

Between Tradition and Modernity: Symbolic Family Narratives in *Kızılıcak Şerbeti* (Cranberry Sorbet)

Gelenek ve Modernite Arasında: Kızılıcak Şerbeti Dizisinde Sembolik Aile Anlatıları

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the dynamic interplay between modern and conservative cultural symbols in the Turkish television series *Cranberry Sorbet*. Through an analysis of key episodes and viral scenes from its first season, the research investigates how the series portrays and navigates cultural tensions within Turkish society. Drawing upon cultural semiotics, representation theory, Han's (2021) concept of the "Palliative Society," and the framework of self-orientalism (Arslan & Temel, 2023), this paper decodes recurring symbols, audience interpretations, and their broader societal implications. Additionally, the study incorporates Çetin's (2023) sociological reading of family transformation in Turkish society, highlighting the softening of secular-religious divides within familial narratives. By contextualizing these elements within Turkey's sociocultural fabric, the study highlights the dual role of media as both a reflector of cultural values and a mediator of ideological conflicts. Ultimately, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how popular media shapes, reflects, and negotiates the complexities of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized yet tradition-rooted world.

Keywords: Cultural Semiotics, Representation Theory, Palliative Society, Turkish Television Dramas, Modernity.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Türk televizyon dizisi *Kızılıcak Şerbeti*'ndeki çağdaş ve geleneksel kültürel semboller arasındaki etkileşimi analiz etmektedir. Araştırma, dizinin ilk sezonundaki öne çıkan bölümleri ve viral sahneleri inceleyerek Türk toplumundaki kültürel gerilimlerin nasıl temsil edildiğini ve medyada nasıl tartışıldığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, kültürel göstergebilim, temsil kuramı, Han'ın (2021) "Palyatif Toplum" kavramı ve Arslan ve Temel'in (2023) "öz-oryantalizm" çerçevesinden yararlanarak yinelenen sembolleri, izleyici yorumlarını ve bunların toplumsal yansımalarını çözümlenmektedir. Ayrıca, Çetin'in (2023) Türk toplumunda aile dönüşümüne ilişkin sosyolojik değerlendirmesinden faydalanılarak, seküler-dindar ayrımının giderek yumuşadığı aile anlatılarına vurgu yapılmaktadır. Araştırma, medyanın kültürel değerlerin aynası ve ideolojik çatışmaların arabulucusu olarak üstlendiği ikili işlevi tartışmaktadır. Bulgular, popüler medyanın küreselleşmiş ama geleneksel köklere dayanan bir toplumda kültürel kimliği nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve yeniden ürettiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Göstergebilim, Temsil Kuramı, Palyatif Toplum, Türk Televizyon Dizileri, Modernite.



Introduction

Television dramas hold a unique position in modern media, serving as both entertainment and a reflection of societal values and conflicts. In Turkey, a country characterized by its rich cultural heritage and evolving social dynamics, television dramas often function as cultural mirrors, portraying the intersection of tradition and modernity. One such series, *Cranberry Sorbet*, stands out for its ability to encapsulate and dramatize these themes. The show's popularity lies not only in its compelling storytelling but also in its capacity to spark conversations about deeply rooted cultural and ideological tensions.

Set against the backdrop of two contrasting families, *Cranberry Sorbet*¹ presents a vivid exploration of modern and conservative values. The series follows characters who navigate familial relationships, societal expectations, and personal aspirations within a framework that juxtaposes progressive ideals with traditional norms. The title itself, which translates to "Cranberry Sorbet," symbolizes the bittersweet nature of these cultural negotiations, offering a metaphorical lens through which viewers can understand the complexities of Turkish society.

Cranberry Sorbet, which premiered on Show TV in 2022, was directed by Kettle (Hakan Kırvavaç) and written by Melis Civelek and Zeynep Gür. The series explores the cultural clash between two families: one rooted in modern, secular values and the other in conservative, traditional beliefs. This duality forms the backdrop for intense familial and societal conflicts, reflecting the complex interplay of modernity and tradition in Turkey.

While the series portrays moments of apparent harmony between these contrasting ideologies, it

often relies on symbolic reconciliations that align with Han's (2021) concept of the "Palliative Society." According to Han, such reconciliations provide temporary relief from societal tensions without addressing the deeper structural conflicts. For instance, the series employs symbolic gestures—such as rituals or familial unity—to suggest resolution, yet these often mask unresolved issues related to gender inequality, class dynamics, and ideological divides. This approach highlights the limitations of media in challenging systemic issues while prioritizing comfort and continuity over transformative change.

The series stars Evrim Alasya as Kivılcım, the progressive and independent mother; Barış Kılıç as Ömer, representing conservative values with a progressive twist; Sıla Türkoğlu as Doğa, a young woman caught between the two worlds; and Doğukan Güngör as Fatih, embodying the traditional expectations of his conservative family. These characters, alongside others, provide a useful lens for analyzing cultural symbols and ideological representations.

Cranberry Sorbet achieved significant viewership success, consistently ranking among the top-rated series in Turkey during its first season. Its unique focus on cultural tensions resonated with a wide audience, sparking debates both in the media and on social platforms. Viral moments such as the "cologne offering" and the "golden belt" scenes sparked discussions that extended beyond the screen, highlighting the show's relevance to contemporary societal issues.

Television series in Turkey frequently tackle cultural dynamics, as seen in earlier productions like *Bir Başkadır* (2020) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (2011-2014). However, *Cranberry Sorbet* distinguishes itself

1 "To spit blood but drink cranberry sherbet" (literally). The idiomatic meaning is closer to: to endure great pain or suffering but pretend everything is fine and/or to suffer silently while maintaining an outward appearance of calmness. This phrase can often refer to the struggles women face in the domestic sphere, such as emotional labor, household responsibilities, or even domestic abuse, which they are expected to endure silently in patriarchal societies. It highlights the burden of being expected to remain patient and composed, despite experiencing significant hardships.

by situating these themes within the framework of familial relationships, offering a microcosm of Turkey's larger societal debates (Sığın & Çakır, 2024).

The show premiered to widespread acclaim, quickly becoming a cultural phenomenon. Its narrative, centered on the tensions between a secular, modern family and a conservative, traditional one, resonates deeply with viewers from diverse backgrounds. Headlines in Turkish media described it as a groundbreaking portrayal of cultural dynamics, with examples such as "A Modern Reflection of Turkey's Cultural Crossroads" (Hürriyet, 2023) and "Families Divided by Tradition and Modernity" (Sabah, 2023), capturing the essence of the series' thematic exploration. Social media platforms buzzed with discussions of its themes and scenes, illustrating its ability to provoke dialogue about cultural identity and societal values.

Cranberry Sorbet leverages the power of symbolism to construct its narrative. Symbols such as clothing, rituals, and domestic spaces serve as visual and thematic tools for examining cultural identity. For example, the conservative family's adherence to traditional rituals often contrasts with the modern family's embrace of individuality and autonomy. These symbols are not merely decorative but function as vehicles for deeper cultural narratives, reflecting the ideological underpinnings of the characters and the broader society they inhabit.

This study aims to dissect these symbolic elements, focusing on the first ten episodes of the series. By analyzing how *Cranberry Sorbet* constructs and communicates modern and conservative values through its characters and plotlines, this research seeks to understand the mechanisms by which television dramas influence and reflect cultural discourse. In doing so, it addresses broader questions about the role of media in shaping societal values and the negotiation of cultural identity in a rapidly globalizing world. In this regard, the research question of the study is, "How

does *Cranberry Sorbet* use cultural narratives and symbols to represent and mediate societal ideologies in Turkey?"

The relevance of this study extends beyond Turkey, offering insights into how popular media can mediate cultural tensions in diverse societies. As globalization blurs boundaries between cultures, the negotiation between tradition and modernity becomes a universal theme. By examining the symbolic language of *Cranberry Sorbet*, this paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship on media representation and cultural identity, providing a nuanced understanding of the interplay between modernity and tradition in a localized yet globally relevant context.

Literature Review

The interplay between media and cultural representation has been a focal point of scholarly inquiry, both globally and within Turkey. Television, as a medium, holds immense power in shaping societal narratives and reflecting cultural identities. Internationally, studies such as Hall's (1997) work on representation theory argue that media does not merely reflect societal norms but actively constructs them. Similarly, Barthes' (1977) analysis of mythologies highlights how media encodes ideologies into symbols, shaping public perceptions of culture and identity.

In the context of television dramas, multiple global examples illustrate this phenomenon. For instance, studies on Indian soap operas (Chadha & Kavoori, 2000) have shown how family-centered narratives often juxtapose modernity with tradition, similar to the themes in *Cranberry Sorbet*. Likewise, American television dramas such as *Mad Men* have been analyzed for their portrayal of shifting societal norms, particularly regarding gender roles (Lotz, 2014).

Within Turkey, television series have long been recognized as cultural mirrors that reflect broader social dynamics and ideological tensions. Studies on Turkish television dramas highlight how narratives frequently revolve around familial

conflicts to illustrate wider societal debates. In this context, Sığın and Çakır (2024) analyze the portrayal of secular and religious tensions in *Cranberry Sorbet*, emphasizing the role of media in mediating cultural dichotomies between modern and conservative identities. Moreover, previous research on media representations of gender further demonstrates how television series construct and negotiate social roles, making gender dynamics a particularly relevant dimension for understanding the narrative structure of *Cranberry Sorbet*.

Research by Şahan (2021) explores how women in Turkish dramas are portrayed as both preservers of tradition and agents of modernity, a duality central to the series' narrative. The depiction of women balancing professional ambitions with traditional family roles aligns with broader patterns in Turkish television. Recent contributions further illuminate these dynamics. Şengül (2024) analyzes the representation of tradition and modernity in Turkish TV series, emphasizing the symbolic narratives that mediate gender ideologies.

This literature review provides a foundation for understanding how *Cranberry Sorbet* contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions. By situating the series within a global and local framework of media analysis, this study highlights the importance of television as a cultural mediator. In the realm of media studies, television series are recognized as potent cultural artifacts that both reflect and shape societal values and ideologies. The Turkish series *Cranberry Sorbet* serves as a compelling case study in this context, offering rich insights into the portrayal of modern and conservative symbols within Turkish society. This literature review examines existing academic discourse on the representation of these symbols in television series, with a particular focus on *Cranberry Sorbet*, and explores the broader implications of media as a conduit for cultural symbolism.

The dichotomy between modernity and conservatism has long been a subject of sociocultural and political discourse in Turkey. This duality is increasingly mirrored in popular culture,

especially television dramas. They have begun to reflect societal debates, presenting conflicting identities and prompting viewers to engage with these representations.

Similarly, Şahan (2021) examined the construction of conservative identities in television series, focusing on the show *Bir Başkadır*. The research underscores the role of television in shaping and reflecting societal norms, suggesting that media representations contribute to the construction and perception of conservative identities within the public sphere.

Several studies have specifically analyzed *Cranberry Sorbet* to understand its portrayal of cultural identities. A study published in *Religions* (2024) conducted a thematic analysis of the series, focusing on its impact on conservative viewers. Findings suggest that while these groups develop their identities in opposition, factors such as age, gender, education, and class facilitate negotiation in shared urban environments, highlighting the dynamic nature of identity and space-making processes (Ayyıldız, 2024).

A study by Sığın and Çakır (2024) examined the series' depiction of the intersection between secularism and religiosity. The study suggests that *Cranberry Sorbet* portrays the tensions between these identities, reflecting the ongoing societal debates in Turkey. While Külekçi (2024) examines the representations of the conservative family structure in this TV series and its impact on conservative viewers, the study also highlights that the series portrays traditional conservative family values while simultaneously including negative representations that deconstruct these values. In particular, conservative male characters are depicted as engaging in behaviors such as infidelity, which contradict conservative norms. The study also provides insights into how these representations influence social perceptions within the framework of conservative ideology.

Television series often serve as mirrors to societal values, utilizing symbols to convey deeper meanings. Hall's (1997) representation theory

posits that media not only reflect reality but also play a crucial role in constructing it by encoding ideological meanings into cultural products. This perspective is essential in understanding how television series like *Cranberry Sorbet* use symbols to represent and potentially influence societal norms.

In the context of Turkish television, traditional and modern symbols are frequently employed to represent the cultural and ideological spectrum of society. Studies on Turkish television series have demonstrated that religious discourse, rituals, and symbolic elements are often integrated into narrative structures to frame debates about identity, morality, and social values. For instance, Serin Aksoy (2023) examines how religion is represented in Turkish television dramas through various symbolic and narrative devices, while Gökalp et al. (2024) analyze how religious discourse and ritual practices are constructed within television narratives to reflect broader societal tensions between secular and conservative perspectives. These representations not only mirror social realities but also contribute to shaping public debates about religion, culture, and modernity in Turkey.

Television dramas like *Cranberry Sorbet* use these symbols not only to entertain but also to provoke reflection on cultural norms and ideologies. The recurring use of such symbols across episodes creates a narrative framework that invites audiences to engage with broader societal debates. By focusing on these symbolic elements, the series contributes to a layered understanding of how media both reflects and constructs cultural meanings in Turkey and beyond.

Media, particularly television, plays a pivotal role in both mirroring and molding cultural norms. Television series draw from real cultural materials, reinterpreting them for the screen, thus participating in the continuous construction of social reality. This process involves the selection and emphasis of certain symbols and narratives, which can reinforce or challenge existing cultural paradigms.

Recent studies further elaborate on the dual role of media as both a reflective and constitutive force in cultural processes. Morley (2000) argues that television functions as a site of cultural negotiation where competing ideologies, identities, and value systems are debated and reinterpreted. Within this framework, media texts become important arenas in which societies interpret and contest cultural meanings. In a broader global context, Mohyeddin (2024) similarly emphasizes that cultural identities are continuously reconstructed through communication processes and media narratives that connect local traditions with wider global influences. Together, these perspectives highlight how media environments mediate the ongoing interaction between tradition and modernity.

In *Cranberry Sorbet*, the portrayal of family dynamics, religious practices, and social interactions serves as a lens through which viewers can engage with and reflect upon their own cultural experiences. The series' depiction of contrasting lifestyles offers a platform for audiences to explore the complexities of modern Turkish identity, prompting discussions that extend beyond the screen. For instance, the series' use of rituals such as the "golden belt" and the "hand-kissing tradition" demonstrates how deeply ingrained cultural norms can become sites of conflict or negotiation. These portrayals resonate with viewers, encouraging them to reflect on their own practices and the societal expectations surrounding them.

The series also leverages its narrative to address broader cultural dynamics, such as the negotiation of gender roles and the influence of globalization on local traditions. By portraying characters who embody varying degrees of adherence to or rejection of traditional norms, *Cranberry Sorbet* engages with the audience's collective consciousness, offering a nuanced perspective on the fluidity of cultural identity.

Ultimately, the role of media, as evidenced by *Cranberry Sorbet*, extends beyond mere representation; it actively participates in shaping

cultural discourses. By incorporating elements that are both relatable and provocative, the series not only entertains but also fosters critical discussions about the trajectory of Turkish society amidst the interplay of tradition and modernity.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the methodology employed in analyzing the representation of modern and conservative symbols in the first ten episodes of *Cranberry Sorbet* and provides the theoretical framework that underpins the research. The study employs qualitative content analysis, guided by cultural and media studies theories, to decode recurring symbols and their cultural significance. Additionally, it incorporates an analysis of social media discourse surrounding viral scenes, enriching the understanding of how these symbols are perceived and interpreted by audiences.

This study employs qualitative content analysis to decode recurring symbols in the first ten episodes of *Cranberry Sorbet*. The analysis involves a systematic approach to identifying and categorizing cultural symbols such as rituals, domestic spaces, and interpersonal dynamics, which serve as critical tools for conveying ideological tensions within the series. Using a coding framework, recurring symbols were classified into themes such as modernity, tradition, gender roles, and familial structures, ensuring a comprehensive examination of their narrative significance.

The theoretical foundation of this analysis draws upon Barthes' (1977) cultural semiotics, which provides insights into how media texts encode deeper cultural meanings into symbolic representations. Hall's (1997) representation theory further informs this study, emphasizing the dual role of media as both a reflector and shaper of cultural realities. These frameworks guided the interpretation of recurring motifs and their alignment with broader societal values.

Additionally, audience responses were integrated into the analysis to contextualize the societal

impact of the series. Social media platforms, Twitter and YouTube, were monitored on the days of episode release, focusing particularly on comments made under the official social media accounts of the series. Audience discussions provided a rich secondary data source, highlighting how viewers interpreted and debated the cultural dynamics portrayed in the series. This pattern of interaction aligns with the evolving phenomenon of social television, where viewing practices have transformed into hybrid experiences that merge personal taste with collective engagement. In today's media landscape, social television has emerged as a hybrid viewing model that combines the prominence of individual preferences with a renewed sense of social connectedness. In this mode of viewing, audiences may be physically alone, yet they consume television content alongside a vast digital crowd. Much like early collective viewing patterns, viewers now engage in real-time interaction by producing content through secondary devices, thus creating new forms of communication and shared experience—often referred to as digital living rooms (Akcan, 2019). By combining content analysis with audience reception studies, this methodology ensures a holistic understanding of how *Cranberry Sorbet* navigates and mediates cultural tensions.

The analysis focuses on the first ten episodes of the inaugural season of *Cranberry Sorbet*. This selection ensures a manageable scope while covering the foundational episodes where the series establishes its thematic and symbolic framework. These episodes introduce the main characters, their familial dynamics, and the central conflicts, making them ideal for examining the interplay of modern and conservative symbols.

A systematic content coding approach is employed to analyze recurring symbols within the series. A content coding sheet is developed, structured around key cultural codes observed in the series, such as,

Family Rituals: Representations of traditional and modern practices in familial contexts.

Clothing and Appearance: Symbolic contrasts in attire reflecting ideological leanings.

Domestic Spaces: Depictions of home environments and their cultural significance.

Interactions and Dialogues: Exchanges between characters that highlight cultural tensions.

This coding sheet categorizes each occurrence of these symbols, noting their frequency, context, and associated narratives. By focusing on recurring motifs, the study aims to uncover patterns that illustrate the series' portrayal of cultural identities (Hall, 1997).

The coding framework integrates cultural codes derived from Turkish societal norms and practices. These codes guide the analysis, ensuring that the symbols are interpreted within their socio-cultural context. The study also considers the dynamic interaction between media texts and audiences, recognizing that symbols are not only constructed by creators but also reinterpreted by viewers, especially in the age of social media. By combining qualitative content analysis with cultural and media theories, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how *Cranberry Sorbet* represents and negotiates cultural identities through recurring symbols and viral moments.

In addition to analyzing the episodes, the study examines social media discourse surrounding viral scenes. For example, the "cologne scene" serves as a focal point for understanding how specific symbols resonate with audiences and provoke broader cultural debates. Social media platforms, Twitter and YouTube, are analyzed to capture audience reactions, discussions, and interpretations of these scenes.

This research is grounded in cultural semiotics and representation theory. In cultural semiotics, symbols are treated as signifiers within a broader cultural context. Barthes' approach to decoding myths and ideologies embedded in media texts is instrumental in analyzing the symbolic elements

of *Cranberry Sorbet*. The study investigates how symbols like clothing, rituals, and domestic settings are imbued with cultural meanings that reflect and reinforce societal ideologies (Barthes, 1977). On the other hand, representation theory provides a framework for understanding how media constructs and represents cultural realities. Media texts, such as television dramas, do not merely reflect reality but actively shape it by encoding specific ideological meanings. This perspective is essential for exploring how *Cranberry Sorbet* mediates the cultural tensions between modern and conservative values (Hall, 1997).

Barthes' (1977) cultural semiotics provides a foundational lens for analyzing how *Cranberry Sorbet* encodes cultural meanings into symbolic representations. Symbols such as traditional clothing, familial rituals, and domestic spaces act as signifiers that convey deeper ideological messages. For instance, the conservative family's use of traditional attire symbolizes adherence to cultural norms, while the modern family's minimalistic aesthetics represent individuality and autonomy. Barthes' framework allows us to decode these symbols, revealing the ideological tensions embedded in the series' narrative. The recurring use of symbolic objects and practices, such as the "golden belt" or the "cologne offering," underscores the cultural negotiation between modern and traditional values. These symbols are not merely decorative but serve as vehicles for larger sociocultural narratives, reflecting the dynamic interplay between cultural preservation and adaptation in a globalized world.

Hall's (1997) representation theory offers another critical perspective for understanding the series' cultural dynamics. He argues that media texts do not simply mirror societal realities but actively construct them by encoding and disseminating specific ideological meanings. In the context of *Cranberry Sorbet*, the portrayal of conservative and modern families provides a mediated representation of Turkey's sociocultural landscape, where traditional and progressive ideologies coexist and often clash. Hall's (1997) concept of

"preferred readings" is particularly relevant, as the series invites viewers to interpret its narrative through specific ideological lenses. For example, the audience's reactions to scenes like Doğa's decision to return to school or the hand-kissing ritual highlight how media representations can both challenge and reinforce societal norms. The series serves as a site of cultural negotiation, where viewers engage with and reinterpret its symbolic messages based on their own cultural and ideological orientations.

In addition to these perspectives, Han's (2021) concept of the "Palliative Society" provides a critical lens for examining the series' approach to societal conflicts. According to Han (2021), a palliative society addresses deep-rooted structural issues through surface-level resolutions, avoiding systemic change while maintaining social harmony. *Cranberry Sorbet's* narrative often relies on symbolic reconciliations between modern and conservative values without fully addressing the underlying societal tensions. For example, while the series portrays moments of apparent harmony—such as mutual respect in family gatherings or symbolic acts like rituals—these resolutions serve more as temporary relief than substantive engagements with the larger issues of inequality, gender roles, or class struggles. This superficial resolution of deep-rooted conflicts mirrors the broader societal tendency to avoid disruption by prioritizing comfort and stability over transformative change.

Through this lens, the series can be seen as a reflection of societal reluctance to confront and address systemic inequalities directly. This approach aligns with Han's (2021) theory, highlighting the limitations of media representations in confronting deeper ideological divides. By offering palliative, rather than radical, solutions, *Cranberry Sorbet* underscores the role of popular culture in maintaining the status quo while providing a veneer of reconciliation and progress.

Building upon these frameworks, Arslan and Temel's (2023) analysis introduces the concept

of self-orientalism to the discussion. Their research identifies how media productions in predominantly Muslim societies, such as Turkey, may internalize Islamophobic representations through a Westernized lens. In *Cranberry Sorbet*, certain portrayals of conservative Muslim characters—such as rigid paternalism, gender conservatism, or selective morality—mirror this internalized discourse. These characterizations align with self-orientalist tendencies, which depict Islamic culture through a reductive, critical, and often stigmatized framework informed by Western secular modernity. This contributes to an orientalist binary in media representation, wherein modern-secular identities are valorized while conservative-religious figures are problematized (Arslan & Temel, 2023).

The integration of these theoretical frameworks provides a comprehensive approach to analyzing the cultural and ideological dimensions of *Cranberry Sorbet*. By examining the series through the lenses of cultural semiotics and representation theory, this study seeks to uncover the mechanisms by which media constructs and mediates cultural tensions. These frameworks also highlight the series' role as a cultural mediator, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity while inviting audiences to engage with and reflect on their own cultural identities.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the first ten episodes of *Cranberry Sorbet* reveals a nuanced portrayal of cultural tensions through the use of symbols, character dynamics, and key narrative moments. By juxtaposing modern and conservative values, the series effectively engages with societal debates about tradition, modernity, and gender roles.

Cultural Symbols Across Episodes

The series employs recurring cultural symbols to dramatize the ideological contrasts between the two families. For example, wedding rituals in Episode 1 juxtapose simple, modern practices with traditional, hierarchical customs. Similarly, the "golden belt" and "hand-kissing" scenes highlight how symbolic gestures are laden with

cultural significance, often leading to conflict or negotiation between characters. Each episode features recurring symbols such as clothing, rituals, and household artifacts. For example, traditional dining setups in the conservative family emphasize hierarchy, whereas the modern family adopts an egalitarian approach.

Viral Scenes and Audience Reactions

Certain scenes, such as the "cologne offering" (Episode 9) and "lighting a candle in the church" (Episode 6), became focal points for audience engagement. These moments not only resonate within the narrative but also extend into societal discourse, as evidenced by social media debates about their cultural implications. Audience discussions reveal a spectrum of interpretations, ranging from staunch support for tradition to calls for greater inclusivity and modernity. Social media discussions often highlighted these scenes as reflections of Turkey's ongoing cultural dichotomy.

Gender Dynamics

The series places significant emphasis on the role of women as mediators of cultural change. Doğa's decision to return to school in Episode 8 and Kivilcim's independent approach to relationships in Episode 10 serve as powerful critiques of patriarchal norms. These characters navigate societal expectations with varying degrees of resistance and compromise, reflecting broader shifts in gender roles within Turkish society. However, as Arslan and Temel (2023) note, such portrayals may also risk reinforcing a binary where modern, secular female figures are implicitly positioned as superior to their conservative counterparts—who are often represented through stereotypical or problematic lenses. This dichotomy reveals how self-orientalist discourse may be embedded in the series' gendered narrative structure.

Bilgin (2023) expands this analysis by emphasizing how the female characters of *Cranberry Sorbet* are positioned within the modern-traditional conflict as both symbolic and social agents. Through a close reading of Kivilcim, Pembe, and Nursema, her study demonstrates how these characters embody varying degrees of agency, resistance,

and transformation. While Kivilcim blends modern feminist ideals with traditional moral values, Pembe represents a strategic deployment of patriarchal norms, and Nursema evolves from passive obedience to active autonomy. The series, therefore, avoids demonizing either pole and instead highlights female resilience, solidarity, and the potential for transformation across ideological lines (Bilgin, 2023).

Siğın and Çakır (2024) provide a comprehensive critique of gender inequality in *Cranberry Sorbet* through critical discourse analysis. Their study identifies four main themes in which the series reproduces patriarchal ideology: the symbolic construction of male and female roles, marriage as a tool of domination, the association of honor with female sexuality, and domesticity as a gendered expectation. Through these themes, the series projects a social reality in which traditional/conservative frameworks marginalize women's autonomy while portraying secular/modernist perspectives as more aligned with gender equality. However, this binary structure also contributes to a simplistic dichotomy that may obscure the structural roots of inequality (Siğın & Çakır, 2024).

Berk's (2024) thesis makes a distinctive contribution by examining the gendered representations of both male and female characters in *Cranberry Sorbet* and "Ömer" using cultivation theory and semi-structured interviews. Her findings reveal how conservative and secular families produce and reproduce different sets of gender expectations through media. The study critically explores how male representations—often overlooked in gender analyses—are shaped by hegemonic ideals, while female portrayals oscillate between compliance and resistance to traditional roles. Berk identifies that media messages not only reflect societal gender roles but also influence viewer attitudes, especially among younger audiences. Her research confirms that both character development and symbolic conflicts in the series subtly cultivate perceptions of "appropriate" femininity and masculinity, making media a powerful agent in the reinforcement or disruption of gender norms (Berk, 2024).

Family Transformation

The representation of family transformation in *Cranberry Sorbet* echoes broader sociological dynamics in Turkish society. Çetin (2023) emphasizes that in media portrayals, religiously conservative families often undergo a process of gradual transformation as they interact with secular-modern family members. This theme is vividly represented in the marriage of Doğa and Fatih, which acts as a symbolic bridge between two contrasting worldviews. Çetin's (2023) analysis of the evolving relationship dynamics in the series highlights how the conservative family is not portrayed as entirely static but rather as being shaped by modern values through kinship ties and generational dialogue. Such portrayals suggest a mediated negotiation of tradition rather than a stark opposition, resonating with the sociological concept of a "transition family" in Turkish modernity.

Bilgin's (2023) reserach investigates the tension between religious-traditional and modern-secular lifestyles as reflected in *Cranberry Sorbet*. Her

content analysis reveals that one of the main sources of this tension is the mutual lack of understanding and respect between the two sides, represented by the contrasting families in the series. However, the narrative also suggests that over time, both sides begin to soften, indicating the potential for negotiation and coexistence. The inclusion of folk religious practices, such as shrine visits and communal rituals, underscores the continuing presence of tradition in everyday life, even within a modernizing context. Bilgin's analysis also highlights how the series acts as a trendsetter, encouraging similar television productions to engage with religious and ideological themes, thus reshaping the boundaries of popular culture in Turkey (Bilgin, 2023).

Narrative Framing

Each episode is carefully constructed to explore a specific cultural tension, whether through domestic conflicts, societal expectations, or individual aspirations. Table 1 summarizes key episodes and their cultural symbolism:

Table 1
Key episodes of *Cranberry Sorbet* and their cultural symbolism

Episode	Cultural Symbols	Modern Representation	Conservative Representation
1	Wedding rituals	Simple attire, individual choice of ceremony	Traditional clothing, arranged marriage emphasis
2	Family dining	Modern dining setup, informal discussions	Formal seating, emphasis on hierarchy
3	Religious practices	Minimalistic mentions	Group prayers, Ramadan-specific routines
4	Hand-kissing tradition	Awkwardness, resistance to hierarchical customs	Reverence for elders, a symbol of family respect
5	Street dog entering the home	Compassion, inclusivity, and individual autonomy	Household decorum, exclusivity, tradition, and religion
6	Lighting a candle in the church	Spiritual freedom, interfaith respect	Strict adherence to religious exclusivity
7	Shoe removal and slippers	Individualism, personal comfort	Respect for household norms, adherence to tradition
8	Doğa starting school	Education as empowerment, independence	Conflict with traditional gender roles, family prioritization
9	Dinner conflict and separation	Autonomy, rejection of restrictive social norms	Emphasis on unity, adherence to family, and societal expectations
10	Kivılcım and Ömer's relationship	Mutual respect, modern-conservative reconciliation	Respectful conservatism, valuing dialogue

The findings underscore the series' role as a cultural mediator, offering a platform for audiences to engage with and reflect upon societal values. By integrating cultural symbols into its narrative and fostering dialogue about tradition and modernity, *Cranberry Sorbet* emerges as a compelling case study in the negotiation of cultural identity.

The theoretical foundation of this analysis draws upon Barthes' (1977) cultural semiotics, which provides insights into how media texts encode deeper cultural meanings into symbolic representations. Hall's (1997) representation theory further informs this study, emphasizing the dual role of media as both a reflector and shaper of cultural realities. These frameworks guided the interpretation of recurring motifs and their alignment with broader societal values.

Additionally, audience responses were integrated into the analysis to contextualize the societal impact of the series. Social media platforms, including Twitter and YouTube, were monitored to capture real-time reactions to key scenes, such as the "golden belt" and "cologne offering" moments. Audience discussions provided a rich secondary data source, highlighting how viewers interpreted and debated the cultural dynamics portrayed in the series. By combining content analysis with audience reception studies, this methodology ensures a holistic understanding of how *Cranberry Sorbet* navigates and mediates cultural tensions.

Expanded Analysis with Additional Viral Scenes

In addition to the *cologne scene*, other moments from the first ten episodes of *Cranberry Sorbet* that gained viral include the "golden belt scene" and "Kivılcım's confrontation with a domestic abuser." These scenes are instrumental in reflecting the series' exploration of modern and conservative cultural tensions and their resonance with the audience.

Viral Scene 1: The Cologne Scene (Episode 9)

The "cologne scene" functions as a microcosm of cultural misunderstanding between the modern

and conservative families portrayed in *Cranberry Sorbet*. The conservative family's gesture of offering cologne—a deeply rooted symbol of Turkish hospitality—encounters hesitation and discomfort from the modern family, transforming a familiar custom into a moment of subtle tension. This scene, widely circulated on social media, encapsulates how traditional practices can become contested when reinterpreted through a contemporary lens.

Discussions on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) reflected how deeply rooted traditions can become points of contention when viewed through modern perspectives. On March 5, 2023, several posts exemplified the polarized reception of the scene. One user argued that the series deliberately designed "scenes and dialogues to portray the religious segment as corrupt and repulsive," expressing concern that the show sought to vilify conservative characters. Another post on the same date declared, "You cannot change the Islamic nation," framing the episode as an ideological provocation against religious identity. Conversely, a third user interpreted the narrative from an alternative angle, suggesting that the series merely highlighted "families who conflate their traditions with religion," noting that such tendencies were frequently underscored in the dialogue through the phrase, "*But our traditions are like this.*"

These social media reactions further illuminate the cultural tensions and misinterpretations portrayed in the "cologne scene." Comments describing the series as "designed to portray religious individuals as corrupt" or insisting that "you cannot change the Islamic nation" reflect a defensive stance from conservative viewers, highlighting their perception of the scene as an attack on traditional values. Conversely, interpretations emphasizing the conflation of traditions with religion suggest that the series effectively stimulates public dialogue about the fluid and multifaceted nature of cultural norms. These divergent readings illustrate how a seemingly simple symbolic act—offering cologne—becomes a catalyst for broader societal debates about authenticity, modernity, and identity in contemporary Turkey.

Viral Scene 2: The Golden Belt Scene (Episode 3)

The “golden belt scene” takes place during the wedding ceremony in Episode 3, where the groom’s mother—a conservative matriarch—insists on fastening a traditional golden belt around the bride’s waist. The belt, a symbol of honor and purity in Turkish culture, carries deep social and religious resonance. The bride’s visible discomfort, however, became a trigger for widespread public commentary, transforming a seemingly domestic ritual into a site of cultural negotiation. For many viewers, the sequence epitomized the generational and ideological tension between the bride’s modern worldview and her in-laws’ adherence to custom (Külekçi, 2024).

On March 5, 2023, shortly after the episode aired, online discussions on platforms such as YouTube and X (formerly Twitter) captured this divide. Several users praised the gesture as a sign of generosity and respect, writing that “*the father-in-law bought the belt with good intentions, may God bless him*” or “*I’d be happy if someone did this for me; it shows care and prosperity.*” Others dismissed the act as outdated or even oppressive, questioning “*what era are we living in?*” and describing the tradition as “*tacky*” or “*a display of social pressure disguised as honor.*” One user contrasted the emotional logic of the scene, arguing that “*wishing for others to experience the same drama just for tradition’s sake is illogical.*” Another countered by expressing pride in such customs, emphasizing their cultural continuity and familial symbolism.

These posts collectively reveal a polarized audience response: while some interpreted the belt as a heartfelt token of family pride, others framed it as an emblem of patriarchal control and performative morality. The diversity of online reactions underscores how a single ceremonial act can generate competing narratives about authenticity, autonomy, and belonging.

From an analytical perspective, the debate surrounding the “golden belt” encapsulates the broader negotiation between tradition and

modernity that defines *Cranberry Sorbet*. By representing both reverence for custom and discomfort with its implications, the series mirrors Turkey’s ongoing sociocultural discourse—balancing respect for inherited rituals with a growing emphasis on personal agency and gender equality. In this sense, social-media engagement functions not merely as audience feedback but as an extension of the text itself, transforming popular culture into a participatory arena where symbolic practices are continuously reinterpreted and contested.

Viral Scene 3: Kivilcim’s Confrontation with Domestic Violence (Episode 5)

In Episode 5, Kivilcim intervenes when a man assaults a woman she had previously helped escape a violent relationship. This scene serves as a powerful portrayal of women’s solidarity and social responsibility in confronting domestic violence. It also marks a significant shift in the series’ narrative focus—from familial tension to broader questions of morality, justice, and gender-based inequality. The emotional intensity of the episode, coupled with its moral clarity, resonated widely with audiences and generated extensive online engagement.

Viewer discussions on platforms such as YouTube in early 2023 revealed how the scene became a catalyst for public reflection on violence against women. One user wrote that “*Kivilcim is both an amazing person and an amazing mother. Her only flaw is not respecting women who wear headscarves—hopefully, she will learn to respect them.*” Another observed that “*We could have admired not only Kivilcim but both sides equally if the narrative also showed in-laws in a positive light.*” These comments highlighted the audience’s expectation for balanced representation between secular and conservative female characters.

Further posts from the same period emphasized the scene’s moral strength. A frequently cited line—“*Silence in the face of oppression is complicity with evil*”—was praised for its clarity and courage. Users described the message as “*meaningful and*

universal” and expressed hopes that “no woman should ever experience violence.” Another set of comments referenced a real-life celebrity case, suggesting that the scene symbolically alluded to Turkish model Ebru Şallı, who had reportedly experienced domestic abuse but maintained an appearance of happiness on social media. One viewer explicitly stated, “*This scene was a reference to Ebru Şallı; the next day she posted joyful photos as if nothing had happened,*” while another remarked that “*as Pembe said, she gave the illusion of happiness through her posts.*”

By integrating personal empathy with media critique, the audience demonstrated how fiction and reality often converge in public consciousness. Conservative viewers also voiced their concerns about representation, cautioning against the risk of associating religiosity with tolerance toward violence. A comment reading, “*Please don’t portray conservative communities as people who condone abuse. I am conservative myself, and there is absolutely no place for violence in our religion,*” reflects this sensitivity and underscores how identity politics shapes audience reception in Turkey’s polarized cultural landscape.

Collectively, these online reactions illustrate that *Cranberry Sorbet* transcends mere dramatization by engaging viewers in a national conversation about gender, morality, and representation. Kivilcim’s intervention is not only a depiction of personal courage but also a mirror of collective conscience. Through both narrative and audience discourse, the series underscores that confronting violence, whether physical, symbolic, or ideological, is a shared social responsibility. The diversity of responses, ranging from feminist praise to conservative critique, demonstrates how *Cranberry Sorbet* bridges conflicting perspectives and transforms televised fiction into a forum for cultural dialogue about justice, empathy, and equality.

Viral Scene 4: The Hand-Kissing Scene (Episode 1)

In Turkish culture, hand-kissing is a deeply rooted gesture that signifies respect and reverence

toward elders. In *Cranberry Sorbet*, this seemingly ordinary tradition becomes a site of symbolic tension. In Episode 1, the conservative family insists that younger members kiss the elders’ hands as a sign of respect, whereas the modern family perceives the act as outdated and unnecessary. What unfolds is a moment of quiet discomfort that encapsulates the broader ideological divide between communal tradition and individual autonomy.

Online discussions following the episode’s release in 2023 reflect how this moment resonated with audiences and reignited cultural debates. Many viewers defended the practice, framing it as a harmless and respectful custom embedded in Turkish social etiquette. One user wrote, “*We all take off our shoes, kiss hands, and drink tea—it’s part of who we are. There’s nothing wrong with Fatih’s behavior; he acted completely normal.*” Another echoed this sentiment, asserting that “*the teacher’s disdain for hand-kissing was exaggerated; Fatih was only being polite.*” Such comments suggest a strong identification with cultural continuity and align with the conservative family’s portrayal in the series, where respect for hierarchy and family cohesion is central to social order.

Conversely, other comments adopted a more critical tone, questioning the persistence of hierarchical traditions in modern contexts. A viewer observed, “*It’s interesting that Fatih mentions his mother in the first seconds—it shows dependency, not respect,*” while another remarked sarcastically, “*According to Kivilcim, half the country is uncivilized for kissing hands and drinking tea.*” These criticisms align with modernist perspectives that perceive traditional gestures as symbolic remnants of social control rather than expressions of affection or unity. The tension between these interpretations underscores how even small cultural rituals can become arenas for negotiating identity in a rapidly modernizing society.

The diversity of online responses—some nostalgic, others confrontational—reveals the depth of emotional investment Turkish audiences place in

everyday traditions. For conservative viewers, hand-kissing symbolizes moral upbringing, humility, and continuity of values across generations. For modern viewers, it represents the persistence of patriarchal hierarchy and a reluctance to adapt to new norms of equality and self-expression.

From a representational standpoint, the scene operates as a microcosm of Turkey's evolving sociocultural fabric. It highlights how traditional gestures, once universally accepted as signs of respect, are increasingly reinterpreted through the lens of modern sensibilities. This dynamic echoes Hall's (1997) theory of representation and Barthes' (1977) semiotic analysis, wherein cultural symbols function as contested signs—capable of both preserving collective identity and reinforcing systems of power.

Ultimately, the *hand-kissing scene* illustrates the series' broader narrative strategy: using domestic rituals to dramatize ideological fault lines within Turkish society. The polarized online discourse surrounding this moment demonstrates how *Cranberry Sorbet* not only depicts cultural tensions but also extends them into the digital public sphere, transforming television into a participatory space of reflection on the meanings of respect, hierarchy, and belonging in the twenty-first century.

Viral Scene 5: The Street Dog Entering the Home (Episode 5)

In Episode 5, a stray dog follows Doğa, one of the central protagonists, into her in-laws' home—a moment that initially appears trivial but soon unfolds as a site of deep cultural tension. For Doğa, whose character embodies modern and compassionate sensibilities, allowing the dog inside signifies empathy, individuality, and a willingness to transcend traditional boundaries. However, for her conservative in-laws, the act is perceived as a violation of domestic order and hygiene, contradicting long-established norms that define the sanctity of the household.

What begins as a minor domestic disagreement gradually evolves into a broader symbolic

commentary on the conflicting moral frameworks that shape Turkish society. The dog, as an “outsider,” becomes a metaphor for disruption within a tightly regulated cultural space, exposing the fragility of social boundaries and the anxieties surrounding purity and propriety. Doğa's decision to welcome the animal reflects her belief in inclusivity and her resistance to rigid conventions—values closely associated with modernity and humanism. In contrast, her in-laws' objections reveal an adherence to customs that prioritize order, discipline, and separation between the private and the public realms, rooted in both cultural and religious understandings of cleanliness and moral conduct.

Social media discussions following the episode further amplified these ideological contrasts. Many viewers celebrated Doğa's behavior as a gesture of compassion and an emblem of progressive values, arguing that kindness toward animals reflects broader humanitarian ethics. Conversely, traditionalist commentators defended the family's reaction as an expression of respect for household customs and cultural continuity, asserting that modern sensibilities should not override deeply held communal traditions (Karakoyunlu, 2023). These polarized responses underscore how *Cranberry Sorbet* transforms everyday situations into reflections of collective identity struggles, inviting audiences to reconsider the meanings of empathy, tradition, and belonging in a rapidly modernizing society.

By dramatizing a simple act such as bringing a dog into the home, the series highlights the complexity of cultural negotiation in contemporary Turkey. As Barthes (1977) suggests, symbolic gestures in domestic life often function as microcosms of broader ideological systems. In this context, the stray dog scene encapsulates the tension between inclusion and exclusion, individuality and conformity, tradition and change—revealing how moral values, social expectations, and private emotions converge in the negotiation of modern Turkish identity.

Viral Scene 6: The Shoe Removal and Slippers Scene (Episode 8)

In Episode 7, Alev, Kivilcim's sister, a character representing modern, individualistic values, visits the conservative family's home. Upon entering, she instinctively hesitates to remove her shoes and wear the house slippers provided by her hosts, a deeply rooted Turkish tradition symbolizing respect for cleanliness and household decorum. The moment is small yet pivotal, as it subtly highlights the cultural and ideological divide between her and her hosts.

Kivilcim's initial resistance symbolizes individual preferences and the prioritization of personal comfort over societal expectations. It also reflects her unfamiliarity with or rejection of certain traditional practices. On the other hand, the family's insistence on this tradition underscores their adherence to established customs, viewing it as a sign of respect and a non-negotiable aspect of hospitality. Shoes and slippers are laden with cultural significance in Turkish households. The act of removing shoes upon entering a home symbolizes respect, while providing slippers for guests demonstrates hospitality. Kivilcim's hesitation disrupts this symbolic exchange, making her an outsider to the tradition. This moment also mirrors broader cultural negotiations where modern lifestyles clash with deeply embedded customs (Barthes, 1977). Social media discussions erupted over this scene, with viewers debating whether such traditions should be upheld universally or adapted based on individual preferences. Some applauded the series for accurately portraying this cultural norm, while others sympathized with Kivilcim's discomfort, arguing for more flexible interpretations of tradition. This scene subtly critiques the rigidity of traditional expectations in a rapidly modernizing society. It invites viewers to consider how even small, everyday practices can become battlegrounds for cultural identity.

Viral Scene 7: Lighting a Candle in the Church (Episode 6)

In Episode 6, Doğa visits a church with a friend and lights a candle as part of a reflective

moment. Although this act is culturally neutral in many societies, it carries substantial symbolic weight in the context of the series, where Doğa's conservative in-laws regard her actions with suspicion and disapproval. The scene becomes a flashpoint for exploring themes of interfaith respect, individuality, and societal expectation. For Doğa, lighting a candle is a personal and spiritual act, unbound by religious orthodoxy. It reflects her openness to exploring different cultural practices and her willingness to embrace spiritual diversity. In contrast, her in-laws perceive this action as inappropriate and potentially undermining their values, highlighting the rigidity of their cultural and religious framework.

The act of lighting a candle in a church is a universal symbol of hope, reflection, and spirituality. Within the series, this act challenges conservative perceptions of exclusivity in religious practices and invites a discussion on interfaith understanding (Barthes, 1977). Social media platforms, especially Twitter and YouTube, saw divided opinions. Supporters of Doğa praised her spiritual freedom and criticized the in-laws for their narrow-mindedness. Others sided with the conservative family, emphasizing the importance of adhering to one's own religious traditions. This scene transcends its immediate narrative context to comment on the tension between globalization, which encourages cultural exchange, and localized traditions, which seek to preserve a singular identity. It also highlights the role of women as agents of cultural negotiation within the family (Hall, 1997).

Viral Scene 8: Doğa Starting School and Fatih's Anger (Episode 8)

In Episode 8, Doğa expresses her determination to continue her education and takes concrete steps to enroll in school, setting in motion one of the series' most ideologically charged conflicts. While her decision is celebrated by her immediate family as a progressive and empowering choice, it provokes disapproval and anger from her husband Fatih, who interprets it as a challenge to traditional familial structures. This confrontation evolves into

a broader dispute about gender roles, personal ambition, and marital expectations, encapsulating the central tension between individual autonomy and collective tradition.

Doğa's return to education functions as a powerful symbol of female independence and intellectual agency. Her decision embodies progressive values that prioritize personal development, equality, and self-realization, marking education as both a right and a means of emancipation. Conversely, Fatih's reaction reinforces the patriarchal notion that a woman's primary duty lies within the domestic sphere—as a wife, mother, and moral custodian of the family. His discomfort with Doğa's aspirations reflects the persistence of gendered expectations within conservative frameworks, where women's ambitions are often constrained by notions of propriety and familial obligation (Karakoyunlu, 2023).

The symbolic weight of this scene extends beyond the narrative to represent a microcosm of the ongoing debate over gender equality in Turkey. Education, particularly for married women, becomes a contested space where competing ideologies—modern individualism and traditional collectivism—collide. Doğa's defiance of conventional roles not only challenges the conservative narrative that confines women to domesticity but also underscores the transformative potential of knowledge and education in dismantling patriarchal norms. Her character thus embodies the evolving identity of the modern Turkish woman: educated, self-aware, and assertive in pursuing her goals despite social resistance.

Audience reactions on social media further amplified the cultural resonance of this episode. Supporters celebrated Doğa's courage, describing her decision as a turning point for female empowerment and emphasizing the importance of women's access to education and professional fulfillment. Others, however, defended Fatih's perspective, arguing that her actions disregarded marital harmony and family priorities. These

polarized responses, as Külekçi (2024) notes, reflect the broader sociocultural friction between modern egalitarian ideals and traditional beliefs that prioritize unity, hierarchy, and clearly defined gender roles.

From a representational standpoint, the scene exemplifies Hall's (1997) theory of cultural negotiation, illustrating how media texts both reflect and shape ideological struggles within society. Doğa's narrative arc operates as an allegory for Turkey's broader transformation—a nation grappling with the coexistence of modernity and conservatism, autonomy and duty, progress and preservation. By portraying education as an arena of empowerment and conflict, *Cranberry Sorbet* underscores the vital role of women's agency in redefining social norms and challenging entrenched patriarchal values.

Viral Scene 9: Dinner Conflict, Fight, and Doğa Leaving Home (Episode 9)

In Episode 9, Fatih invites Doğa to a dinner with his conservative friends—a formal gathering steeped in traditional customs and gendered social expectations. From the outset, Doğa feels alienated, as the tone of the evening reflects values and conversations she finds restrictive and outdated. Her discomfort intensifies when Fatih's friends make inappropriate remarks about other women in the restaurant, exposing the patriarchal undertones of their social dynamic. The conversation soon turns dismissive toward women's roles and aspirations, leading to a disagreement that culminates in Doğa's abrupt departure from the table. The ensuing argument between Doğa and Fatih escalates, prompting her decision to leave the house altogether—a decisive act that symbolizes her rejection of the oppressive environment imposed upon her.

Doğa's actions—walking away from the dinner and ultimately leaving home—serve as powerful symbols of self-assertion and defiance against traditional gender norms. Her departure represents a refusal to conform to societal and familial expectations that subordinate women's

autonomy to male authority. By standing up to both her husband and his social circle, Doğa embodies a feminist consciousness rooted in dignity, resistance, and solidarity with other women. Her decision underscores the value of self-respect over compliance, positioning her as a figure of empowerment who challenges patriarchal boundaries and reclaims control over her own narrative.

In contrast, Fatih's response reinforces the conventional expectation that women should adapt to their husbands' cultural and social environments, prioritizing family unity and harmony over personal grievances. His reaction reflects the persistence of patriarchal attitudes that equate female independence with rebellion and disobedience. The dinner scene, therefore, operates as a microcosm of conservative social structures—spaces governed by male dominance, hierarchical interactions, and rigid gender expectations (Barthes, 1977).

The public reception of this scene on social media was immediate and deeply divided. Many viewers applauded Doğa's courage to stand up for herself, praising her as a role model for self-respect and independence in relationships. Others, however, criticized her departure as impulsive, arguing that dialogue and compromise should prevail within marriage. These polarized responses mirror the broader societal tension between individual agency and collective conformity in modern Turkey.

From a semiotic perspective, Doğa's act of leaving the dinner table signifies more than personal defiance—it represents the disruption of a symbolic order rooted in patriarchal tradition. Her resistance transforms the domestic and social space into a site of ideological contestation, exposing the fragility of conservative authority when confronted with modern ideals of equality. As Hall (1997) argues, media narratives often serve as arenas where competing ideologies are negotiated, and this scene exemplifies that process vividly. Through Doğa's confrontation and

withdrawal, *Cranberry Sorbet* not only critiques rigid societal expectations but also underscores the necessity of mutual respect and equality in relationships, offering a nuanced reflection on the challenges of reconciling tradition with modernity.

Viral Scene 10: Kivilcim and Ömer's Relationship Development (Episode 10)

In Episode 10, the show shifts focus to the developing relationship between Kivilcim, a fiercely independent and modern woman, and Ömer, a thoughtful and reserved man rooted in conservative values. The episode highlights their mutual attraction despite their ideological differences. In a pivotal moment, Ömer expresses his admiration for Kivilcim's independence and strength, while she acknowledges his steadfast principles and respectful demeanor.

Kivilcim's character embodies progressive ideals, prioritizing career and personal autonomy. Her interest in Ömer suggests that modernity does not necessitate the rejection of tradition but instead seeks harmony with mutual respect. On the other hand, Ömer's approach to their relationship is rooted in his conservative upbringing, valuing respect, patience, and communication. His openness to Kivilcim's differing perspective represents a softer, more adaptable version of conservatism.

The relationship symbolizes a potential bridge between modern and conservative values. Their dialogue and shared moments reflect a negotiation of these ideologies, emphasizing respect and understanding over conflict (Hall, 1997). Viewers reacted positively to the chemistry between Kivilcim and Ömer, with many praising the show for presenting a relationship that challenges stereotypical portrayals of modern and conservative dynamics. Social media discussions highlighted this as a refreshing take on reconciliation in a polarized cultural context.

The scene critiques rigid perceptions of relationships defined solely by ideological alignment. It underscores the importance of

personal values and mutual respect in transcending cultural boundaries, offering a hopeful narrative in an otherwise conflict-laden series (Barthes, 1977; Karakoyunlu, 2023).

Conclusion

The analysis of the first ten episodes of *Cranberry Sorbet* reveals a sophisticated portrayal of the interplay between modern and conservative values within Turkish society. Through its use of cultural symbols—such as wedding rituals, hand-kissing traditions, and domestic dynamics—the series constructs a vivid narrative framework that encapsulates the ideological tensions embedded in everyday interactions.

Recurring motifs like traditional attire, hospitality gestures, and familial rituals anchor the storyline, illustrating how deeply ingrained cultural norms are continuously negotiated and contested. The contrast between modern representations—defined by autonomy, inclusivity, and ambition—and conservative ideals that emphasize family unity and social hierarchy underscores the series' dual role as both a reflection and a critique of Turkish cultural identity. Viral scenes such as the “cologne offering,” “golden belt,” and “lighting a candle in the church” serve as symbolic flashpoints that not only dramatize these tensions but also invite audiences to engage in broader societal debates.

Cultural narratives and symbolic acts are intricately woven throughout the series. Ceremonies like the golden belt ritual and the cologne offering function as focal points for exploring the dynamic between modernity and tradition, revealing how cultural practices are simultaneously preserved, reinterpreted, and contested. By foregrounding these elements, *Cranberry Sorbet* offers a nuanced commentary on the ongoing negotiation between progress and continuity within Turkish society.

The representation of women stands at the core of this narrative tension. Characters such as Doğa and Kivılcım navigate the dual pressures of modern ambition and traditional expectation, embodying

both resistance and adaptation. Their portrayals highlight the evolving status of women as agents who simultaneously uphold and challenge patriarchal norms within the family and broader social structures. By placing these conflicts at the narrative center, the series encourages viewers to critically reflect on gender, power, and the shifting nature of cultural identity.

Cranberry Sorbet's mediation of these tensions can be examined through Han's (2021) *Palliative Society* framework, which suggests that the series often resolves ideological conflict through symbolic or emotional reconciliation rather than structural transformation. While characters achieve moments of harmony and personal growth, systemic issues such as gender inequality and class stratification remain largely unaddressed. This reading underscores the limits of media narratives that privilege comfort and continuity over radical change, revealing television's tendency to soothe rather than dismantle social contradictions.

Despite these limitations, the series succeeds in sparking meaningful dialogue about cultural identity, modernity, and tradition. It functions as a cultural mediator, bridging opposing ideologies and fostering empathy across social divides. By reflecting its characters' struggles and resolutions, *Cranberry Sorbet* invites audiences to re-evaluate their own values and to envision possibilities for reconciliation between tradition and progress.

Ultimately, *Cranberry Sorbet* stands as a compelling case study in the negotiation of cultural identity within a globalized yet tradition-rooted context. It illustrates the power of television not only as an instrument of entertainment but also as a medium of cultural reflection and ideological negotiation. This study underscores the crucial role of media in articulating and mediating social tensions—offering insights that extend beyond Turkey to societies worldwide that grapple with similar dilemmas of continuity and transformation.

Moreover, the series effectively responds to the central research question: *How does Cranberry*

Sorbet use cultural narratives and symbols to represent and mediate societal ideologies in Turkey? Through its synthesis of theoretical perspectives and scene-based analysis, the series demonstrates how media narratives operate as both mirrors and mediators of social discourse. By strategically employing cultural narratives and symbols, Cranberry Sorbet bridges the ideological divide between modernity and conservatism, encouraging reflection, dialogue, and cultural self-awareness among its audience.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de geniş bir izleyici kitlesine ulaşan ve farklı yaşam tarzlarını aile anlatıları yoluyla görünür kılan Türk televizyon dizisi *Kızılıcak Şerbeti* örneğinde, modernlik ve geleneksellik arasındaki kültürel gerilimin sembolik temsiller aracılığıyla nasıl yapılandırıldığını ve bu sürecin toplumsal anlam üretimindeki müzakere boyutunu incelemektedir. Türkiye’de televizyon dizileri yalnızca popüler kültür ürünleri değil; aynı zamanda toplumsal değerlerin, ideolojik çatışmaların ve kültürel dönüşümlerin görünür hâle geldiği önemli iletişim alanlarıdır. Bu bağlamda *Kızılıcak Şerbeti*, seküler-modern ve muhafazakâr-geleneksel yaşam tarzlarının aile kurumu üzerinden kesişimini merkeze alan anlatı yapısıyla akademik inceleme açısından anlamlı bir örnek teşkil etmektedir.

Araştırmanın temel amacı, dizinin ilk sezonunda (2022, ilk on bölüm) yer alan sembolik pratiklerin – ritüeller, gündelik davranışlar, mekânsal düzenlemeler ve karakter etkileşimleri – kültürel anlam üretiminde nasıl işlev gördüğünü ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışma, *Kızılıcak Şerbeti* dizisinde kültürel anlatılar ve semboller aracılığıyla toplumsal ideolojilerin nasıl temsil edildiğini ve medyanın bu temsiller üzerinden nasıl bir arabuluculuk rolü üstlendiğini sorgulamaktadır.

Kuramsal çerçeve, kültürel göstergibilim ve temsil kuramı temelinde yapılandırılmıştır. Barthes’ın (1977) kültürel göstergibilim yaklaşımı, dizideki sembollerin ideolojik anlamlarını çözümlmek için kullanılmış; Hall’un (1997) temsil kuramı ise medyanın toplumsal gerçekliği yalnızca yansıtmakla kalmayıp onu aktif biçimde inşa

ettiği varsayımından hareketle analiz sürecine dâhil edilmiştir. Buna ek olarak Han’ın (2021) Palyatif Toplum kavramı, dizideki uzlaşma ve çatışma çözüm biçimlerini eleştirel bir perspektifle değerlendirmek için kullanılmış; Arslan ve Temel’in (2023) öz-oryantalizm yaklaşımı ise muhafazakâr temsillerin medyatik inşasında ortaya çıkan içselleştirilmiş eleştirel söylemleri tartışmaya açmıştır.

Araştırma, nitel bir araştırma deseni çerçevesinde yürütülmüş; yöntem olarak nitel içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Dizinin ilk sezonuna ait ilk on bölüm, anlatının temel çatışma eksenlerinin ve sembolik çerçevenin kurulduğu bölümler olması nedeniyle örneklem olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu bölümlerde tekrar eden sembolik unsurlar, belirlenen kodlama şeması doğrultusunda sistematik biçimde analiz edilmiştir. Kodlama sürecinde aile ritüelleri (düğün töreni, el öpme pratiği, altın kemer takma), gündelik etkileşimler (kolonya ikramı, ayakkabı-terlik kullanımı), mekânsal düzenlemeler (ev içi oturma hiyerarşisi, misafir-ev sahibi ilişkisi), toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri ile eğitim ve çalışma hayatına ilişkin temsiller temel analitik kategoriler olarak ele alınmıştır. Örneğin, düğün sahnelerinde altın kemer ritüeli üzerinden namus, gelenek ve aile onuru vurgulanırken; kolonya ikramı ve el öpme gibi gündelik pratikler modern ve muhafazakâr aileler arasındaki kültürel sınırların sembolik olarak görünür hâle geldiği anlar olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Ayrıca, Doğa’nın eğitimine devam etme kararı ve bu karar etrafında gelişen çatışmalar, kadın öznelliği ve toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği bağlamında çözümlenmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra dizinin yayınlandığı dönemlerde X (Twitter) ve YouTube platformlarında öne çıkan izleyici yorumları incelenmiş; özellikle “kolonya ikramı”, “altın kemer takma” ve “el öpme” sahneleri etrafında yoğunlaşan tartışmalar üzerinden, söz konusu sembollerin toplumsal alanda nasıl alımlandığı, hangi ideolojik pozisyonlarla ilişkilendirildiği ve kamusal söylemde nasıl yeniden anlamlandırıldığı değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular, *Kızılıcak Şerbeti*’nin kültürel sembolleri yalnızca anlatıyı destekleyen öğeler olarak değil, ideolojik müzakerelerin taşıyıcısı olarak

kullandığını göstermektedir. Kolonya ikramı, altın kemer takma, el öpme gibi gündelik ve törensel pratikler; modern ve muhafazakâr değerler arasındaki sınırların görünür hâle geldiği sembolik çatışma alanları olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu sahnelerin sosyal medyada yoğun tartışmalara yol açması, dizinin “sosyal televizyon” bağlamında kamusal tartışmayı tetikleyen bir iletişim alanı oluşturduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Çalışma ayrıca, dizide kadın karakterlerin kültürel müzakerede merkezi bir rol üstlendiğini göstermektedir. Doğa ve Kıvılcım karakterleri üzerinden kadınların eğitim, çalışma hayatı ve bireysel özerklik talepleri temsil edilirken; bu taleplerin muhafazakâr aile yapılarıyla çatışması, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerini görünür kılmaktadır. Bununla birlikte, dizide yer alan bazı uzlaşma sahnelerinde yapısal eşitsizliklerin sembolik düzeyde geçici olarak yumuşatıldığı; ancak bu eşitsizliklerin köklü bir sorgulamaya tabi tutulmadığı gözlemlenmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, Han’ın (2021) ortaya koyduğu “palyatif toplum” kavramsallaştırmasıyla örtüşmektedir.

Sonuç olarak *Kızılıcak Şerbeti*, Türkiye’de modernlik ve geleneksellik arasındaki ideolojik gerilimi aile anlatıları ve sembolik pratikler aracılığıyla görünür kılan bir medya metni olarak değerlendirilebilir. Dizi, bu gerilimi kimi zaman keskin karşıtlıklar üzerinden temsil ederken, kimi zaman da uzlaşma ve diyalog olanakları sunan anlatı stratejileri geliştirmekte; böylece popüler kültür alanında kültürel kimliğin yeniden müzakere edildiği bir iletişim zemini oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma, televizyon dizilerinin kültürel temsiller ve ideolojik arbuluculuk bağlamındaki rolünü tartışmaya açarak ilgili literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yazar Bilgileri

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