Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

ANALYSIS OF FLAMING BEHAVIORS TOWARD MERVE DIZDAR'S CANNES SPEECH IN THE CONTEXT OF CELEBRITY BRAND MANAGEMENT

MERVE DİZDAR'IN CANNES KONUŞMASI ÜZERİNE YAPILAN PARLAMA DAVRANIŞLARININ ÜNLÜ MARKALAŞMASI YÖNETİMİ BAĞLAMINDA ANALİZİ

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Abstract

The rapidly changing landscape of new media poses significant challenges for social scientists striving to define sociological and psychological contexts. The emergence of "Online flaming" as a behavior post-Web 2.0 technology exemplifies this challenge, as it represents a form of cyberbullying where users post hostile or insulting messages online, violating societal norms. This study integrates the stances and actions of celebrity brands on social media within their brand management processes. Employing netnography—an online ethnographic research method that systematically analyzes online communities—this study scrutinizes flaming behaviors impacting the personal brand management processes of actress Merve Dizdar on YouTube. The sample consists of the most-liked comments and sub-comments from the top five YouTube channels featuring Dizdar's speech, categorized into six flame behavior types: direct and intentional flame, indirect flame, straight flame, satirical flame, hot flame, and cold flame. Through netnography, the study examines the cultural essence of cyberbullying embedded within flaming behaviors. Findings of the research reveals the prevalent use of hostile language against the actress, with cyberbullies aiming to negatively impact her motivation. This research highlights the widespread use of exclusionary language, emphasizing its potential impact on the actress's online reputation and psychological well-being. Moreover, cyberbullies' aim to negatively affect the actress's motivation highlights the broader implications of online flaming on public figures. The study calls attention to brand management challenges in the digital age and offers insights into future research, aiming to foster a healthier online environment.

Keywords: Online Flaming, Cyberbullying, Netnography, Brand Management, Celebrity Brands, Social Media Behavior.

Öz

Yeni medya ortamındaki hızlı değişim, sosyologların ve psikologların sosyal ve psikolojik bağlamları tanımlama çabaları için bazı zorluklar sunmaktadır. Web 2.0 teknolojisiyle ortaya çıkan "Çevrimiçi parlama" davranışı bu zorluğun bir örneğini temsil etmekte ve toplumsal normları ihlal eden aşağılayıcı çevrimiçi mesajlar biçiminde bir siber zorbalığı ifade etmektedir. Bu çalışma, ünlü markaların sosyal medyadaki duruşları ve eylemlerini, marka yönetimi süreçleriyle bütünleştirmektedir. Çalışma, çevrimiçi toplulukları sistematik bir şekilde analiz eden çevrimiçi etnografik bir araştırma yöntemi olan netnografi kullanılarak, Merve Dizdar'ın YouTube üzerindeki kişisel marka yönetim süreçlerini etkileyen parlama davranışlarını incelemektedir. Örneklem, Dizdar'ın konuşmasının yer aldığı en çok beğenilen beş YouTube kanalındaki en popüler yorumlar ve alt yorumlardan oluşmaktadır. Netnografi aracılığıyla çalışma, parlama davranışları içinde yer alan siber zorbalığın kültürel özünü incelemektedir. Araştırma bulguları, oyuncuya karşı dışlayıcı dilin yaygın bir şekilde kullanıldığını ortaya koymakta ve siber zorba kişilerin onun motivasyonunu olumsuz etkilemeyi hedeflediğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, dışlayıcı dilin yaygın kullanımını vurgulayarak, bunun oyuncunun çevrimiçi itibarı ve psikolojik iyi oluşu üzerindeki potansiyel etkilerini gözler önüne sermektedir. Ayrıca siber zorba kişilerin oyuncunun motivasyonunu olumsuz etkileme amacı çevrimiçi parlamanın kamu figürleri üzerindeki daha geniş etkilerine dikkat çekmektedir. Çalışma, dijital çağda marka yönetimi zorluklarına işaret etmekte ve daha sağlıklı bir çevrimiçi ortam oluşturma amacını güden gelecekteki araştırmalara yönelik içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevirimiçi Parlama, Siber Zorbalık, Netnografi, Marka Yönetimi, Ünlü Markası, Sosyal Medya Davranışı.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digitalization has significantly increased the spread of online hate speech, defined as discriminatory communication targeting individuals or groups based on specific characteristics. This rise in hate speech has been further amplified by the extensive reach of social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitch (Kim, 2023). With more people using the internet and social media, the negative consequences of the digital landscape, such as the propagation of hate speech and online flaming, have intensified. These developments highlight the complexities and responsibilities that accompany technological advancements in the digital age (Prabandari, Cahyaningtyas, & Wibawa, 2021). As online communities grow, the incidence of hate speech tends to rise, suggesting that these platforms may contribute to user radicalization (Schmitz, Murić, & Burghardt, 2022).

Social media platforms offer users a venue for unrestricted expression, but they also function as breeding grounds for hate speech, which can expose users to harmful content, either intentionally or unintentionally (Ștefăniță & Buf, 2021). Identifying and addressing hate speech on platforms like Twitter poses a significant challenge, often requiring manual moderation due to varying interpretations of what constitutes hate speech (Waseem & Hovy, 2016).

The anonymity provided by online platforms complicates the detection and prevention of hate speech, encouraging predatory behaviors in the online environment (Chakraborty & Masud, 2022). Consequently, the digital sphere has become a significant environment for the proliferation of hate speech and online flaming, with social media platforms playing a central role in their spread. Addressing the problem of hate speech online requires a comprehensive approach that considers the broader societal implications and complexities associated with digitalization and virtual interactions.

The objective of this research is to investigate celebrity endorsement patterns through the lens of a highly regarded celebrity, Merve Dizdar, who has won an award at Cannes, and to explore their impact on social media, particularly YouTube, which is one of the most significant platforms for online engagement. In this context, netnography has been useful in investigating a range of phenomena, including consumer behavior in relation to beauty products (Mimoun, Garnier, & Depledt, 2015), interactions within fan communities (Cronin & Cocker, 2018), and responses to celebrity endorsements, like those involving Merve Dizdar.

The netnographic method allows researchers to analyze user-generated content, comments, and interactions on online platforms (Rashid & Zeeshan, 2018). For this study, netnographic analysis was chosen to investigate online flame behavior directed at Merve Dizdar on YouTube. The specific approach employed here is symbolic netnography, one of the four main methodologies used in marketing research (Kozinets, Netnography: Redefined --first two chapters preview, 2015). Symbolic netnography aims to "decode the everyday worlds of people or consumers," providing insights into the cultural context of online interactions.

The central concepts and primary goals of this research establish a framework for examining digital flaming directed at celebrity brands on YouTube through a netnographic analysis. The rapid growth of social media platforms in recent years has empowered individuals to voice their opinions, criticisms, and support for various brands and public figures. YouTube, as one of the most widely used platforms for user-generated content, plays a critical role in shaping public perceptions and influencing consumer behavior.

Digital flaming—defined as the use of inflammatory language and negative comments directed at celebrities or brands online—has become increasingly prevalent in the digital landscape. This paper seeks to explore the underlying motivations for digital flaming and its impact on celebrity brands. It also examines the extent to which netnographic analysis can offer valuable insights into this complex issue. By examining themes related to online behavior, brand image management, and audience engagement, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics at play in the digital age.

Conceptual Background

The literature review for this study explores the intersection of digital culture, celebrity brands, and online aggression. Researchers like (Ricketts, Barry, Guo, & Pelham , 2023) have investigated how platforms like YouTube have become arenas for digital flaming targeted at celebrity brands. Digital flaming includes a spectrum of hostile online behaviors, such as inflammatory comments, cyberbullying, and initiating online conflicts. Prior studies suggests that digital flaming can significantly harm both the targeted celebrities and the brands they represent. Understanding the reasons behind digital flaming and its impact on celebrity brands is crucial for marketers and brand managers to develop strategies to mitigate online aggression.

This study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by conducting a netnographic analysis of digital flaming on YouTube, specifically focusing on celebrity brands. The goal is to uncover underlying patterns and motivations that drive such behavior, offering insights that could inform more effective responses to online aggression. As part of this research, we will assess Merve Dizdar's speech, where she referenced women's issues—a controversial topic in Turkey—through the character she portrayed during her award acceptance. The online comments this speech received in the context of celebrity brands form the unique structure of this research.

The Concept of Online Flaming

Online flaming, also known as cyberbullying or online harassment, involves hostile or aggressive interactions among users on the internet. This behavior typically includes posting offensive or provocative comments, spreading false information, or attacking an individual's reputation online. Such actions can create a toxic atmosphere and severely affect the mental well-being of the targeted individuals. Cyberbullying is widespread across various platforms, including social media, discussion forums, and gaming communities. To effectively address online flaming, we need to educate internet users about the consequences of their online actions and promote positive interactions. Implementing robust reporting mechanisms that allow users to flag instances of online flaming is crucial for creating a safer online environment. Awareness campaigns and educational programs can help individuals recognize and combat online flaming, fostering a digital community characterized by respect and support (O'Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003).

There are approximately 4.95 billion social media users worldwide, representing about 61.4 percent of the global population. The primary reasons for using social media platforms include staying in touch with family and friends, spending leisure time, discovering the latest content, and consuming media. (Kepios, 2024). Additionally, many users turn to social media to find inspiration for new activities and make purchasing decisions. However, research indicates that despite the growing importance of social commerce, users often express dissatisfaction with the presence of brands on social media, and brands report mixed results regarding their social media investments (Yıldız, 2024). This context is pertinent to the focus of this research, which explores the dimensions of flame behavior on YouTube—one of the most popular social media platforms—and its impact on celebrity brands, specifically those associated with Cannes award recipients.

Flaming on YouTube, characterized by offensive and aggressive comments, is a widespread behavior that has been extensively researched. The nature of flaming comments on YouTube videos in Malaysia has been analyzed, providing insights into this behavior within a specific cultural context (Lingam & Aripin, 2017). Additionally, the ethical and legal dimensions of flaming on YouTube have been explored, with a focus on the perspectives of individuals engaging in such behavior (Aripin, Rashid, Ismail, & Limgam, 2020). These studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of flaming on social media platforms like YouTube, emphasizing the need for further investigation into its various aspects and broader implications.

Understanding YouTube as a Social Media Platform

The Social App Report 2024 shows that YouTube's revenue grew modestly in 2023, reaching $31.5 billion 1.3% increase from the previous year. This growth underscores YouTube's continued prominence in the digital world, with over 2.7 billion monthly active users reinforcing its dominance in the online

video industry. YouTube Premium, the platform's paid subscription service, surpassed the one hundred million subscriber mark in 2024, reflecting the increasing demand for premium content and users' willingness to pay for uninterrupted viewing (Iqbal, 2024).

Unlike traditional social networks like Facebook, YouTube focuses on content sharing rather than direct social interactions (Klobas, McGill, Moghavvemi, & Paramanathan, 2019). This unique approach makes YouTube the second most-used social media platform globally (Lee & Lee, 2021). Its popularity stems from its capacity for video content creation and viewing, attracting communities focused on phenomena like mukbang watching and science communication (Kircaburun et al.,).

Research on YouTube engagement has explored factors that influence user interaction, such as video tags and length, particularly within specific communities like Motor Vlogging (Kegen, 2015). YouTube has also become a major platform for science communication, elevating science communicators to influential roles (Hill, Grant, Mcmahon, & Singhal, 2022). YouTube's emphasis on community and web-based social connections fosters a sense of belonging and encourages user interaction (Görgün Deveci & Ünal, 2021). However, YouTube has faced criticism for negative aspects like social media addiction and the spread of misleading health-related information, such as pro-anorexia content (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017).

As YouTube continues to evolve, there is a growing interest in its potential to promote environmental awareness and foster social engagement (Filter, Eckes, Fiebelkorn, & Büssing, 2020). Additionally, YouTube's influence on consumer behavior, through product reviews and online trends, underscores its significance in shaping contemporary society (Huang, Chen, Chen, & Silalahi, 2022).

Flaming on YouTube has become a significant concern for marketers and brand managers, especially when it affects celebrity brands. This research aims to examine online flaming's impact on celebrity brands, focusing on the consequences of negative publicity. A positive alignment between a celebrity and a brand can enhance consumer perceptions, but scandals or negative information can significantly damage brand reputation. Marketers must proactively manage celebrity partnerships and implement contingency plans to mitigate these risks (Eng & Jarvis, 2020).

The Impact of Celebrity Brands on Consumer Behavior
Celebrities are individuals who possess a significant public presence, indicating that they hold a high status within society and attract public interest. Often, the public elevates celebrities to prominence without an apparent reason other than their fame and popularity. A celebrity endorsement of a product is considered a formal form of advertising. It involves providing public support or backing through a testimonial, a written or spoken declaration, or a press release.

A successful celebrity endorsement can shape the brand identity of the endorsed product, transferring the essence of the celebrity to the product and creating a connection between the product and the endorser. This occurs by transmitting the endorser's perceived image from the consumer's mind to the product, fostering a positive perception of the product and gradually establishing a distinct brand identity. This approach benefits companies because consumers are more likely to buy a familiar brand with a clearly defined identity.

Celebrity endorsement also serves to differentiate and position a product, using a well-known personality to establish a unique brand identity that sets it apart from competitors. Celebrity branding is like celebrity endorsement, serving as a secondary career for some public figures. Celebrities often start a brand as an investment or to engage in less demanding work that they find enjoyable. Celebrities leverage their established fan base from their careers to cultivate consumer loyalty and instill confidence in the brands they endorse. This connection enhances the brand's image as consumers perceive the celebrity as integral to the brand, thereby boosting its appeal.

Brands aim to maximize sales, and consumers are more inclined to purchase products that align positively with their lifestyle and self-image. Celebrity endorsements offer brands a distinct opportunity

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to forge personal connections with consumers, utilizing the celebrity's influence to foster a favorable association with the product.

Celebrities are pivotal in marketing, influencing brand equity through secondary associations (Spry, Pappu, & Cornwell , 2011). Consumers' admiration for celebrities can shape their perceptions of brands and influence their purchasing decisions (Özer, Ekinci, & Koçak, 2022). However, celebrity endorsements come with risks such as overexposure and potential negative associations that can impact the endorsed brands (Udovita, 2020). Research indicates that when a celebrity endorses multiple products, the effectiveness of these endorsements can diminish (Freire, Quevedo-Silva, Senise, & Scrivano, 2018). Globally, celebrities play an increasingly significant role in brand promotion (Hà & Lam, 2016).

The concept of a celebrity brand involves well-known individuals leveraging their unique image for commercial purposes often extending to creating their own product lines exclusively associated with their names (Kennedy, Baxter, & Kulczynski, 2021). Due to their high social status, celebrities can attract consumers to join brand communities and become devoted fans, aligning their aspirations for self-enhancement with those of their favorite celebrities (Wang, Huang, Zheng, Lin, & Wang, 2022). Celebrity endorsements wield considerable influence over consumer behavior, shaping brand perception and purchase intentions. Factors critical to their effectiveness include the alignment between the celebrity and the brand, the credibility of the celebrity, and the nature of the celebrity-consumer relationship (Dwivedi , Johnson, & McDonald, 2015). Endorsements often cultivate positive consumer attitudes, enhancing brand awareness, credibility, and loyalty (Kennedy, Baxter, & Kulczynski, 2021).

However, it is essential to acknowledge potential drawbacks associated with celebrity endorsements, such as scandals or overexposure, which can negatively impact consumer perceptions of both the celebrity and the endorsed brand (Um & Kim, 2016). Moreover, the proliferation of endorsements and the attachment consumers feel towards celebrities underscore the importance of maintaining celebrity credibility while mitigating risks of consumer trust erosion due to excessive brand associations (Ilicic & Webster, 2011).

Exploring the Phenomenon of Celebrity Brands Flaming on YouTube
Celebrity brand flaming on YouTube involves individuals, known as "flamers," who deliberately target celebrities and their associated brands with negative and hostile comments or content. This cyberbullying practice can severely harm the public image and reputation of both the celebrity and the brand, impacting the perception of the products, services, or causes they endorse. YouTube, as a platform, is commonly known to host a significant amount of flaming activity.

Social media platforms often lack effective mechanisms to prevent or address the spread of such harmful content, leaving celebrities and brands vulnerable to these attacks. Flamers engage in debates and post comments without considering ethical or legal implications, and many users are unaware of cybersecurity laws, especially those pertaining to flaming activities on platforms like YouTube.

Addressing celebrity brand flaming on YouTube requires the involvement of various stakeholders, including social media platforms, legal bodies, celebrities, brands, and the public. By understanding the dynamics of flaming and implementing comprehensive strategies to combat it, the negative impact on celebrities and brands can be mitigated.

On the other hand, when individuals become fans of a celebrity, they often develop a sense of empathy towards the brands endorsed by that celebrity. This empathy can lead fans to learn more about the brand and seek to experience it themselves (Parmar & Mann, 2020). A higher degree of celebrity worship can transform into a self-brand connection, impacting the brand equity of the endorsed brand. Consumers build their self-concept through the brands they use, often appropriating the symbolic meanings derived from celebrity endorsement.

Consumers frequently view celebrity endorsers as embodying positive attributes related to their

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personality and lifestyle. This perception can foster strong affection and, in some cases, even obsession with the celebrity. As a result, consumers may believe that using products endorsed by their favorite celebrity will lead to self-fulfillment and positive transformation in their own lives (Reeves, Baker, & Truluck, 2012). This close connection between celebrity endorsements and consumer behavior underscores the significant influence celebrities wield over brand perception and consumer loyalty.

Netnographic Analysis: Understanding Celebrity Brands in Digital Landscape
In today's digital age, celebrity branding has transcended traditional advertising, leveraging online platforms as dynamic spaces for consumer engagement and discussion. Through netnographic analysis, researchers can delve into online conversations and interactions, gaining insights into consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards celebrity brands.

Netnography proves invaluable in exploring online flaming, where consumers express enthusiastic and often polarized opinions about celebrity brands. By examining the underlying motivations and sentiments driving these online flames, we can gain insights into the complex dynamics of celebrity branding in the digital realm.

Moreover, netnographic analysis enables the identification of influential trends, critical brand touchpoints, and areas for enhancement in celebrity branding strategies. This deeper understanding of online flaming within the context of celebrity brands empowers marketers to craft more targeted and resonant approaches that resonate deeply with consumers.

Netnography involves analyzing social relations on platforms like YouTube and other social media networks, focusing on the structures and interactions among users. This method explores online community exchanges such as information sharing, discussions, emotional support, and companionship. By examining these interactions, netnography provides valuable insights into the structure and patterns of relationships among community members, offering a comprehensive tool for understanding online social dynamics (Reid & Duffy, 2018).

Additionally, netnography is an efficient approach for studying online culture and community interactions, offering a unique perspective on digital social phenomena (Punch, 2014). It allows researchers to observe and capture the essence of online interactions without disrupting conversations, leading to a nuanced understanding of virtual social dynamics. In this study, primary data will be gathered from observations on YouTube, illustrating the effectiveness of netnography in exploring online platforms.

In our netnographic study design, we will analyze YouTube to capture the diverse range of consumer perspectives and experiences related to celebrity brands. By immersing ourselves in the digital conversations surrounding celebrity branding, we aim to gain a holistic view of the complex relationships between celebrities, brands, and consumers in the online realm.

METHODOLOGY
Main purpose of the netnographic research design
This study utilizes netnography, a qualitative research methodology developed by Robert V. Kozinets in 1998, specifically designed for studying online cultures and communities (Crichton & Kinash, 2008). Netnography essentially adapts traditional ethnographic techniques to the realm of computer-mediated communications, enabling a deep dive into the beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors prevalent within specific online groups (Coombes & Jones, 2020). It is uniquely effective in uncovering the intricate dynamics and communication patterns within virtual communities.

Netnography is defined as 'a written narrative derived from fieldwork investigating cultures and communities evolving from online, computer-mediated, or internet-based communications, where both fieldwork and textual narrative are methodologically grounded in Western traditions and techniques' (Kozinets, 1998). As online cultural communities proliferated through platforms like social media, this

definition was subsequently refined and broadened to offer clearer insights into the breadth and practical application of netnography.

Netnography offers a more naturalistic and robust approach compared to quantitative research methods like surveys, interviews, or focus groups (Kozinets, 2010). Rooted in anthropology, it transforms social media data into cultural insights by studying online interactions and dynamics through traditional ethnographic principles. This methodology occupies a distinctive position bridging quantitative and qualitative methodologies, leveraging the strengths of both while maintaining manageable complexity (Kozinets, 2015). This flexibility renders netnography an effective tool for exploring and understanding diverse online communities and their unique cultural dynamics.

Netnography encompasses a multimethod approach that integrates various analytical techniques, including content analysis, historical analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis (Mkono, 2012). This methodology is adept at studying social activities and interactions within online communities through technologically mediated communications. Its effectiveness in providing insights into the utilization of social media platforms by diverse online communities is well documented (Latip-Yusoph , 2016). Moreover, netnography has proven valuable in exploring customer interactions and organizational behaviors (Setiawan & Setyohadi, 2017).

Historically, netnography has enjoyed widespread use primarily in fields such as marketing and advertising. However, in recent years, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable surge in studies examining the role of online interactions and digital communities. These newer investigations delve into diverse topics, including the dynamics of online engagement, the formation of communities in digital environments, and the integration of digital media into daily life routines. Consequently, netnography has evolved beyond its traditional association with advertising and marketing, becoming a versatile research tool with applications spanning across various social sciences.

Netnography is widely recognized for its natural and non-intrusive approach, contrasting with methods like focus groups, surveys, or interviews. This methodology allows researchers to observe online communities offline, either participating or not, akin to traditional ethnography. Non-participant observation is typically preferred for studying behaviors in settings like Facebook groups, Twitter chats, user comments on platforms such as YouTube, or blog sites. This preference stems from netnography's aim to minimize researcher influence, thereby preserving the authenticity of online community behaviors and optimizing data collection (Bartl, Kannan, & Stockinger, 2016).

Rooted in ethnographic principles from anthropology, netnography examines the cultural dynamics of societies and communities through the lens of digital media. The increasing prevalence of cultural expressions on social media platforms has bolstered netnography's appeal, offering researchers a flexible framework to explore diverse topics within digital environments (Kozinets, 2010).

Similar to ethnography, netnography can be tailored to fit the interests and capabilities of individual researchers, providing a practical guide for applying this method in numerous studies (Kozinets, 2010). The stages of netnography involve outlining a data collection strategy, categorizing data based on themes and content using qualitative content analysis principles, interpreting findings, and offering recommendations for future research endeavors.

In this context, this study aims to answer the following questions:
- What types of online flaming behaviors are directed toward the Merve Dizdar brand on YouTube?
- How have these flaming behaviors on YouTube impacted the brand reputation of actress Merve Dizdar?

The purpose of this study is to analyze and classify the various types of flaming behaviors directed at the Merve Dizdar brand on YouTube using netnographic analysis. By categorizing these behaviors, the research seeks to assess their impact on the actress's brand reputation. Through these investigations, the

study aims to elucidate the connection between online flaming and brand perception, offering insights into the ramifications of negative online discourse on celebrity brands.

Data Collection

The methodology used for analyzing digital flaming targeting Merve Dizdar's celebrity brand on YouTube was comprehensive and multi-faceted. We began with purposive sampling to select relevant YouTube channels and videos that featured instances of digital flaming directed at Dizdar. Our data collection involved meticulous observation of user-generated comments and discussions within these videos, aiming to uncover prevalent themes and patterns of negative sentiment. Employing qualitative content analysis, we systematically categorized and examined the data to delve into the motivations driving digital flaming and its broader implications for celebrity brands and audience perceptions (Bowler, 2010).

This methodological framework was crafted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital flaming phenomenon and its implications for celebrity branding strategies in the social media landscape (Bowler, 2010). Through netnography, researchers explored the intricate dynamics of online interactions and sentiments surrounding celebrity brands, uncovering insights into the impact of digital flaming on brand perception.

Following Merve Dizdar's Best Actress Award win at the Cannes Film Festival on May 27, 2023, for her role in *About Dry Grasses*, her personal brand faced a barrage of cyberbullying and flaming on YouTube. These negative comments surfaced prominently on videos featuring her acceptance speech, appearing directly and in responses to other users' comments.

The study's population consisted of comments displaying flaming behavior directed at Merve Dizdar's personal brand, found under YouTube videos broadcasting her acceptance speech. The flame types— including direct and intentional, indirect, straight, satirical, hot, and cold—guided the sampling criteria, employing criterion sampling (Nitin et al., 2012). This method, a subtype of purposive sampling, selects cases that meet predefined criteria to provide in-depth insights relevant to the research problem (Patton, 2014).

To assess cyber-attacks on Merve Dizdar's personal brand, comments under videos from five YouTube channels that broadcast her speech—Halk TV, Cumartesi & Pazar Sürprizi, Turkish British CreaPost, Tele1, and Sözcü Televizyonu—were analyzed using the netnographic method with criterion sampling. Netnographic research employs three data collection methods: archival data, elicited data, and fieldnote data. This study primarily used "archival data," which refers to readily available data in a virtual environment, collected through a non-participatory approach (Kozinets, 2010).

Scope and Limitations

This study analyzes celebrity brands and the phenomenon of flaming within the context of YouTube. Specifically investigates the interaction between audiences and digital content, focusing on consumer-to-consumer interactions within the boundaries of YouTube.

YouTube, launched in 2005, has rapidly become one of the fastest-growing social media platforms, with an estimated twenty million or more visitors each day. The platform was chosen for this study because it is not merely a video-sharing site but also a hub for social interaction, offering an ideal setting to study the interaction between audiences and digital content (Kozinets, 2010). This study builds a case to examine these theories within the context of YouTube using netnographic simulations and insights from studies on internet psychology (Kozinets, 2010).

The study's limitations arise from the inherent nature of netnography and the characteristics of researching YouTube. Traditional netnography is typically conducted within text-based communities, whereas this study explores a video-based community. Due to the constantly changing nature of the internet, this study focuses on recent video posts to capture current interaction behaviors (Kozinets, 2010). Given YouTube's size, certain threads and communities can be challenging to locate, potentially

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leaving some interesting videos and discussions unexplored. This limitation puts YouTube at a disadvantage compared to studies on smaller sites.

Another limitation involves the validity of secondary data related to internet psychology, as outlined by Kozinets (2010). The issue with netnographic simulations is determining when observation should cease. Kozinets (2010) suggests that data collection should stop when the repetition of new posts occurs, a guideline that was followed in this study.

FINDINGS

The study analyzed flaming behaviors directed at Merve Dizdar on YouTube channels using the netnography method. Netnography comprises five stages, and the reliability of netnographic research depends on selecting communities with larger membership and a strong common denominator (Kandemir Altunel & Çifçi, 2021).

In the first stage, YouTube was selected as the platform due to its global popularity for video content sharing, ensuring diverse data sources. The second stage focused on data collection and categorization (Varnalı, 2019), utilizing criterion sampling—a subtype of purposive sampling. Initial criteria included the five most-watched YouTube channels that featured Merve Dizdar's award acceptance speech. The second criterion encompassed the five most-liked comments on these videos and all replies to these comments. These comments were then categorized based on different types of flaming behavior.

The third stage involved analyzing the research data. According to the findings, among the 25 main comments analyzed, 11 showed no evidence of flaming behavior, while 4 exhibited direct and intentional flaming, 2 showed straight flaming, 2 had satirical flaming, 2 were categorized as hot flaming, and 4 were classified as indirect flaming. In the 65 sub-comments analyzed, 4 were categorized as cold flaming, 12 as direct and intentional flaming, 6 as hot flaming, 17 as satirical flaming, 15 as straight flaming, and 5 as indirect flaming, with 6 showing no flaming behavior.

The flaming behavior was in response to the award acceptance speech made by Merve Dizdar, which emphasized the struggles of women like her character Nuray and resonated with themes of resilience and authenticity. The speech notably reflected her dedication to empowering women and fighting for their rights, which played a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of her celebrity brand (Bbc News, 2024). Here is the speech that triggered such reactions:

"Nuray, the character I portray in the film, is a woman who fights for what she believes in and for her existence and is forced to pay a price for it. I would have loved to work long and hard to get to know her, but unfortunately, being a woman in the geography I live in requires me to be familiar with the feelings of Nuray and women like her since the day I was born. I dedicate this award to give strength to the struggles of Nuray and women like her; to all my sisters who do not bow down to what they are deemed worthy of, who take action, who risk everything for this cause, and who, no matter what, do not give up on hope; and to all the fighting spirits in Turkey waiting to live the beautiful days they deserve."

Examples of each type of flaming behavior observed in response to this speech are given below to illustrate the range of reactions. Users' names are coded anonymously to protect their identity.

Direct and Intentional Flaming

User A1: "You should be proud of the geography you live in, which has produced such wonderful people. Instead of praising your homeland, you have, pardon me, disrespected it." *User A2*: "You know how dogs look at you expectantly after fetching a ball? That is exactly how she looked after her speech. Her handlers gave her the script, she read it, and now she expects a reward... If only she could read properly."

Straight Flaming

User B1: " It did not suit you, Merve, to complain about your state—which made your success possible—in France, from a paper that looked like it was given to you at the last minute and that you were unable to read properly. I would have wholeheartedly rejoiced in your award, but this behavior

casts a shadow on it." *User B2*: "I am curious about what criteria those claiming not to be free are basing their assertions on."

Indirect Flaming
User C1: "Cede not this heavenly homeland, even if it's the worlds you're granted." *User C2*: "These people don't understand what the National Anthem means."

Hot Flaming
User D1: "What humiliation? Instead of rejoicing for your country, how dare you write this comment? Shame on people like you. Merve is a very talented actress. If you don't like such scenes, series or films, don't watch them." *User D2*: "You are free to dress as you wish, speak as you wish; you are free. What more do you want from God? It is a shame that you belittle the country you live in. Europe admires Turkey, but you admire Europe."

Cold Flaming
User E1: "But isn't she talking about the lack of respect for women in our country? I could not understand, can you explain? We live in a country where women are second-class citizens." *User E2*: "How else should she praise her country? Can you write a two-line praise speech here?"

Satirical Flaming
User F1: "How are things in Europe? Are women given the respect they deserve? Are there no murdered women? Or battered or cheated on? Is everything unique to our geography? What are you thinking?" *User F2*: "No, the people in the world are perfect, those in Turkey are terrible."

Table 1. Lorem Table of Similarity Matrix

	Cumartesi-Pazar Süprizi	Halk TV	Sözcü	Tele 1	Turkish British CreaPost
Group 1 > Cumartesi-Pazar Süprizi	1,00	0,50	0,75	0,63	0,75
Group 1 > Halk TV	0,50	1,00	0,25	0,63	0,75
Group 1 > Sözcü	0,75	0,25	1,00	0,63	0,50
Group 1 > Tele 1	0,63	0,63	0,63	1,00	0,63
Group 1 > Turkish British CreaPost	0,75	0,75	0,50	0,63	1,00

The similarity matrix was created in the Maxqda program to extract the similarities of the flame behaviors between the channels. A similarity of 0.70 and above indicates a high degree of similarity between the channels, while a similarity below 0.70 indicates a low rate of similarity.

As can be seen in the table, the channels with the highest similarity rate are Cumartesi-Pazar Sürprizi channel and Sözcü, Cumartesi-Pazar Sürprizi and Turkish British CreaPost, Halk Tv and Turkish British CreaPost, while the channel with the lowest similarity rate is Sözcü channel and Halk Tv channel.

The fourth stage focused on complying with ethical principles. To avoid ethical violations, the study only reviewed public accounts whose posts were not hidden. The final stage, member validation, was not applicable due to the observational nature of netnography; therefore, the research was conducted in four stages.

CONCLUSION
Researchers examining "flaming"—defined as hostile and aggressive interactions through text-based computer-mediated communication—have proposed theoretical frameworks to explain its probable causes (O'Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003). These frameworks suggest that attention should be paid to

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interventions to address aggressive behavior among individuals with Internet addiction or those heavily involved in online gaming and chatting.

YouTube categorizes content that promotes hatred and violence based on age, gender, race, social class, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status as hate speech, committing to removing such material from videos, descriptions, comments, and live broadcasts. However, the persistence of inflammatory comments targeting Merve Dizdar's brand persona contradicts YouTube's hate speech policies.

In conclusion, the netnographic analysis of digital flaming aimed at celebrity brands on YouTube offers valuable insights into online consumer behavior dynamics and its repercussions on brand reputation. The systematic examination of user-generated content reveals the rapid dissemination of negative sentiments towards celebrity brands, which can have enduring impacts. These findings underscore the importance for celebrities to manage their online presence and endorse content carefully to mitigate the risks associated with digital flaming. Additionally, brands must actively monitor and address online feedback to safeguard their reputation effectively.

This study emphasizes the significance of comprehending and leveraging the influence of online communities in shaping consumer perceptions and fostering brand loyalty. Future research in this field could explore strategies for brands to engage authentically with consumers, cultivating trust and loyalty in the digital era.

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