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## **Sosyal Medya Reklamlarında Eleştirel Söylem Analizi: Starbucks**

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### **ÖZ**

Günümüzde ilginç, yaratıcı, çekici ve ikna edici görünümlere sahip basılı veya sosyal medya gibi çeşitli mecralarda birçok reklam sunulmaktadır. Bu reklamlarda, göze çarpan dil olgusu gelişiminin yanı sıra sözel ve sözel olmayan işaretlerin ortak kullanımı, reklam söylemini keşfetmeyi ve dahası verilmek istenen mesajı analiz etmeyi gerekli bir konu haline getirmiştir. Bu amaçla, bu çalışmada oldukça popüler bir kahve markası olan Starbucks'a ait dört farklı İngilizce reklam, "Eleştirel Söylem Analizi" perspektifinden incelenmiştir. Bu çalışma, temel olarak ilgili markanın reklamlarındaki dil kullanımı ve görsel tasarımın müşterileri nasıl etkilediğine odaklanmaktadır. Dilsel ve görsel unsurların, ürünlerin tercih edilebilirliği üzerindeki etkilerini analiz etmek için Fairclough'un (1992) Eleştirel Söylem Analizi çerçevesi benimsenerek dört farklı Starbucks reklamı üzerinde nitel bir araştırma yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler tematik analiz yapılarak incelenmiştir. Bulgular, markanın müşterilerin algılarını etkilemek için çeşitli stratejiler kullandığını, ilgili sosyal medya reklamlarının ürünlerin satın alınmasını teşvik etmek için, 'dönemsel içecek' ve 'bireysellik' gibi yaklaşımları kullandığını göstermiştir. Sonuç olarak, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi'nin, anlam oluşturmada insanları etkileme yöntemlerine ve bu etkilerin farklı sosyal bağlamlarda incelenmesine izin veren etkili bir yaklaşım olduğu ifade edilebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Söylem analizi, metin analizi, Starbucks, reklam.

## **Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Media Ads: Starbucks**

### **ABSTRACT**

Today, many advertisements are presented in various media such as printed or social media with interesting, creative, attractive and persuasive appearances. In these advertisements, the common use of verbal and non-verbal signs and the development of conspicuous language phenomena have made it necessary to explore the advertising discourse and analyze the desired message. For this purpose, in this study, four different English advertisements of Starbucks, a very popular coffee brand, were examined from the perspective of "Critical Discourse Analysis". This study mainly focuses on how the use of language and visual design in the advertisements of the relevant brand affects customers. To analyze the effects of linguistic and visual elements on the preferability of products, qualitative research was conducted on four different Starbucks advertisements in Turkish and English, adopting Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The obtained data were analyzed by making a thematic analysis. The findings showed that the brand uses a variety of strategies to influence customers' perceptions, with relevant social media advertisements using approaches such as 'seasonal drinks' and 'individuality' to encourage the purchase of products. As a result, it can be stated that Critical Discourse Analysis is an effective approach that

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allows the methods of influencing people in creating meaning and the examination of these effects in different social contexts.

**Keywords:** Discourse analysis, textual analysis, Starbucks, advertisement.

## Introduction

Language is essential to human life, through which spoken or written communication is provided to others. According to Crystal (1992), language is society's systematic, traditional use of sounds, signs, or written symbols systematic, traditional use of sounds, signs, or written symbols in society for self-expression and communication. Also, language has a significant influence on how individuals behave. This is particularly true in the marketing and advertising industries. In advertising, language as a communication tool is used to deliver specific messages to influence, convince, and inform people. These specific messages generally aim to persuade people to buy certain products or services.

Language has also been the subject of many studies for a long time in different disciplines such as advertising, mass communication, marketing, sociology, cultural anthropology, social psychology and semiotics, which has a history dating back to the 1950s and 1960s. Undoubtedly, it has some effective functions that affect everyone (Gonzalez Ruiz, 2014). Davidson (1992) explains advertising as a social language, a type of audience/reader experience, a technique of persuasion [...] almost on its own, a world with its languages, customs, and history that determines the course and pace of much of our lives. In other words, advertising is a field that both creates and reveals existing social divisions.

Advertising, which is “any paid form of non-personal communication through the mass media about the product by an identified sponsor” (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty, 2003), has become part of our everyday life. The function of advertising can be viewed in basic ways: as a marketing tool and a means of communication (Wright, Winter and Zeigler, 1982). Thus, advertisements which are the products of advertising, are delivered to different kinds of societies to convey these two basic ways of function. Language in advertising is very important because it helps people identify and remember the product. According to Crystal (1987), advertising language is generally laudatory, positive, unreserved, and emphasizes the uniqueness of a product. Typically, it emphasizes why one product stands out in comparison with another.

Nowadays, an advertisement is presented in various kinds of media, such as printed and electronic media with interesting, creative, attractive, and persuasive appearances. As a media of communication, every advertisement has a message to be delivered to the customers. Due to the prevalence of mobile devices and consumers' virtually widespread carrying of them, businesses may contact customers anytime (Taylor, 2009). Nowadays, customers may also access and consume nearly any form of media material, wherever they are and whenever they want. As a result, the broad adoption of mobile communications opens up new avenues for marketing campaigns, consumer connection development, and direct customer feedback (Andrews et al., 2016).

The evolution of advertising noteworthy linguistic phenomena has been demonstrated by the discourse of ads. A copywriter may utilize language as a medium for communication ads that are both fascinating and convincing. Leech (1996) stated that, in general, every advertisement has five structures; headline, illustration(s), body copy, signature line, and standing details supporting subtle meaning because advertisements use a sign system that is comprised of verbal or non-verbal signs. Hence, this kind of language use makes advertising discourse an intriguing subject to investigate and evaluate. With this aim, a close textual analysis of four Starbucks advertisements is made to find the

language used and the meaning, purpose, message, and implication behind them by addressing the following research questions:

- 1) What are the linguistic features used in Starbucks advertisements?
- 2) What are the discursive techniques employed in these advertisements to influence the customers?

### **Literature Review**

Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach to language, which attempts to underline the affirmative, complicated relationships between text, talk, social perception, power and culture, in terms of social power and dominance. A definition of discourse is needed to underline more specifically how CDA is being used as a multimodal tool to examine discourses. For that purpose, it can be suggested that discourse refers to several cognizances such as “(1) meaning-making as an element of the social process, (2) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., political discourse), and (3) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective” (Fairclough, 2009: 162). To put it differently, discourse is about the production of knowledge through language, but it is itself produced by a practice: “discursive practice” — in other words, the practice of producing meaning (Hall, 1997). Therefore, discourse analysis is one of the most effective methods to understand how power relations influence the practices of social identities and institutions.

Fairclough and Wodak (1997) describe CDA as a method to explore causal relationships and specify interconnections between discursive practices, events, texts (language) and social structures. It views “language as discourse, understood as an element of the social process which is dialectically related to others” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 2010: 1214). Thus, CDA provides for the scrutiny of how discourse is socially constitutive and socially shaped (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) and how discursive practices and texts are framed by relations of power. Similarly, Van Dijk (1995) considers CDA as a field that is involved closely in studying and analysing written and/or spoken texts to find the sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. Moreover, Shuker (1998) adds that “discursive practices are real or material, as well as being embodied in language, and function as a form of ideology” (p.99). Shuker defines social practices, or individual signs as discursive practices and defines them as a form of ideology. In brief, it is applied to discover the power dynamics in discourse and uncover the socially constituted power relationships manifested in texts (Bishop and Jaworski, 2003).

Van Dijk, who is a Dutch linguist with an analysis work on discourse structures, talks about a two-way relationship between discourse and ideology. Accordingly, while ideologies influence our discourses in daily life, discourse also plays an important role in the reproduction of ideologies. It can be understood that a link is established between discourse and ideology, mental models that represent events from the point of view of one or more ideological groups (Işık, 2006: 84). Apparently, it can be grasped that all linguistic items are not chosen randomly in a context but rather, they are all selected and used on an ideological basis because language is the tool which conveys socially-negotiated messages to people in a society.

When considering advertising discourse, it is assumed that the text is written to influence the audience to purchase the related good or service or to show that product or service as appealing to the viewer as possible. As a kind of spoken media, advertisements may be among the most important media discourses in terms of controlled language use and concealed ideologies. According to Abdelaal and Sase (2014), advertisements are a part of our everyday life and transmit certain meanings. This approach addresses the values, attitudes, and common knowledge, including the traces of culture.

Correspondingly, in the process of persuading a customer, the consumer always fails to recognize the advertising as an advertisement (Liyanage, 2020). It merely becomes information in the consumer's head. As a result of their use of language and underlying ideology, advertising, regardless of how they reach the consumer, whether verbal or nonverbal, may be recognized as a more critical media discourse.

Advertising is also a social activity that does not operate in an isolation; it relates a variety of elements, including person and item, symbol, power, communication and satisfaction, and many more (Jhally, 1987). The form, colours, words, typefaces, and pictures used on the packaging convey and appeal to customers through the careful selection of semiotic elements and the communicative features of incorporated design and new writing (Chen and Eriksson, 2019). In this manner, Cook (2001) reminds out that advertising informs, persuades, recalls, influences and even modifies beliefs, feelings, and mindsets. He argues that advertising does more than just sell stuff; they also reshape society and force individuals to buy things they do not want or need. He also believes that commercials provide consumers with caution or information. As a result, ads can aid in the formation of identities and attitudes.

Goddard (1998) also suggests that people build their conceptions of the world through the rhetoric of advertising. Observing the conversation surrounding commercials, intertextual aspects are frequently seen in advertisements, and popular genres are chosen on purpose (Williams, 2003). This demonstrates how well-informed advertising is about the qualities of its target market. Thus, It is crucial to understand how they should build their messaging visually and verbally to impact the customers.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative design was utilized for this study to investigate how meaning is constructed through media discourse for the purpose of directing people to buy a certain product. The methodology used to conduct this study is the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – derived from Functional Systematic Linguistics– since it permits the analysis of texts within their social context (Titscher et al, 2000). This analysis deals with how relationships, values, ideologies, and identities between powers are reflected and processed in individuals and society through linguistic fictionalizations. This method of analysis developed by van Dijk (1993) includes the content, rhetoric, semantics and narrative structure of the text. Furthermore, Wodak (1996) puts forward that “the critical analysis implies a systematic methodology and a relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power-relations. Interpretations are always dynamic and open to new contexts and new information” ( p. 17-20). Taking this into consideration, Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional framework was employed for the analysis of related Starbucks coffee advertisements.

Within this framework, there are closely related dimensions. These dimensions are the description of text analysis, the interpretation of production and the explanation of social conditions. In the first dimension, the textual level is concerned with the “description” of content and form. Linguistic features include a systematic analysis of word choices, grammatical functions, and text structure. The second stage is the “interpretation” stage, which is closely related to how an object is produced and perceived by the audience with the help of linguistic elements in the first dimension. The last stage, the “explanation” part, examines the social equivalent of the process produced and interpreted by interaction and social context. In other words, the analysis in the explanatory part is considered together with historical, social and cultural contexts as a social-cultural practice.

### Data Collection Tools

In this study, the necessary information was obtained by scanning the written and visual literature about the Starbucks company and its advertisements. With this aim, four different advertisements found in the images section of the google search engine are randomly selected and analyzed qualitatively from a critical perspective to understand how both text and visual design work together to create the desired effect on customers.

### Data Analysis

As Fairclough (1992) states, critical discourse analysis is the multifaceted examination of a text's linguistic units, semantics, and visual components. He adds that linguistic analysis is concerned with “participant’s representations, categories, construction of participant identity or participant relation” (1995: 58). The selected ads have more graphics and less text since the study’s goal is to lift the ideological veil to reveal the influence and philosophy behind pictures (Plamenatz, 1970). Therefore, in any sentence in a text, the expression of these functions has been examined with a thematic content analysis together with visual designs of each social media ad.

### Findings



fall back in with  
the pick of the season

Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Latte is back.

The flavor of pumpkin perfectly blended with steamed milk, whipped cream, and pumpkin pie spices. Just what you've been waiting to fall back into.



Enjoy a Pumpkin Spice Latte,  
back for a limited time  
at Starbucks.

[Facebook.com/Starbucks](https://www.facebook.com/Starbucks)

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Figure 1. *Fall Back in with the Pick of the Season (Pumpkin Spice Latte, 2011)*

The headline in this advertisement is “fall back in with the pick of the season.” In this headline, the ad maker tries to increase customers’ and readers’ sight. This headline also tries to influence the viewers with the choice of words. To begin with, ‘fall’ is used as a synonym- for the season and as a metaphor to welcome back the season of pumpkin spice latte. The word “pick” can imply both picking up the patch in the picture above and picking up ‘the pick of the season’ at the nearest Starbucks. Therefore, it can be suggested this ad is released in the fall to promote a limited-time latte.

When some linguistic features are considered and are the most frequently used in nearly all of the ads, there is only one use of ‘and’ in this ad because the text is limited. The addition is connective and is used to give details about the latte. In terms of lexical cohesion, “pumpkin spice latte”, the brand name “Starbucks” and “back” are used twice in the ad as repeating words. In terms of word choice, it can be seen that the passive versions of some verbs are used as adjectives to describe (blended, whipped, steamed) to describe the flavour, which contributes to “hyperbole”; in other words, exaggeration of the product.

The grammatical patterns of the sentences offer that the sentences in the ad are direct and simple. The use of verbs is simple present tense and present perfect continuous tense to emphasize the wait for this seasonal latte. There is also the use of imperatives to persuade readers to buy this product, ‘Enjoy a pumpkin spice latte.’

“You” is used only once in the text as a pronoun. The use of second-person personal and possessive pronouns such as “you” and “yours” seeks to address the readers directly and personally. It is considered valuable when people are addressed individually rather than as part of a mass audience.

The sentence structures are short and include non-traditional syntactic constructions. These ads use characteristics that belong to the spoken language but are used in written text. As paralinguistic elements, the headline and signature lines are written in different fonts and sometimes in different colours. Blank spaces also separate these elements and the body copy. The layout consists of different images as it exists in this ad as well.

In terms of illustrations, this ad uses a simple design with both the excitement of fall (through colours and images) and the use of “pick of the season” to imply that this product is only available for a limited time, which is one of the marketing strategies of Starbucks. It can be suggested that the concept of ‘seasonal drinks’ turns a regular cup of coffee into a luxury because the customer needs to grab it as quickly as possible. Multiple uses of pumpkins, visually and textually, work subtly to convince the viewers to buy the latte.

The models are at a pumpkin patch, bundled up with scarf and barret. Happy and smiling people imply how you can feel if you buy the latte. Orange colour leaves extend the fall theme throughout the entire ad. Also, the Starbucks logo is small and almost hard to notice. It can be suggested that the minimal use of its logo and name was intentional and proves the company doesn’t have to do much to market its products. As a final word, the limited text keeps the photo as the focal point of the ad.



Figure 2. *The Best Coffee for the Best You (The Best Coffee, 2016)*

The cup's Starbucks emblem and the usage of the all-caps word "YOU" highlight how significant "you" are. Inferring that Starbucks and "You" are both the greatest—or, to put it another way, the best coffee for the best (as the slogan claims)—suggests another principle that the best gets the best or that you deserve the best. Under the phrase "Taste of Inspiration," there is a signature font that expresses freedom and a sense of individuality. The overall result has to do with "Being Exceptional."

At first glance, one cannot help but notice a single cup and the word "YOU" in capital letters, which might be seen as a way of direct communication with the customer together with the reinforcement of the individualistic lifestyle. On the other side, the entire composition also isolates the person from the crowd; the single cup emphasizes: "You are the best/special." The elements work together cohesively to successfully deliver the message. The advertisement effectively sells more than just coffee; it also offers an experience and a way of life.

Yellow and brown/dark brown, a combination of red and black, are employed as the primary colours of this advertisement. Green and white/off-white are also visible. It is possible to see the colour green in only two places, the uppercase YOU and the logo. The colours provide a sense of harmony or resemblance. Customers are motivated to feel special by the emotion of the slogan, which suggests that they should treat themselves to the best cup of tea or coffee at Starbucks, a welcoming local coffee shop. Warm and earthy tones are used, and the lighting conveys an inviting and friendly feeling.



Figure 3. *It's not Just Coffee (It's Starbucks, 2013)*

In this ad, the tagline appears as a body copy, and all of the words are written in upper-case to emphasize the message, which has an assertive effect on the viewer. Some words such as coffee, perfect, and Starbucks are in larger points. When these words come together, they form a subtle message and represent a connotation that Starbucks offers the perfect coffee, as suggested in the ad.

There is a repetitive use of if conditionals. If-clauses are also known as conditional clauses or conditional sentences. This means that the event in the main clause (not counting the if) only occurs if the condition contained in the clause is fulfilled. If clauses are negative, implying unanticipated situations. In the first sentence, the main clause suggests that the company takes responsibility for that situation. However, in the second sentence, the main clause includes an imperative (Make sure), putting the responsibility on the customer. Also, the use of still as an adverb symbolizes something continuing. The use of imperative and “still” adverb in the second conditional sentence contributes to the meaning that the company rejects the failure.

The use of pronouns (You, We) emphasizes the direct communication between the company and its customers. This usage also clearly makes party determination (the Starbucks Company and the customers). In the signature line, just an adverb is used to strengthen a statement, namely, the message given above. The Starbucks written in bold characters supports the effect in the whole ad, and the company's name thus stands out.



In the ad, white, off- white and green, the company's colours, come to the fore and draw attention. The company logo and the size of a coffee cup in the foreground emphasize how much the company trusts its product. The logo is stressed twice on the cup and at the bottom of the ad.



Figure 4. *Nice to meet you (We're Starbucks, 2020)*

As can be seen in the fourth advertisement, a group of cups with the name of their recipient is seen on each coffee cup. The title is "We're Starbucks. Nice to meet you" is written. Although initially, Starbucks wrote down customer names because they received too many orders, later Starbucks discovered that writing names increases business efficiency and increases brand awareness. Writing a name on the cup makes customers feel a sense of ownership, as well as creating a feeling of 'this coffee belongs only to me, not to someone else'.

For this reason, when the baristas working at Starbucks write customers' names on the glass, they create a strong bond between the product and the customer, potentially making the customer feel a sense of ownership of this product. In this way, it also increases the value of the brand by making each customer feel special individually at the same time. In addition, it can be stated that Starbucks company also creates its own unique community in this way.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

Starbucks is a well-known premium coffee brand that is experiencing rapid global expansion. The business has become an iconic brand known for its various coffee products and customer service thanks to some marketing strategy. Different marketing techniques have helped the company gain a competitive advantage in transforming itself into an industry leader. Therefore, this study aimed to decipher the social media ads belonging to the Starbucks brand by combining verbal and nonverbal elements to create an effective marketing strategy in product marketing with the Critical Discourse Analysis approach of Fairclough (1992). Four advertisements taken from the images section of the google search engine were systematically analyzed through thematic analysis for this purpose. The

results obtained revealed that the relevant company uses two basic marketing strategies: Seasonal drinks and individuality.

The seasonal drinks strategy comes across as a marketing strategy that offers important opportunities to meet new customers. With seasonal marketing, special products are offered for that period with promotions made taking into account the periods that are important for target group customers. The message of buying that product as soon as possible is subconsciously included in the customer's perception. Also, Starbucks catches consumers' attention by consistently delivering distinctive designs for each season (Munifa, 2022). Thus, it is the case that a cup of coffee turns into a luxurious experience.

Another important issue to underline in the ads is the idea that each customer is individually valuable. For this reason, it can be said that Starbucks' brand understanding is structured to create personal connections with its guests. In addition, according to Schultz and Yang (2008), it is possible to say that the most distinctive feature of Starbucks as a brand is that it has qualified personnel to establish a direct relationship with guests. Therefore, Starbucks, which aims to give its guests an experience as a brand, aims to reflect the brand and its performance on the coffee cup. Dave Olsen from Starbucks management also states that coffee will remain only a theory when it is far from people. With the work of Bedbury, who has been serving as a marketing manager since 1995, Starbucks has been transformed into its current state as a brand and its products have become a cultural symbol in many regions. Especially by adopting the values of communicating directly with its guests, it has achieved an emotional connection by providing a much more sincere and deep brand communication than advertising campaigns on television and in newspapers (Kodak, 2011).

Starbucks started writing the names of its customers on cups in 2012 to create a better personal bond with its customers. The goal of the application is to develop a first-name relationship with customers and make beverage orders more than a purchase. Although the names on the glasses also help baristas remember and sort orders, preventing customers with similar orders from getting the wrong one, this has turned into a strategy over time, causing customers to feel an affinity for a brand. A person's name is the greatest link to their identity and individuality. For some, it can even be said that this is the most important word in the world for that person. In addition to being a sign of kindness and a way to get to know people, it also leaves positive and lasting marks by making people feel more respected and more important. As can be grasped, people prefer to choose brands that care about themselves. Therefore, asking and responding to customers' needs increases customer engagement with the brand, as well as improves the customer experience because today's businesses recognize the value of engaged consumers since they have transformed into co-creators of communication and goods (Sawhney et al., 2005). In other words, a higher degree of confidence in the coffee shop, a better appraisal of interior infrastructure, and more quality service appreciated by customers can all contribute to a higher level of satisfaction (Pakurár et al., 2019).

As a result, it can be expressed that advertising is designed to have various effects on consumers based on a company's goals. Most companies use a variety of methods to support a wide range of functions. The goal is to motivate targeted customers by showing them how a product or service is best to help them solve a problem or convince them to buy it. For this reason, discourse analysis is a useful tool for studying the power of language in advertising with the help of other details, such as illustrations. Taking these into account, it is understood that this study shows how language affects society through advertising by creating standards that will convince the target audience to prefer that company. The results revealed that the advertising organization has symbolic actions with strategies produced to create the desired effect on customers. Although details are

important for message and persuasion, photos and words interact with each other to convey the following message to people: come and buy this product.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The Critical Discourse Analysis framework adopted by Fairclough helps to identify what underlies certain ideologies, beliefs and attitudes of discourse production. Namely, the relationship between language and its social context can be examined in more detail by analyzing how texts are deconstructed and shaped to achieve the goals assigned to them. Thus, teaching this approach to students in the classroom goes beyond creating students' awareness of purely linguistic issues. Depending on this, students can also be taught how to emphasize the influence of social forces on text composition.

Acquiring critical discourse analysis skills enables students to answer inferential questions whose answers are usually predicted as they relate to the author's beliefs and ideologies (Dini, 2022). Moreover, it can be stated that raising awareness about media literacy will help students create a shield against extreme ideological views that are imposed by different sources - intentionally or accidentally. Students' acquisition of such a skill encourages the logical organization of ideas and strengthens communication. Hence, teaching students how this approach can be used effectively in all verbal, visual or auditory areas is recommended.

### **Research and Publication Ethics**

In this study, all the rules specified in the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were complied with. None of the actions described in the Directive under the title of Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics were carried out.

### **Ethics Committee Permission**

It does not require the approval of the Ethics Committee.

### **Authors Contribution Rate**

The work is authored.

### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no case of conflict of interest.

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