

The historical development of the brewery sector in Türkiye reveals a complex interplay between state intervention and private enterprise. The industry traces its origins to the late Ottoman period in the 1890s, when the Swiss Bomonti Brothers established a brewery in Istanbul under a state-granted permit. During the early Republican era, private breweries continued to operate until 1940, when the state nationalized the sector under the General Directorate of Tekel. For the next 15 years, beer production remained under state monopoly until legal reforms in 1955 (Law No. 4250, amended by Law No. 6552) opened the market to private enterprises. However, private firms did not resume production until 1969. Initially, these firms benefitted from substantial state support, which was later withdrawn as regulatory restrictions were imposed, creating increasing operational difficulties for breweries.

This study examines how brewery firms navigated these transitions and engaged in legitimacy struggles through discourse, particularly during periods of intensified restrictions. The Turkish brewery sector provides valuable insights into the evolving nature of organizational legitimacy—where structural constraints imposed by institutional environments shape firm behavior, yet firms retain agency to negotiate their legitimacy. Globally, alcohol consumption is often framed within health-related discourses. In Türkiye, however, where the majority of the population is Muslim, alcohol is also intertwined with religion, family structures, and state institutions. This intersection renders the brewery sector a compelling case for analyzing how organizations construct legitimacy in politically and culturally sensitive industries.

Accordingly, this study investigates how brewery firms, initially supported but subsequently constrained by the state, developed legitimacy-seeking discourses in response to shifting regulatory environments. It further explores the role of fundamental institutions—such as the state, religion, and health authorities—in shaping these discourses. Specifically, the study addresses two key research questions: (1) How do beer producers strategically use organizational discourse to expand their scope of action and

reinforce legitimacy within an institutional framework influenced by state, health, family, and religious dynamics? (2) What discursive strategies do firms employ when their legitimacy is threatened by state-imposed restrictions?

To address these questions, this study adopts a discourse analysis approach. First, the institutional landscape of alcohol consumption in Türkiye is examined to contextualize the historical and regulatory challenges faced by the sector. This includes an assessment of alcohol consumption patterns in Türkiye and their alignment with broader societal norms. The empirical analysis draws on secondary sources, particularly historical archives of *Milliyet* and *Cumhuriyet* newspapers, spanning from the late 1960s to the present. A total of 326 newspaper articles related to the brewery sector were identified and analyzed to trace discursive shifts over time.

This research contributes to the understanding the dynamic interplay between business, government, and institutional constraints, illustrating how brewery firms in Türkiye strategically constructed legitimacy under regulatory and ideological pressures. By analyzing the historical trajectory of legitimacy struggles in the sector, the study adds to broader discussions on business-government relations, particularly in politically sensitive industries within emerging economies.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Organizational Legitimacy

Legitimacy is generally defined as the perception or acceptance that an entity's actions are valid, reasonable, and appropriate within a socially constructed system of norms and values (Suchman, 1995). This definition is widely recognized across sociology and organizational studies, particularly within institutional theory, where legitimacy is regarded as a central factor shaping organizational survival and stability (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987). Nevertheless, conceptualizations of legitimacy vary. Some approaches emphasize the determinative role of the structural environment in sociological or institutional legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), while others highlight the active management of legitimacy by organizational actors in strategic contexts (Suchman, 1995; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008).

From a sociological perspective, legitimacy has been described as acceptability and approval (Brown, 1997), taken-for-grantedness (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and reasonableness and conformity (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). Similarly, Meyer and Scott (1983), prominent contributors to new institutional theory, defined legitimacy as the alignment of an organization's existence with prevailing cultural values. Taken

together, these definitions suggest that this approach prioritizes structure over agency. For instance, according to Parsons, the determinant of action is the social system, and action itself lacks inherent authority (cited in Fidan, 2017: 277). In this view, legitimacy is neither measurable nor effectively manageable. Rather, organizations have no direct control over their legitimacy; it is instead a systemic outcome (Tang, 2017: 492-493).

Conversely, from a strategic perspective, legitimacy is understood not as an end in itself but as a means of organizational survival (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). This view assigns organizations a proactive role in managing legitimacy. Accordingly, firms may undertake various actions to establish, maintain, and leverage legitimacy as a resource, thereby securing access to critical external support and resources (Suchman, 1995: 575-577). This strategic understanding of legitimacy is closely aligned with resource dependence theory and resource-based perspectives.

Another important aspect of legitimacy is its dimensions. While this topic was examined by researchers such as Sing in 1986, Aldrich and Fiol in 1994, Greenwood in 2002, and Archibald in 2004, the most widely used distinctions are those proposed by Scott and Suchman (cited in Tang, 2017: 495). Scott's dimensions of legitimacy (which bear traces of Weber's (2017: 48-49) “three pure types of legitimate authority”) include regulatory, normative, and cognitive legitimacy. Normative legitimacy refers to the alignment of an organization with the cultural and belief systems of its environment. Cognitive legitimacy concerns the dissemination of knowledge. For example, cognitive legitimacy can be achieved when a new firm adopts a familiar organizational form rather than experimenting with a new structure. Regulatory legitimacy, on the other hand, relates to the extent to which an organization adheres to regulatory processes and rules, with non-compliance resulting in tangible sanctions (Suddaby et al., 2017).

Suddaby et al. (2017), who conducted an in-depth literature review and discussion on legitimacy, identified three distinct approaches to legitimacy in the literature: as an object (property), as a process, and as a perception. Studies treating legitimacy as a property focus narrowly on legitimacy as a product of two primary actors (the institution and its external environment). The process perspective adopts a broader lens, examining legitimacy as the outcome of interactions among multiple actors (typically organizations) operating at macro levels of analysis, such as organizational fields. Finally, the perception-based approach views legitimacy as a cross-level phenomenon emerging from interactions between collective and individual actors, encompassing perceptions, judgments of appropriateness, and actions.

When legitimacy is viewed as a property, actors are seen as “possessing” legitimacy. When understood as a process, actors are typically characterized as “change agents” whose primary interest lies in

influencing the process through which legitimacy is constructed. Lastly, when seen as a perception, the primary role of actors involved in legitimacy judgments is that of “evaluators.”

One of the most distinctive features of the process-based approach to legitimacy, which this study also adopts, is that the social conditions of legitimacy are constantly open to negotiation. Consequently, the constitutive elements of legitimacy are described as being in a continuous state of flux. From this perspective and based on the characterizations by Suddaby et al. (2017), this study conceptualizes legitimacy not as a static condition (the property perspective) but as a dynamic process.

Furthermore, in this study, the legitimacy of the brewery sector, rather than the selected case organizations, is examined. It is observed that the legitimacy of the sector was initially constructed by the state, which holds the authority to regulate the market, and was later restricted, and even stigmatized. The reactions of the sector's two major firms to these periods were, respectively, adaptation and compliance, followed by efforts to legitimize their position.

Drawing on insights from the literature, the first research question of this study is: How do beer producers strategically use organizational discourse as a tool to expand their scope of action and strengthen their legitimacy in an organizational field shaped by established institutions such as the state, health, family, and religion, particularly where the state plays a regulatory role through legal instruments?

In one of the pioneering studies on legitimacy in the literature, Suchman (1995) categorized legitimacy into three forms: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive. Pragmatic legitimacy relates to the value a company provides to its stakeholders. In this case, stakeholders act as evaluators, assessing the impact of the company's activities on themselves—in other words, conducting a cost-benefit analysis. Cognitive legitimacy, by contrast, is based on cognitive acceptance without reference to utility or moral alignment. This acceptance arises when an organization is perceived as necessary or taken for granted. Moral legitimacy refers to the alignment of the company and its actions with broader moral norms. This distinction bears notable similarities to Scott's normative dimension.

Assuming that organizations have a limited scope of action, it may be expected that they will adopt certain strategies. Particularly in situations where their legitimacy is threatened, as in the process examined in this study, they may employ strategies such as acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, or manipulation in response to external threats and pressures (Oliver, 1991). These strategies can be analyzed through the lens of the discursive tools used by firms during that period. Accordingly, the second research

question of this study is: Within which strategies do these organizations, initially supported and later constrained, construct their discourses?

Discourse

Traditionally, discourse has been understood as either written texts or spoken words. However, its meaning has gradually expanded to encompass a combination of written and verbal expressions, and ultimately, it has come to be seen as a concept that includes all interactions—both formal and informal—embedded within a cultural background (Grant et al., 2001: 7). Organizational discourse, on the other hand, is defined as the systematic collection of verbal, written, or visual texts, presented and distributed to internal and external audiences in the form of an organizational manifesto aligned with organizational goals and activities (Grant et al., 2004: 3). In this study, discourse is understood as a manifesto designed to fit a specific context and purpose. In this sense, discourse appears to intersect with rhetoric, or eloquence (Keskin et al., 2013: 31).

It has been argued that discourse carries strategic value (Hardy et al., 1999) and, as such, can be strategically constructed by organizations using various methods (Arslan & Coşkun, 2017). Even if not explicitly constructed, researchers can analyze discourses through different approaches. For example, concepts such as acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation—examined by Thang (1999) as strategies for gaining legitimacy and referred to in the literature as strategic responses—can also be used as discourse strategies. In other words, organizations can use their discourses to confirm their alignment with the context in the face of existing pressures, seek ways to compromise, avoid addressing the issue altogether, object, or manipulate the situation to their advantage.

In line with insights from the literature, this study examines the discourses of the state, brewery organizations, and other actors. By analyzing these discourses, the study aims to uncover how organizations strategically navigate legitimacy challenges and respond to external pressures through their communicative practices.

CONTEXT OF TÜRKİYE

This section provides an overview of the sociological institutions influencing alcohol consumption in Türkiye and presents relevant information on alcohol consumption in the country to situate the Turkish context.

Alcohol Consumption and Institutional Influences

Sociological institutions that influence organizational behavior can be classified in various ways. For example, these institutions include family, education, religion, economy, politics, health, media, law, and science. In this study, the institutions considered in defining the pressures faced by the firms under examination are the state, religion, health, and family. This selection aims to provide a clearer framework for understanding the socio-cultural and regulatory context.

The State

In institutional theory, the state, as a rule-maker and institutional entrepreneur, can exert multiple influences on existing institutions or establish new ones, utilizing its power to enact legal regulations (Yalçinkaya & Taşçı, 2017). In the Turkish context, the state authorized the Bomonti Brothers to produce alcoholic beverages in 1890, monopolized production in 1940, reopened the sector to the private enterprise in 1955, and saw firms actively resume production in 1969. Nearly half a century later, the state imposed numerous restrictions on alcoholic beverage companies through various legal regulations (e.g., Law No. 6487 dated June 11, 2013, Law No. 4250 first published in 1942 and amended multiple times; Regulation No. 27808, and similar provisions). Over this 120-year period, the state has implemented diametrically opposed regulations, practices, and discourses regarding the alcoholic beverage sector. This shift can primarily be attributed to the differing ideological foundations of the political parties in power.

Since the 2000s, the restrictions imposed by the state have been compared with those in EU countries to evaluate the context from a macro perspective, highlighting both similarities and differences. For example, regulations on the legal drinking and purchasing age are present in many countries and fall within a similar range (İmamoğlu, 2011). In Türkiye, the legal drinking age is 18. Additionally, the prohibition of retail alcohol sales during specific hours, a restriction found in various countries, also applies in Türkiye, where sales are banned between 22:00 and 06:00.

Restrictions on alcohol advertising are common in many countries, but in Türkiye, alcoholic beverages cannot be advertised under any circumstances, and companies cannot share explanatory information about their products on their own websites. Furthermore, alcoholic beverage companies in Türkiye cannot engage in sponsorships or distribute gifts, promotional items, or similar materials. They are also required to include warnings about the harms of alcohol on their products. This study examines examples of discourses developed and disseminated by brewery organizations to navigate these restrictions.

Religion

In addition to the state's role as an active regulator, another factor that makes this study valuable is the predominance of Islam as the major religion in Türkiye. Islam, through its primary sources—the Quran and Hadith—progressively restricted and ultimately prohibited the consumption of alcoholic beverages ([Quran] (<https://kuran.diyamet.gov.tr/>), [Hadith](<https://hadislerleislam.diyamet.gov.tr/>)). In a society where between 89% and 99% of the population is Muslim, as indicated by various studies (TÜİK: 2014, Optimar: 2019), the religious prohibition of alcohol consumption constitutes a significant constraint on the organizational legitimacy of companies that produce and sell alcoholic beverages.

During the period under review and within the sample examined in this study, no discourse from religious individuals or institutions regarding the state's liberalizing or restrictive regulations on alcohol was identified. This notable absence is likely related to the target audience and editorial policies of the newspapers analyzed. For instance, if a conservative newspaper from the same period had been included in the study, findings on this issue might have emerged. On the other hand, while the study examined whether brewery organizations produced any discourse related to the institution of religion, no evidence was found in this regard. This outcome is understandable, as breweries likely sought to avoid engaging with religious institutions directly to prevent further controversy or backlash.

Health

The institution of health is a significant established institution due to its direct and immediate impact on human life. Given the direct and indirect adverse effects of alcoholic beverages on human health, it is expected that the health institution would produce legitimacy-restricting discourses targeting the organizational field. However, in this study, no evidence was found that real or legal entities representing the health institution engaged in producing such discourse within the examined period and sample. Nevertheless, it was observed that beer-producing firms, especially in the early periods, constructed various discourses highlighting a positive relationship between beer and health.

Family

As Çelik (2010) noted, the traditional Turkish family acquired its fundamental characteristics during the Islamic period. Therefore, it can be inferred that most individuals raised in Turkish society developed a negative attitude toward alcoholic beverages during their childhood. On the other hand, the study by Mercan et al. (2018) is valuable in demonstrating both sociological and psychological effects of the family institution

on an individual's alcohol consumption. In this context, within the scope of the study, it was expected that various civil society organizations representing the family institution would produce opposing discourses during the period when the beer production sector was supported by the state and supportive discourses during the period when it was restricted. However, no evidence in this direction was found within the examined period and sample. On the other hand, it can be stated that beer-producing firms, particularly in their advertisements, employed family imagery in an attempt to construct positive discourses in this regard.

Alcohol and Beer Consumption in Türkiye

The data shared by the OECD (2020) on alcohol consumption in various countries is significant for understanding Türkiye's position globally. According to this data, Türkiye has the lowest annual per capita alcohol consumption at 1.2 liters, while Lithuania has the highest at 12.1 liters. When examining the period between 2012 and 2021 in Türkiye, the average consumption in the first five years was 1.48 liters, while in the last five years, it declined to 1.24 liters. This suggests that consumption has been lower in recent years. However, it is important to note that Türkiye is a tourism hub, and the alcohol consumed by tourists visiting the country is also reflected in these calculations.

In line with the main focus of this study, the classification of beer as an alcoholic beverage rather than a regular soft drink- a categorization shaped by the aforementioned institutions (religion, health, family, etc.) - assigns a new label to beer. In other words, for Turkish society, which generally maintains a cautious attitude toward alcoholic beverages, the inclusion of beer in this category appears to have created certain challenges and threats for beer-producing and selling companies.

On the other hand, the above data also includes beer consumption. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (2018), 923 million liters of beer were consumed in the relevant year, accounting for 86% of total alcohol consumption. This suggests that beer producers responded to these challenges by developing strategies and succeeded in securing a dominant share of the alcohol market. The focus of this study is to examine these processes through the lens of discourse.

Historical Development of Beer-Producing Companies in Türkiye

The historical development of beer-producing breweries in Türkiye reflects a rich tapestry of cultural and industrial evolution. Beer production in the region has deep roots, with archaeological evidence indicating early beer production dating back 12,000 years at the site of Göbekli Tepe (Paulette, 2024). In more recent times, the first dedicated beer production facility was established in 1890 (Tanyeli & İkiz,

2009). While there have been various developments since then, the first significant milestone relevant to this study occurred in 1940 when TEKEL (the state monopoly) took over beer production facilities (Ertin, 1998). Twenty-five years later, in 1965, beer production was privatized and removed from TEKEL's control.

During this period, two major beer producers emerged: Efes and Tuborg. Although imported brands were also present, Efes and Tuborg remained the dominant firms throughout the period examined in this study. After their establishment, these companies benefited from a widespread distribution network (e.g., coffeehouses) for a time. However, the classification of beer as an alcoholic beverage in 1984 marked the beginning of a new era. This reclassification introduced significant challenges and fundamentally reshaped the strategies of beer producers in Türkiye.

METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

The study utilized secondary data to examine how beer-producing companies construct their discourses to maintain legitimacy and how the state intervenes in the field over time. The empirical data were derived from the historical archives of two national newspapers—Cumhuriyet and Milliyet. These newspapers were selected based on their long publication history, the availability of digitized archives, and their broad sociopolitical readership in Türkiye. Both are considered mainstream sources that offer extensive coverage of political, economic, and cultural developments relevant to the study's focus.

Although the data set is limited to these two sources, the selection is methodologically justified. First, both newspapers provide substantial temporal coverage of the Turkish beer industry, spanning from the late 1960s to the present, which aligns with the study's historical scope. Second, their relatively centrist editorial stances allow for the identification of institutional discourses without extreme ideological bias. Lastly, technical limitations in accessing other digitized newspaper archives—particularly those representing more conservative perspectives—restricted the inclusion of additional sources. Nevertheless, the richness and depth of the selected corpus made it possible to identify recurring discursive patterns and legitimacy strategies. While future studies may benefit from a broader media base, the current sample offers sufficient variation to support the study's analytical objectives.

The examined content covers the period from the initial operations of private beer companies to the present. A total of 326 news articles were reviewed, with the majority of relevant content published between 1967 and 1986. After 1984, news articles became less frequent and focused mostly on beer companies' sponsorship activities. Based on patterns in the data, three distinct historical periods were identified: the

pre-restriction period (1967–1984), the year of legal intervention (1984), and the post-restriction period (1985 onward).

This study employed content analysis, a qualitative research method. In line with the research questions and the theoretical framework, a thematic code list was initially developed by the researcher, drawing upon key conceptual distinctions in the literature (e.g., Oliver, 1991; Suchman, 1995; Scott, 1995). Both inductive and deductive approaches were applied throughout the code development process. News texts and accompanying visuals were examined simultaneously, and each article was classified according to its target audience. Relevant codes were then assigned to each item based on its textual and visual content. While initial codes were theory-informed, additional codes were generated as new themes emerged from the data.

Coding was conducted manually using Microsoft Office software. Upon completion, the first author reviewed the coded material and provided feedback to ensure thematic coherence and analytical consistency. Although no inter-coder reliability coefficient was calculated, the coding framework was systematically applied and reviewed. This approach aligns with qualitative research standards, where theoretical alignment and procedural transparency are prioritized over numerical measures of reliability (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

FINDINGS

Prominent Themes and Codes

During the coding process, the primary focus was to identify the main institutions with which the newspaper content on the beer industry was associated, and these were used as themes. For content that did not align with these themes, new categories were created. Table 1 presents the themes, categories, and codes that emerged during the analysis process.

Table 1: Prominent themes, categories and codes

Themes	Categories	Codes
Market Related Content	Related to Product Sold	Introduction of the product, production process
		Appeal to emotions
		Launching new products on the market
		Giveaways with the product

	Related to Production Company	Celebration and social context
		Related to success
		Related to sales
	Ideological Criticism	Capitalist exploitation
	Rights and Fair Practices	Unfair competition
		Rights and freedoms
Content Related to State	Sponsorship activities	Sponsorship for sports clubs
	Firm-State Relationship	Political support
		Political reactions
		Ideological partisanship
	Rules and regulations	Legal regulations
		Following the Rules
Content Related to Nationalism	National Income	Social contribution
	Negative impact on the country	Damage to the homeland
	Positive effects on the homeland	Hometown Success
		Contribution to the homeland
		Donations
	Company identity	Turkish identity of companies
Religion Related Content	-	References to the relationship between religion and alcohol
Health Related Content	Negative Health Effects	Pointing to health problems
		Underestimation of health hazards
	Positive Perceptions on Health	Denial of health hazards
		Health benefits of beer
Content related to Family	-	The damage beer does to the family institution

Private Companies in Beer Production (1967–1983)

During this period, the prominent themes identified were “market-related content,” “stakeholder-oriented content,” “firm-state relations,” and “content related to nationalism.” Under the theme of “market-

related content,” the categories included “content related to the product sold” and “content related to the producing firm.” The third theme, “stakeholder-oriented content,” encompassed the categories of “business development with stakeholders” and “corporate communication.” Meanwhile, the theme of “firm-state relations” highlighted categories such as “political support,” “rules and regulations,” and “national income.” The final theme identified during this period, “content related to nationalism,” included the categories of “firm identity” and “positive impacts on the country.” As evident, all newspaper content related to these firms, which began operations after the 1960s, was positive during this period.

Prominent discourses related to the producing firms

During this period, nationalism emerged as a prominent discourse in the promotion of firms, with companies aligning themselves with Turkish identity. For Tuborg, its experience and past successes in the industry were highlighted, and the brand's Turkish partnership was emphasized as part of its identity: “Turkish Tuborg” (*Cumhuriyet*, July 25, 1969). For the other firm, the phrase “Completely Turkish Capital” (*Cumhuriyet*, September 4, 1969) stood out. Thus, the emphasis on nationalism was significant for both firms. In the context of nationalism, in a Cumhuriyet newspaper article dated October 26, 1969, Efes Pilsen, referring to Tuborg, a Danish company, stated: “EFES PİLSEN was established with an entirely domestic Turkish capital. There is no foreign partnership, and therefore, no foreign currency is transferred abroad under the name of patent rights or profit transfers.” This issue seems to have been significant, as Tuborg's newspaper advertisement in Milliyet on June 28, 1972, which explained its contribution to the country in numbers, included the phrase “the profit transferred by the foreign partner is only...” In the same advertisement, Tuborg also announced plans to organize special promotional programs on Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, and Çukurova radios. However, the content of these programs remains unknown as no related records were found.

From the 1970s to the end of this period, advertisements emphasizing the firms' contributions to the Turkish economy became more prominent. Finally, in a debates over whether beer should be classified as an alcoholic beverage, beer producers defended their legitimacy by stressing national benefits, asserting that “this decision would lead to a significant loss of tax revenue for the state and leave thousands of workers unemployed.”

Prominent discourses related to the product sold, business development with stakeholders, and corporate communication

Product-related advertisements can also be divided into two subcategories. The first consists of advertisements introducing the beer itself, while the second focuses on appealing to consumer emotions. Product-introducing advertisements were most commonly used during the firms' early operations, emphasizing the production process and ingredients. As will be shown, both organizations employed a range of expressions aligned with this approach.

Table 2: Advertisements related to the product – sample expressions of prominent discourses

The Actor in Discourse	Category	Featured Code	Discourse - Example Expressions
Tuborg	Consumers	Introduction of the product, production process	"...drink it cold...see what kind of beer it is" "out of season" "relieves fatigue" "with the most modern machines and without human intervention" (Cumhuriyet, July 27, 1969)
Tuborg	Consumers	Appeal to Emotions	black beer was offered under the name "Esmer" (Milliyet, January 12, 1971), The slogan "Blonde or brunette?" (Cumhuriyet, February 6, 1970) "Let's add joy to our joy" (Cumhuriyet, December 29, 1973), A different night where friendships are woven, hearts beat with the clocks. A night of words, laughter, love. And the taste of this night: special beer. For a different celebration." (Milliyet, December 17, 1979), "Happy moments with..." (Cumhuriyet, December 26, 1969), "Youth is having fun" (Cumhuriyet, April 10, 1970), Advertisements that emphasized entertainment generally used visuals of men and women drinking beer (Cumhuriyet, 29 August 197, 25 December 1979, 2 May 1984).
Tuborg	Stakeholders	Expanding the Sales Network	(Milliyet, July 28, 1968, October 20, 1968)
Efes Pilsen and Tuborg	Stakeholders	Staff employment	(Milliyet, 29 January 1969, Cumhuriyet, 27 August 1980)
Tuborg	Stakeholders	Communication	(Milliyet, July 8, 1969, July 11, 1969)

Tuborg	Stakeholders	Various Competitions	Bust competition (Milliyet, June 14, 1971, June 5, 1972) The most hardworking student competition (Cumhuriyet, January 27, 1973; Milliyet, January 26, 1972)
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As illustrated in Table 2, beer producers in the early stages of their operations employed discursive strategies aimed at both consumers and institutional stakeholders to construct and reinforce organizational legitimacy. Product-related advertisements emphasized modern production processes, hygiene, and national quality standards, aligning with pragmatic as well as moral legitimacy claims (Suchman, 1995). At the same time, emotion-driven slogans and imagery—such as those invoking joy, friendship, and youth—sought to normalize beer consumption within the framework of modern, Westernized lifestyles. These discourses can be understood as part of a broader effort to redefine the product category (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005), shifting its image from a morally ambiguous commodity to a symbol of leisure and social connection.

Furthermore, advertisements directed at stakeholders—including announcements on network expansion, employment, and public competitions—signaled attempts to embed beer producers more deeply within Turkish society. These efforts reflect a strategy of institutional embedding (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), in which firms aimed to legitimize their presence not only through consumer appeal but also through claims of broader social contribution. Collectively, these strategies correspond to proactive legitimization efforts, designed to align with the dominant institutional logic of state-led modernization and industrial development.

Political support; rules and regulations, discourses on national income

Periodic shifts in the stance of political authorities toward the beer industry reveal the fragile and unstable character of institutional support in Türkiye. For instance, as reported in Cumhuriyet on July 10, 1974, the Minister of Interior issued a circular reclassifying beer as an alcoholic beverage that could not be sold without a license. This regulatory action reflects a shift from prior tacit support to a more restrictive institutional framing, thereby challenging the industry's previously consolidated legitimacy. In response, beer companies pursued legal action through the Council of State, which suspended the circular and demanded a formal defense from the Ministry. This episode exemplifies how firms may strategically resist delegitimation efforts by invoking legal and procedural mechanisms within the institutional system—a response consistent with Oliver's (1991) typology of strategic reactions such as “challenge” or “manipulation.” It also illustrates the tension between competing legitimacy claims—those constructed by firms and those asserted by regulatory authorities. Table 3 illustrates sample discursive expressions and

framing strategies related to this incident, providing evidence of how firms sought to reposition their products and defend their legitimacy through legal–institutional discourse.

Table 3: Firm-state relations and legal decisions regarding the product

The Actor in Discourse	Category	Featured Code	Discourse - Example Expressions
Tuborg	Stakeholders – Government (Bureaucracy)	Political Supports	“Traditional Journalists’ Day... especially our President Cevdet Sunay... This year’s celebration had another special feature: ...TUBORG BEER would be served to the guests and members of the press attending the Journalists’ Day... then TUBORG BEERS were brought to the tables. The satisfaction of those who tasted the beer was obvious on their faces. The taste of Tuborg was talked about for a long time. TUBORG beer added joy to the journalists’ day and was also a nice surprise” (Milliyet, 29.07.1969).
Tuborg	Stakeholders – Government (Bureaucracy)	Political Supports	“After the Governor... the President... and the Prime Minister... read their messages to the congress... the delegates were served dry sandwiches, champagne and beer. The beer was Tuborg and was produced by DYO Holding, one of the congress members” (Milliyet, 10.09.1969)
Tuborg	Stakeholders – Government (Bureaucracy)	Political Supports	“The guest minister will go to Izmir tomorrow morning and visit the Tuborg beer factory, which was established jointly with Danish capital...” (Milliyet, 26 October 1976).
4 Breweries	Stakeholders – Government (Bureaucracy)	Legal Regulations (The Minister of Internal Affairs restricted the sale of beer with a circular and the Council of State annulled it)	“The authorities of 4 beer factories spoke. Beer is a foodstuff, it is not considered an alcoholic beverage. ... beer has 3-4% alcohol, not 7%... Private Sector Beer Industry Representatives criticized the Ministry of Interior for preventing the sale of beer in unlicensed places” (Cumhuriyet, 10.07.1974)

As illustrated in Table 3, the discursive strategies employed by beer companies in response to regulatory constraints were not merely reactive but structurally embedded. Rather than directly opposing the state on normative grounds, firms sought to reframe their position within the institutional order by emphasizing procedural legality, economic contributions, and historical continuity. These findings reinforce the view that organizations actively construct legitimacy through strategic adaptation and institutional negotiation (Suchman, 1995; Oliver, 1991).

State Intervention in Beer (1984) and News Supporting the Restriction of the Organizational Field

During this period, beer-producing companies faced state interventions and legal restrictions. Consequently, the discourse shifted, with firms defending themselves while other actors adopted oppositional positions. The prominent themes and categories that emerged are as follows: “market-related content” (ideological criticism, unfair competition), “family-related content”, “state-related content” (firm-state relations; rules and regulations), “health-related content” (negative impacts on health), “nationalism-related content” (negative effects on the nation, national income), “stakeholder-related content” (corporate communication), and “health-related content” (positive perceptions, negative impacts).

Content against firms: discourses on ideological criticism, harm to the family institution, negative effects on the nation, and health issues

First, news targeting beer companies and reflecting or supporting the state’s position can be interpreted as early indicators published prior to direct state intervention. In this context, an example of news under the category of “exploitation of capitalism” is a report in ‘Cumhuriyet Gazetesi’ on June 11, 1979, covering MSP member Şener Battal’s proposal to reclassify beer as an alcoholic beverage. Further examples and details are provided in Table 4, where necessary.

Table 4. News supporting the restriction of the organizational field

The Actor in Discourse	Target Group	Featured Code	Discourse - Example Expressions
National Salvation Party	Society	Capitalism exploitation	“Capitalism is an organization connected to each other by hoses. Beer flows to Türkiye from one of these hoses of exploitation” (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 11.06.1979).
Writer of Cumhuriyet Newspaper	Society	Capitalism exploitation	“Beer entered our lives with TV commercials and jokes. Later, with giant billboards covering the walls and buses, glasses, bottle openers, ashtrays, awnings, calendars and stickers stuck here and there... Over time, there was no place it didn’t enter” (Cumhuriyet Newspaper, 18.08.1982).
Minister of National Education, Youth and Sports Vehbi Dinçerler	Society	“Damage to the family institution”	“Even a 4-year-old girl wants to drink beer after seeing the advertisement on TV. ... He said that the ministry will carry out its responsibility to the end so that beer advertisements do not appear on TV screens” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).

Minister of of National Education, Youth and Sports Vehbi Dinçerler	Society	“indicating health problems”	“Taking into account the provision of the TRT Law that “Broadcasts that are detrimental to physical and mental health cannot be made”, beer advertisements should be removed from TV screens...” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
118 lecturers	Society	“Damage to the country”	Beer should be legally considered an alcoholic beverage, it should not be served to those under the age of 18 in restaurants that serve alcohol, Beer advertising should be banned on state radio and television, Marketing and sales conditions should be kept the same as other alcoholic beverages... In another report prepared by psychiatrists...” (Cumhuriyet, 20.04.1984)

As illustrated in Table 4, discourses opposing beer producers intensified during periods of growing political conservatism and state intervention. These narratives framed beer not only as a health or moral concern, but also as a symbol of capitalist exploitation, foreign cultural intrusion, and social decay. Such constructions reflect a deliberate effort by state actors, politicians, and intellectuals to delegitimize the organizational field by reframing its products and practices as threats to both national identity and moral order. This shift marks a transition from institutional support to regulatory hostility, signaling a breakdown in the pragmatic and moral legitimacy previously established by firms (Suchman, 1995).

The invocation of family values, national health, and youth protection resonates with normative institutional logics, wherein political and cultural norms supersede economic rationality (Thornton et al., 2012). These discourses also demonstrate how field-level legitimacy is contested through competing narratives, where firms’ legitimacy claims are challenged by actors seeking to reshape public norms and regulatory expectations (Maguire et al., 2004).

Discourses aimed at strengthening organizational legitimacy: national income, corporate communication, negative and positive perceptions of health, rules and regulations, rights and fair practices, and firm-state relations

Despite the restrictions planned by state actors due to beer being classified as an alcoholic beverage and the material and cultural damages it allegedly caused, beer companies also engaged in discourses aimed at strengthening their organizational legitimacy and protecting their organizational field. Table 5 provides examples of expressions under various codes related to the discourses of these organizations.

Table 5: Discourses strengthening the legitimacy of the beer production sector

The Actor in Discourse	Target group	Featured code	Discourse - Example Expressions
Tuborg Beer and Malt Industries Inc.	Society	Social Contribution	“Banning beer advertisements on television will result in a loss of income for TRT” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
Istanbul Advertising Officer Sadettin Nalbantoğlu	Society	To inform	“The purpose of advertisements is not only to encourage but also to inform the citizens”, (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
Istanbul Advertising Officer Sadettin Nalbantoğlu	Society	Underestimation of health hazards	“If beer is thought to be harmful... they should also remove the chewing gum advertisement from TV. Because it tires the chewing person’s jaw and endangers their health”, (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
Efes Pilsen	Society	Denial of health damages	“It is not possible to take seriously the claim that beer is harmful, which is supported and encouraged in various ways in modern countries” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
Efes Pilsen Group	Society	“Don’t follow the rules”	“They meticulously abided by restrictions such as not showing people drinking beer in the footage” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
General Coordinator of Tuborg	Society	Health	“Beer is not harmful to health. On the contrary, it has been determined that it has great medical benefits. It is not an alcoholic drink. It is a soft drink. It is the most effective way to prevent alcoholism in the world” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
General Coordinator of Tuborg	Society	“Unfair competition	“Preventing beer advertising on television would create unfair competition in favor of soft drinks other than beer” (Milliyet, 20.04.1984).
Deputy Chairman of SODEP	Society	Ideological Partiality	“The parties opposed the minister in the beer debate”, “It would be wrong to enter into such discussions when there are many important issues on the public agenda” (Milliyet, 21.04.1984).
HP Vice President	Society	Ideological Partiality	“This behavior may also be a resurrection of some old mentalities” (Milliyet, 21.04.1984).
Efes Pilsen	Society	Ideological Partiality	“Beer was encouraged throughout the period from the Ataturk period to the planned period...” (Milliyet, 21.04.1984).

As shown in Table 5, beer producers and affiliated actors engaged in multifaceted discursive strategies to counter growing regulatory pressures and protect their organizational legitimacy. These

included appeals to economic rationality (e.g., potential revenue loss for TRT), claims of public benefit and transparency in advertising, and attempts to normalize beer consumption by downplaying health risks or framing beer as a non-alcoholic “soft drink.” Such arguments illustrate a deliberate use of pragmatic legitimacy framing, where organizations seek to demonstrate functional value and compliance with public interest (Suchman, 1995).

At the same time, references to fair competition, adherence to regulations, and alignment with republican modernization ideals reveal a strategic coupling with historical-national values. This positioning reflects elements of normative and moral legitimacy, aimed at aligning organizational discourse with foundational state ideologies. The involvement of political opposition figures (e.g., SODEP and HP representatives) further indicates that legitimacy construction transcended corporate actors and became embedded within a broader field-level discursive contestation (Maguire et al., 2004). These discourses exemplify strategic resistance and re-legitimation efforts in response to shifting institutional logics and regulatory constraints (Oliver, 1991).

Despite these multifaceted efforts to maintain legitimacy, the regulatory shift ultimately prevailed. As reported on May 9, 1984, the Minister of Education declared the end of the public debate, and the ban on beer advertisements on television and radio was to take effect on May 14. Additional restrictions soon followed, including prohibitions on alcohol sales in villages and limitations on minors’ access to licensed venues. This turning point underscores the limits of discursive legitimation strategies in the face of consolidated political authority and shifting normative logics.

Post-Restriction Period (1985 -)

During this period, the prominent themes include “market-related content” (rights and fair practices, content related to the product sold and the producing firm, sponsorship activities), “state-related content” (- firm-state relations), and “health-related content” (negative impacts on health, positive perceptions of health). To capture how different segments of the public responded to these regulations following their implementation, the topic was examined under the heading “Reactions After the Restrictions.”

Reactions after the restrictions: content related to rights and fair practices, firm-state relations, negative impacts on health, and positive perceptions

Political reactions to the bans generally included criticisms directed at the government and its policies. In this regard, opposition parties and various groups that did not align with the conservative center-right

ideology represented by the ruling Motherland Party (ANAP) of the time voiced criticisms against these restrictions. On the other hand, the government naturally defended the restrictions it implemented. Notably, the discourses constructed by sector representatives in the aftermath of the restrictions centered largely on rights, freedoms, and Atatürk-oriented narratives. The intensity and scale of reactions invoking Atatürk reached such a level that former CHP senator Mehmet Feyyat filed a criminal complaint against the executives of both Tuborg and Efes Pilsen, accusing them of “exploiting Atatürk for commercial purposes through advertisements and demeaning him.” However, this accusation was dismissed (Milliyet, June 13, 1984). Examples of data obtained from newspaper archives in this context can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Discursive reactions after the restrictions

The Actor in Discourse	Target Group	Featured Code	Discourse - Example Expressions
Former Minister of Trade Halil Başol	Society	“political reactions”	“It is unfortunate that the Parliament and the government are dealing with beer at such a time” (Milliyet, June 6, 1984).
Chairman of the Harb -İş Union	Society	“political reactions”	“We are not dealing with beer, we are dealing with cheese and bread... The government is distracting the people with beer” (Milliyet, June 6, 1984),
Deputy Chairman of the Union of Chambers, Ersin Faralyalı	Society	“political reactions”	“...while there were many problems, it was not the time to bring up the beer issue and provoke it” (Cumhuriyet, June 13, 1984).
Prime Minister Turgut Ozal	Society	“political reactions”	“We left everyone to their own conscience when it comes to beer. “There is no political aspect to this issue...” (Cumhuriyet, 13 June 1984).
Joint statement by Tuborg and Efes	Society	Ideological Partiality	“...a great war of civilization throughout the 60-year history of the Republic... This war started by our Great Leader Atatürk... was started with a series of radical reforms called Atatürk’s reforms... To turn away from Atatürk’s path means taking Türkiye back...”, “...it should not be turned into a country where girls with turbans and headscarves walk around its universities, where more and more women in chadors and veils fill its streets, where the names of Turkish intellectuals are erased from its squares...” “...Great Leader Atatürk establishes the first beer factory on this farm that was his own property... (Cumhuriyet, 11.06.1984).

Vice President of Yaşar Holding, which is affiliated with Tuborg company	Society	Ideological Partiality	“... The beer industry in Türkiye was founded by Atatürk. Not only was it founded, but its production was later encouraged (Cumhuriyet, June 13, 1984).
Former CHP Senator Av. Mehmet Feyyat	Society	Ideological Partiality	He filed a criminal complaint against both Tuborg and Efes company managers, claiming that they “used Atatürk as a tool for commercial purposes and humiliated him through publications through beer advertisements” (Milliyet, June 13, 1984).
Efes Pilsen General Manager Ahmet Boyacıoğlu	Society	“rights and freedoms”	“The definitive results of the ban will become clear later. ... Not allowing children into restaurants that serve alcohol is an issue that goes beyond beer shops and is related to fundamental rights and freedoms. It is very difficult to implement. The relationship between the operator and the customer will be damaged” (Cumhuriyet, August 11, 1984).
Aegean Travel Ergun Göksan, President of the Agencies Association	Society	“rights and freedoms”	“Tourists find it interesting. They find it strange. Tourists cannot allow their children into the restaurant. We have applied to the necessary places to change these absurd and ridiculous decisions, but we have not received any results” (Cumhuriyet, August 11, 1984).
A person's story published in Cumhuriyet Newspaper	Society	Indicating health problems	“It is a big mistake to see alcohol as a savior and a sedative... first a social drinker, then an evening drinker and finally an alcoholic” (Cumhuriyet, 05.07.1986).

An interesting article offering a different perspective on the beer bans—beyond the examples seen in Table 6—was published approximately three years after the restrictions came into effect. In the piece titled “ANAP, Money, and Beer” (Cumhuriyet, July 12, 1987), it was argued that, after the ANAP government came to power, a decisive blow was struck against the beer industry: advertisements were banned, and consumption sites were placed under strict control. Although the bans were initially interpreted as being influenced by the religious orientation of certain ANAP factions, subsequent information suggested alternative motives. A statement by an executive of Anadolu Endüstri Holding, a company that had received state support, indicated that political retaliation may have also played a role. Allegedly, beer producers were penalized due to their open support for the Nationalist Democracy Party (MDP) in the 1983 elections, while other firms that supported ANAP received favorable treatment. The article concluded with a rhetorical question aimed at highlighting the real motive behind the restrictions: “Which do you think the ANAP government values more: religion or money?”

Another noteworthy report, published in Cumhuriyet on June 14, 1994, critiqued the requirement for beer companies to obtain a license from Tekel, a direct competitor in the alcoholic beverage market. The article framed this as a clear case of unfair competition. Efes Pilsen emphasized the contradiction of forcing a private company to be licensed by a monopolistic public rival in a liberalizing economic environment. Similarly, the General Manager of Tuborg warned that such a system would push young consumers toward taverns and increase the consumption of hard alcohol (Milliyet, June 13, 1984).

The discursive reactions presented in Table 6 and in these subsequent reports indicate that the post-ban period triggered a significant shift in legitimacy strategies. Rather than retreating from the public sphere, beer producers and allied actors re-engaged with intensified efforts to reshape institutional perceptions. This was particularly evident in the use of symbolic legitimacy claims (Suchman, 1995), such as invoking Atatürk's legacy, to reframe beer production as part of the Republic's modernist tradition. Additionally, critiques centered on unfair competition, freedom of enterprise, and procedural inconsistencies demonstrate a discursive turn toward moral and legal rationalization, aligning with strategies of resistance and re-legitimation (Oliver, 1991).

The involvement of political opposition, professional associations, and even tourists suggests that legitimacy struggles extended beyond economic concerns and became embedded in broader ideological and institutional conflicts. These dynamics illustrate how contested organizational fields evolves into arenas of discursive negotiation, where actors compete not only over regulatory authority, but also over the symbolic definition of national identity, modernity, and rightful participation in public discourse.

Post-restriction strategies and practices of firms and the sector: content related to the product sold, the producing firm, and sponsorship activities

Following numerous restrictions, including the requirement to obtain a license for beer sales, beer companies adopted new strategies to protect and expand their organizational fields and strengthen their legitimacy. Prominent strategies in this context included the following codes: "launching new products", "offering promotional gifts with products" and "sponsoring sports clubs." One of the first actions taken by beer companies was to introduce non-alcoholic beer (Milliyet, August 12 and September 16, 1984). Advertisements for non-alcoholic beer often portrayed beer as a nutritious food supplement. Additionally, companies sought to increase exports to find new markets (Cumhuriyet, August 11, 1984; Milliyet, September 18, 1984). Tuborg also began producing soft drinks (Milliyet, March 25 and 29, 1985), while the General Manager of Efes Pilsen stated, "If this continues, we may produce soft drinks" (Cumhuriyet, August 15, 1984). Another notable development during this period was the change in the content of newspaper

advertisements. As mentioned in the first section, beer advertisements in newspapers before 1984 typically targeted emotions, whereas after 1984, the focus shifted to promotional gifts offered with beer (Milliyet, July 3, 1985; Cumhuriyet, October 18, 1985). A news article titled “Competition in Beer Revived” published in Cumhuriyet on October 22, 1985, supports this observation: “With 'gift sales,' competition between Türkiye's two leading private beer companies has been reignited.” After this period, beer companies also became more involved in sports and athletes. Perhaps Uğur Mumcu's observation (Cumhuriyet, June 16, 1984) explains this trend: “Additionally, the Efes Pilsen Basketball team will compete in the Turkish First Basketball League this year, and broadcasters will have to mention the name 'Efes Pilsen' when reporting match results on radio and television. Tuborg, on the other hand, is engaging in 'sportsmanship' with its volleyball team in the İzmir local league. Tuborg also has swimmers competing in local competitions in İzmir.”

Content related to the declining sales of beer companies after the bans also appeared in the press. Newspaper headlines summarizing the sector's situation included: “Beer's Hope Lies in Homes” (Cumhuriyet, June 9, 1984), “Beer's Case in Parliament” (Cumhuriyet, June 11, 1984), “Beer Market Shrinks by 18%” (Cumhuriyet, April 2, 1985), “Beer Ban Benefits Hard Alcohol”, “Beer Producers Long for the Old Days” and “Beer Producers' Nightmare: A 40% Drop in Sales” (Cumhuriyet, September 22, 1985), and “Beer Consumption Drops by 50%” (Cumhuriyet, April 22, 1986). Today, the beer sector in Türkiye consists of 19 companies with a production capacity of over 1.6 billion liters. After reaching a record production of 1.1 billion liters in 2012, the sector experienced declines, with production in 2020 amounting to 928 million liters (source: TGDF Report). In Türkiye, where the conservative-democratic AK Party has been in power since 2002, restrictions on the alcoholic beverage sector have continued and appear to have been normalized by the general public.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the historical development of the beer production sector in Türkiye, its legitimacy challenges, and the influential role of the state, offering important extensions to existing theories of organizational legitimacy and discursive strategy. Aligning with the national business systems literature that emphasizes Turkish businesses' dependence on the state (Buğra, 2016; Fıkrıkoca, 2020), our analysis demonstrates how initial state support fostered a favorable legitimacy environment. However, when the state later withdrew support and imposed regulatory constraints, it mobilized additional institutional pressures (e.g., religious, health, and family values) against the industry. This highlights the state's role as an institutional entrepreneur capable of reshaping norms and discursive environments, extending prior

literature by showing how government rhetoric can initiate legitimacy struggles rather than merely respond to societal pressures.

Our findings address how organizations responded strategically when their legitimacy was threatened, aligning with Oliver's (1991) typology. Turkish breweries employed a range of tactics from compliance—such as adhering to advertising bans—to defiance, openly challenging regulatory classifications. Firms also compromised by emphasizing economic contributions (tax revenues, employment) and used avoidance strategies by reframing beer as non-alcoholic or beneficial to health. These tactics parallel strategies identified in other contested industries, such as gambling and tobacco (Reast et al., 2013), demonstrating both their wider applicability and the context-specific variations shaped by Türkiye's institutional environment.

Critically, this study enriches the discursive legitimacy literature by illustrating how firms utilized nationalist and modernist rhetoric to bolster their legitimacy. Firms strategically leveraged Atatürk's legacy and nationalist narratives, positioning beer production within the broader discourse of Turkish modernization. This ideologically charged discourse highlights the necessity of considering cultural and historical contexts, showing how alignment with dominant national narratives can compensate for weak or contested bases of legitimacy (e.g., religion) are weak or contested. Furthermore, framing beer as a lesser evil compared to hard liquors aligns with rhetorical strategies identified by Maguire and Hardy (2009) in other sectors, further underscoring the adaptive nature of organizational discourse.

This research also advances the understanding of legitimacy as a dynamic, continually negotiated process rather than a static condition (Suchman, 1995). Historically analyzing legitimacy shifts, we observed the transition from pragmatic legitimacy based on economic benefits and societal acceptance to moral legitimacy grounded in health and family values. The emergence of latent societal dissent upon shifts in political power highlights the concept of "masked dissent" discussed by Haack, Schilke, and Zucker (2021), illustrating how apparent institutional consensus may obscure underlying ideological conflicts that rapidly surface under changing political climates.

Finally, by integrating structure and agency perspectives, our study uniquely examines how institutional frameworks, notably state policies and cultural ideologies, shape legitimacy contests, and how organizational agents actively employ discursive strategies to navigate these constraints. This dual focus emphasizes the reciprocal interplay between powerful institutional environments and organizational rhetoric. Our findings reinforce Ashforth and Gibbs' (1990) assertion that legitimacy management is inherently precarious, as organizations' discursive strategies may backfire when institutional alignment

shifts. Nevertheless, the study also highlights firms' adaptive resilience, evident through strategic realignment (e.g., niche marketing, sponsorships), demonstrating discourse as a critical resource for sustaining organizational legitimacy under institutional volatility (Hardy et al., 2000; Arslan & Coşkun, 2017).

In summary, this research provides nuanced insights into the relational and processual nature of organizational legitimacy within an emerging economy, underscoring the importance of socio-political acumen alongside economic performance. By revealing how organizations dynamically recalibrate legitimacy narratives amid shifting state ideologies and cultural contexts, our findings significantly contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical approaches to legitimacy management in contested institutional environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that organizational legitimacy in the Turkish brewing industry evolved across three distinct historical periods, each shaped by shifting institutional constraints and corresponding discursive strategies. Initially, firms aligned with state-supported economic policies, reinforcing their legitimacy through nationalism and economic contributions. However, as regulatory restrictions emerged, firms adopted defensive and ideological discourses, drawing on modernity, public health arguments, and economic liberalization narratives. Ultimately, in response to restrictive policies, firms shifted towards adaptive and pragmatic legitimacy strategies, leveraging sports sponsorships and alternative market positioning.

By examining these historical shifts, this study contributes to the broader literature on organizational legitimacy, particularly in industries where state, religious, and societal institutions exert strong influence over market dynamics. Within the Turkish context, it provides new insights into how firms navigate evolving regulatory pressures through discourse. The findings highlight the dynamic nature of legitimacy struggles in developing economies and underscore the importance of cross-national comparisons across different institutional settings.

The results of this research reaffirm that legitimacy is not a static but a dynamic process, where discourse plays a proactive role in shaping organizational positioning. Beyond their normative justifications, firms' efforts to frame their relations with the state within regulatory and pragmatic frameworks highlight a key aspect of legitimacy construction. Strategies that distinguish the government from the state and reference historical conceptions of governance have been integral to firms' attempts at reconciliation with

shifting institutional expectations. These discursive strategies serve not only as responses to immediate regulatory pressures as a long-term mechanism of defense against potential future constraints.

For future research, this study presents several important questions: How would state discourse differ in contexts where the foundation of legitimacy is stronger? Similarly, how would firm discourses evolve in markets with more limited state intervention? Investigating these questions across different national contexts could provide comparative insights into how regulatory environments shape organizational legitimacy strategies.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the empirical analysis relied solely on two newspapers, Cumhuriyet and Milliyet, which may limit the breadth of ideological representation and perspectives. While these newspapers provide extensive historical coverage and represent relatively centrist perspectives, additional sources with varied ideological orientations could have further enriched the findings. Second, due to the inherent editorial nature of newspaper data, the discourses analyzed may reflect editorial policies as much as organizational voices themselves. Finally, given the specific historical and institutional context of the Turkish brewing industry, caution is warranted in generalizing the findings to other sectors or national contexts. Despite these limitations, the study provides significant insights into legitimacy management strategies within contested institutional environments and offers valuable avenues for future research.

AUTHOR STATEMENT

The authors declare that all contributions to this manuscript were made by the listed authors. Kemal Demir and Hakan Baltacı contributed 60% and 40% to the study, respectively. The authors also declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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