

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

The Presentation of Brand Personality and Cultural Branding Through Instagram

Marka Kişiliği ve Kültürel Markalamanın Instagram Aracılığıyla Sunumu

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Abstract

Brands, much like individuals, build their unique brand personalities through their communication styles and behaviors. Some brands, through the cultural elements embedded in their communication components, become symbols of a nation. This study aims to reveal the messages conveyed through the current communication practices of local brands with high brand value and cultural elements, as well as the cultural indicators they use when structuring these messages. In this context, Turkish Airlines and Türkiye İş Bank, both prominent in terms of brand value and carrying cultural branding elements, were selected for analysis. The most-liked Instagram videos of these brands were examined using a semiotic analysis method. As a result of the study, it was found that both brands have a strong connection to Turkish culture and the history of the Republic. Moreover, it was concluded that the message strategies of these cultural brands are constructed through symbols such as the flag, historical heroes, shared history, and national and cultural virtues. The emotions included in the content rely on the shared past of the nation and national sentiment to be conveyed, which can contribute to the formation of cultural brand personalities. These findings provide insights into how brands create cultural brand personalities through their cultural branding strategies.

Keywords: Brand Communication, Brand Personality, Cultural Branding, Turkish Airlines, Türkiye İş Bank

Öz

Markalar, tıpkı bireyler gibi, iletişim tarzları ve davranışlarıyla kendilerine özgü marka kişiliklerini oluştururlar. Bazı markalar ise iletişim bileşenlerine yerleştirdikleri kültürel öğeler aracılığıyla bir milletin sembolü haline gelirler. Bu çalışma, marka değeri yüksek ve kültürel öğelere sahip yerel markaların güncel iletişim pratikleriyle ilettikleri mesajları ve bu mesajları yapılandırırken kullandıkları kültürel göstergeleri ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, marka değeri açısından öne çıkan ve kültürel marka öğeleri taşıyan Türk Hava Yolları ve Türkiye İş Bankası analiz için seçilmiştir. Bu markaların en çok beğenilen Instagram videoları göstergelimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda, her iki markanın da Türk kültürü ve Cumhuriyet tarihiyle güçlü bir bağa sahip olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, bu kültürel markaların mesaj stratejilerinin bayrak, tarihi kahramanlar, ortak tarih, milli ve kültürel erdemler gibi semboller aracılığıyla inşa edildiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. İçerikte yer verilen duygular, iletmek istenen milletin ortak geçmişine ve milli duyguya dayanmaktadır ve bu da kültürel marka kişiliklerinin oluşumuna katkıda bulunabilir. Bu bulgular, markaların kültürel marka stratejileri aracılığıyla kültürel marka kişiliklerini nasıl oluşturduklarına dair içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marka İletişimi, Marka Kişiliği, Kültürel Markalama, Türk Hava Yolları, Türkiye İş Bankası

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1. INTRODUCTION

As our world becomes more and more digital, brands have begun to make strategic use of not only traditional media tools but also digital media channels in order to interact with their target audience. The expanding area of presence of brands has transformed them from mere economic actors that provide goods and services to cultural subjects that build meaning. In this context, branding and brand communication endeavours to create a connection with the consumer while also being a communication process in which cultural representations, identities, and symbols become currency. Brand identity, and brand personality which is a reflection of it, comprise the nucleus of brand communication and are the cornerstones of this process. The blueprint of brand identity put forward by Aaker (1997) paved the way for the perception of brands as being akin to human beings, while those personality traits carry a more complex and profound meaning with regards to the cultural landscape. Based on this fact, the concept of a cultural brand identity purports that brands not only reflect individual personality traits but also convey societal values and include symbolic aspects. Brands can link themselves to the commonly held values of a nation through the cultural codes they embed into their communication practices.

Holt (2004) states that brands become icons by catering to societal issues, the search for identity, and collective desires. This strategy has become even more important in the digital age, and brands have been able to convey their cultural representations directly to their target consumer base thanks to social media platforms.

Studies on cultural branding in Türkiye usually analyse how global brands code local values and symbols into their communication practices (Deneçli, 2013; Onurlu & Zulfugarova, 2016). These studies explore how global brands in Türkiye ensure intercultural harmony through their advertising strategy when it comes to televised advertisements. This so-called “glocal” advertising strategy shows how global brands code their messages in accordance with the commonly held values of Turkish culture (Deneçli, 2013; Onurlu & Zulfugarova, 2016).

This study uses Turkish Airlines and İşbank, two of Türkiye’s most powerful brands, as examples. A total of eight reels videos that have received the most likes on the two brands’ Instagram pages have been analysed using the semiotic analysis method. The fundamental aim of the study is to reveal what messages the aforementioned brands are currently broadcasting on digital channels, and which cultural signifiers they employ when building those messages. Additionally, the study explores how referring to national and moral values through cultural coding contributes to brand identity.

1.1. Brands and Brand Communication

A brand is defined as the entirety of products, shapes, symbols, logos, slogans and packaging that distinguish a company from other institutions. A brand is also known as the reputation of a company (Elden, 2009, p. 96).

The idea of branding dates back to ancient Egypt. The very first instances of branding include marking livestock to protect against theft and loss and craftsmen embossing their own symbols into the bricks they manufactured, both from ancient Egypt. In ancient Rome, merchants used special imprints and stamps to distinguish their products from the rest. During the Middle Ages, members of European trade guilds placed a special mark on their products and attempted to create a legal framework of protection in this manner. In the 16th century, wine producers branded their names into wooden barrels with fire. By the 18th century, brands had begun to differ in terms of style, and names, images of celebrities, and animal pictures began to be incorporated into their designs. The first brands to trademark their products by using patented names were Levi’s, Maxwell House, Budweiser, Coca-Cola and Campbell’s Soup (as cited in Yayınoğlu, 2006, p. 129).

The first law regarding brands in history was enacted in 1857 in France. The “Factory and Commercial Goods Law” protected certain goods, and over time it was incorporated into the legislation of other European countries and the United States (Sağlam, 2019). As communication and transportation technologies improved, brands were able to reach consumers through advertisements and mass communication tools with greater ease, and the idea of brand awareness was developed. While companies found it useful that brands were popularised extremely quickly, this also created issues in the shape of imitations and fakes. By 1890, many countries around the world had implemented laws

concerning trademarks, which offered legal protection for brand names, labels, and designs (Borça, 1993, p. 8).

The factors facilitating the commercial popularity of branded goods in the United States can be summarised as follows (Borça, 1993, p. 7):

- Improvements in transportation and communication technologies
- Ability to quickly manufacture large quantities of high-quality goods thanks to improvements in the factory process
- New packaging technologies leading to an increase in retail enterprises
- Changes to legislation that make it possible for brands to be protected
- A new source of income for newspapers and magazines in the form of printed advertisements
- Immigration policies and population increase
- Improved living standards thanks to industrialisation and urbanisation

Today, branding and brand value remain highly important aspects of the business world. Since the 1990s, corporations have realised the need for them to prioritise brand management, and abstract and tangible innovations have been made in branding. Companies dedicate resources to the creation, positioning, and strengthening of brands.

According to Kotler, (2000) the most fundamental aspects of a brand can be divided into six categories:

Table 1. Brand Layers

| Aspect | Definition | Example |
|-------------|---|--|
| Feature | A brand denotes that its products contain certain features | The Mercedes brand is associated with expensive, robust, long-lasting and prestigious vehicles. |
| Benefit | The features of the brand are said to provide practical and sentimental benefits. | The feature of being “long lasting” can be made into a practical benefit by the thought “I will not have to change my car for the next few years.” |
| Value | The brand says something about its manufacturer’s values. | Mercedes represents high performance, safety, and prestige. |
| Culture | The brand points to a specific culture. | Mercedes represents German culture with its features of dependability, productiveness, and high quality. |
| Personality | The brand emphasises certain personality traits. | Mercedes can be reminiscent of a serious and uncompromising boss (an individual) or a lion that is the leader of its pack (an animal). |
| User | The brand brings its customer base to mind. | Mercedes vehicles are more commonly purchased by 55 year old executives rather than 20 year old retail staff. |

Source: Kotler, 2000: 188

The most important stage in the branding process is the positioning of the brand in the consumers’ minds. Today, with an expanding consumer market and increased competition, brands strive to highlight features that make them stand out from their competitors. A brand comprises tangible and intangible features, therefore it is expected to cater to its customer base not just on a rational level but an emotional

level too. These rational and emotional features must be complemented by other features such as availability, prevalence, advertising, and packaging. For instance, when marketing its products, a tech company not only highlights the “fast processor” of its devices but also characterises them as “tools for a freer lifestyle,” creating a rational and emotional bond with the consumer. Consumer with first-hand experience of the brand propagate their impressions through reviews and conversations with members of their social circles (Saatçioğlu, 2025, p. 6).

To this end, the name of a brand, its personality, and its identity are the most effective tools for it to connect with its target audience. The name of a brand in particular is vital when forming a relationship with the consumer. For this reason, the name of a brand (Can, 2007, pp. 229-230):

- Should be short and snappy
- Should be easy to pronounce
- Should be suitable to display on packaging and labels
- Should not evoke phrases associated with violence or negativity
- Should be suitable for advertising tools
- Should be memorable
- Should be distinct
- Should point to a quality of the goods it represents

Today, as the digital world becomes a part of our daily lives more quickly than ever, the reach of brands has grown much wider than before. The extensive use of digital marketing tools in addition to traditional mass communication tools has changed the way we live our lives. Social media in particular has completely transformed the way people communicate, make friends, shop, and follow the news.

The “global village” created by digitalisation makes it easier for information to spread around the world quickly. Social media in particular is used by large swathes of the population, which prompts brands to use those channels to broadcast content targeting their consumer base. A 2024 report by We Are Social shows that there are 5.04 billion social media users in the world. As a global meeting place, social media expands every day, and the number of users increase. According to a survey, social media users utilise the platforms not only to access information but also for emotional support (Clicks’us, 2024).

Social media is used extensively both by private individuals and corporations. Social media allows for a two-sided conversation, facilitating the dialogue between the source and the target audience. For this reason, social media platforms have been a significant communication arena for brands since their inception, and new communication formats emerge as the medium develops. Social media presents companies with important opportunities in the modern world, and virtual communities allow brands to build brand loyalty. However, once consumers become a part of this online environment, the company ceases to be the sole entity controlling the conversation (Éva and Mirkó, 2012). This initiates a two-sided process between the source and the target audience.

1.2. Brand Personality

Just like humans, each brand also possesses an identity and personality. A “brand identity” is the sum of qualities that show the character of a brand. This includes all the aspects of a brand — including brand perception, identity, history, and name. In order to build up a distinct identity, a brand must differ from its competitors with unique features, build an emotional bond with the consumer, and be dependable and clear (Andrivet, 2023). Just as different personalities set apart individual human beings, brand personalities set apart companies from one another. One component of brand image is brand identity of character. Brands are reminiscent of qualities such as “young,” “colourful,” and “gentle.” Such associations are usually made with regard to feedback through usage. A brand’s personality can also invoke the feelings or emotions created by the brand (Keller, 1993).

A brand’s personality is shaped by the brand’s values, characteristics, the corporate culture into which it was born, management style, marketing events, advertisement, PR practices, and perception, as well as consumer expectations and the features of the goods it represents. It is through brand personality that

Italian brands are associated with superior aesthetics while German brands are associated with technology and expert engineering, or for brands to be referred to with adjectives such as “young” or “dynamic.” Brand personality usually hinges on abstract phrases and symbols (Elden, 2009, p. 13).

A study by Aaker (1997) explores brand personalities in five dimensions:

Table 2. Brand Personalities in five dimensions

| Brand Personality | | | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|----------------|-------------|
| Sincerity | Excitement | Competence | Sophistication | Durability |
| Pragmatic | Brave | Reliable | High-class | Extroverted |
| Honest | Inspring | Clever | Alluring | Direct |
| Healthy | Creative | Successful | | |
| Cheerful | Current | | | |

Source: Aaker, 1997, p. 352

Each of the above categories display the factors brands rely on. For instance, The Body Shop has a reliable stance against animal testing, and expresses that the brand supports environmental and social causes, which emphasises the brand’s sincerity. The US-based brand GoPro’s strong affinity for extreme sports, outdoor activities, and adrenaline-seeking experiences point to the brand having an exciting and adventurous personality. IBM prioritises innovation and trustworthy software solutions, which characterises it as a competent corporation. Rolex, known for its elegant and prestigious watches, emphasises its sophisticated side with intricate workmanship and being a status symbol. Finally, the Harley Davidson motorcycle company highlights its products’ durability by cultivating an image of sturdiness, freedom, and rebelliousness (Blaess, 2025). It is worth noting that all of these brands’ personality traits are universal qualities. When building a brand personality, global brands cultivate emotions or features that will appeal to consumers all around the world.

An approach to brand communication that emphasises local values and encodes local characteristics means that the cultural brand personality is just as important. The concept of the cultural brand personality describes brands utilising prevalent modes of behaviour and personality traits of a given culture. The concept can be traced back to Aaker’s (1997) “brand personality model” and Holt’s (2004) approach to “cultural branding”; it is also closely related to the concept of “intercultural brand personality” (Vellnagel, 2020) that describes differences in brand perception between cultures.

While intercultural brand identity describes global brands paying attention to intercultural differences and shaping perceptions based on their target culture, cultural brand identity means that a brand incorporates its own local cultural characteristics to its communication practices, and reflects this in its perceived personality traits. In brief, cultural brand identity means that a brand carries local cultural qualities. Countries themselves have brand personalities. For instance, the brand personality of Brazil comprises five qualities that vary from Aaker’s (1997) brand personality features, these being cheerfulness, dependability, courage, elegance, and sensitivity (Muniz & Archetti, 2012). Similarly, durability is a cultural brand personality trait of the United States, peacefulness, of Japan, and passion, of Spain (Aaker et al., 2001). The unique history, traditions, and culture of the country where the consumer base is located is reflected in brands and form the cultural brand personality.

1.3. Cultural Branding

When creating content, brands pay close attention to a society’s cultural fabric. Addressing the target audience through social media requires producing images and videos that convey the desired values. To this end, brands are often seen to prioritise the values, beliefs, and preconceptions of a community. Brands rely heavily on cultural components on digital platforms, and many cultural products have found the chance to influence other cultures thanks to the development of communication and transportation technologies. The widespread use of digital platforms and social media also influences how people

access, share, and consume culture.

Life is formed by culture. Emotions, thoughts, approaches, and values play an important role in this formation. Every society has a vast array of cultural practices. In marketing communications, being mindful of the target society's cultural values and designing communications with this in mind increases the ease of communication. When developing cultural marketing strategies, it is important not to forego cultural components (Özdemir et al., 2021, p. 1168). When brands that are reminiscent of a meaning or symbol integrate country-specific cultural codes into their identity, they take on definitions regarding shared social values and become cultural brands. The influence of cultural brands is based on individuals' shared historical and cultural representations. In this context, cultural brands are not only consumer brands, but also the meaning-bearers of collective desires and anxieties shared on a societal level (Holt, 2004).

Certain cultural pointers are used by brands when addressing consumers. Four cultural components are commonly preferred by brands when addressing consumers:

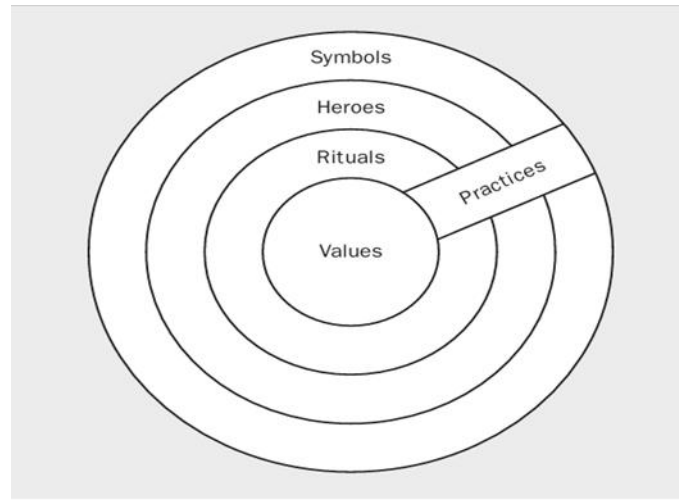


Figure 1. Hofstede's Cultural Onion Model

Source: Hofstede et al., 2010: 8

In this table laid out by Hofstede, symbols, heroes, rituals, and values can be seen as content prioritised by brands in their messaging. Symbols are the words, gestures, images or objects that are familiar to those who share a culture. This includes words in a language, or specialised jargon used by certain professions. Personal style, haircuts, flags, and status symbols also fall under this category. Heroes are yet another facet of cultural values. Heroes are individuals who may be dead or alive, real or fictitious, who serve as role models of behaviour due to possessing qualities that are regarded as being extremely valuable in a culture. Fictional characters such as Barbie, Batman, and Snoopy in the United States, Asterix in France, and Olivier B. Bommel (Oliver B. Bumble) in the Netherlands are also considered cultural heroes. Rituals are collective activities that are not required to achieve a specific outcome but are considered socially essential within a culture. Examples include greeting each other, expressions of respect, and social and religious gatherings. Values denote preferences we develop early on in life, and can be described as preferring certain situations over others. Values are emotions with a positive and negative side. The pairings of good-bad, ugly-beautiful, moral-immoral, safe-dangerous, clean-dirty can be seen as value judgements (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 8-9).

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2. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to outline how these two brands employ visual and linguistic pointers in digital avenues to create their brand identities, what cultural symbols they use, and what type of meaningful connections they form with the audience. This study investigates Instagram Reels posted by Turkish Airlines and İşbank, two of Türkiye's highest-ranking companies in terms of brand value, from the perspective of brand communication and cultural branding. It employs the qualitative research method of semiotic analysis. There is no situation requiring ethics committee approval in the study.

The sample of this study consists of Reels content shared on the official Instagram accounts of Turkish Airlines (THY) and Türkiye İş Bankası. In determining the sample, July 2025—the date on which the research was conducted—was taken as the reference point, and the four Reels posts with the highest number of likes for each brand were selected retrospectively. Accordingly, a total of eight Reels videos, four from each brand, were included in the sample through purposive sampling.

According to the “Türkiye 125” report published by Brand Finance in 2025, Turkish Airlines occupies first place amongst Turkish brands when ranked by value, with a brand value of 2.2 billion USD. İşbank, though in a different sector, is the third most valuable brand in Türkiye, with a brand value of 1.24 billion USD (Uylas and Yildirim, 2025). Both companies use Instagram reels for brand communication and incorporate aspects of culture branding, and both their histories go back almost as far as the Republic of Türkiye itself. Their references to Turkish culture in their communication practices is significant for the study.

The social media website used for the study was Instagram, due to its high number of users. For personal and corporate use alike, Instagram grows in popularity day after day. Reels in particular, which is the name given to short Instagram videos, are one of the most popular media formats of the past few years. Globally, Türkiye has one of the highest percentage of Instagram users as of 2025. In terms of total number of users, Türkiye is ranked fifth globally, though when the ratio of the number of users to the general population is considered, a percentage of 85.5% places it second globally (Dixon, 2025).

Instagram is at the forefront of the Turkish social media landscape not just based on the number of users but also based on the reach of the advertisements that run on the platform. The potential advertising reach of Instagram in Türkiye increased by 8.5 million people (7.14%) between January 2023- January 2024 (Kemp, 2024). This shows that Instagram is not solely used as a personal communication tool in Türkiye but has a central role in cultural interaction, digital marketing, and social visibility. The high number of users makes Instagram an effective communication and advertising tool for brands and institutions. Recent studies show that Instagram is the most preferred platform when it comes to brand-related activity. Companies can remain in constant engagement with their shareholders and target consumers on issues such as customer commitment, brand recognition, and brand loyalty.

The study uses Roland Barthes semiotic approach. In the simplest terms, semiotics can be defined as “what is relayed to me by the signifier” (Barthes, 1993, p. 12). Semiotics is particularly useful when it comes to decoding hidden ideological layers in communication content. Semiotics is a qualitative research method, and it studies what meaning can be derived from a signifier we see or perceive, or in other words, it focuses on what is being pointed at and reveals hidden layers of meaning. A ‘signifier’ can be a word, symbol, object or person, whereas a ‘signified’ refers to the true meaning within the signifier, while a ‘sign’ is the whole that contains the two (Barthes, 2014, p. 184).

This study explores the following research questions:

RQ1: Do brands pay attention to cultural values in their reels?

RQ2: What kinds of cultural elements do brands use in their messages?

RQ3: What topics do brands address visually and linguistically?

In this study, Hofstede's cultural layers theory was also used as a complementary analytical framework in order to analyze brand content from a cultural perspective (Hofstede, 2010, p. 8). This approach, which was introduced in detail in the previous section, is a suitable and widely used method for uncovering the elements employed to appeal to a particular culture in communication content. It has been observed that this analytical method, which consists of the elements of “symbols, heroes, rituals,

and values,” is used in studies aiming to reveal cultural components (Deneçli, 2013; Onurlu & Zulfugarova, 2016).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Turkish Airlines (THY) Reels Analysis

Four Instagram reels posted by the official THY account that have received the highest number of likes have been analysed in terms of brand personality and cultural branding components using the semiotic analysis method.

3.1.1. Reels Scenes Posted by THY Photographer Ercan Akçay

Figure 2. Reels scenes posted by thy photographer Ercan Akçay



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLYFWCggyxu/>

Table 3. Analysis of Video by THY Employee Ercan Akçay

| Date: 26. 06. 2025 | | Number of Likes: 14.605 |
|--------------------|--|--|
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Person | Ercan Akçay, a diplomatic protocol photographer who has been working for THY for 20 years. | Loyalty and trust in the company, many years of harmonious employee-employer relations. |
| Event | As a freelance photographer, Ercan Akçay’s studio was the target of a robbery, and he began working for THY after receiving a job offer from them. | THY is not only professional but provides work opportunities with altruistic kindness, supporting the workforce’s potential. |
| Event | A gift is presented to Ercan Akçay that symbolises a childhood memory he has that involves planes. | THY’s corporate culture has a high level of internal communication. Employees are valued as individuals. |

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| Event | Finding the document that designated the establishment of State Airports in Türkiye, signed by Atatürk himself, at the THY archives | A connection to the national values and history of Turkish culture through a reference to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye. |
| Person or people | A group of THY employees comprising a pilot and cabin crew members present a meaningful gift to Ercan Akçay as they say goodbye to him. | Employees and managers at THY appreciate each other's efforts and support each other. Managers and colleagues value one another on a personal level. |
| Dialogue | <i>"I'm saying goodbye to my work family after 20 years".</i> | As well as being a work environment with colleagues, THY also provides the warmth and educational benefits of a family. |
| Dialogue | <i>"May God watch over this company."</i> | As a cultural ritual, prayer is used to forge a connection with Turkish moral values. The sentimental bond of an employee with their company is highlighted. |
| Dialogue | <i>"THY brings the kind heart of Türkiye everywhere it flies."</i> | THY is not only a powerful brand, but also a powerful representative of Türkiye as a country. This shows that the brand has created an emotional bond with consumers. |

The messages that are delivered to the target audience through the meanings pointed at by the signifiers create emotional and cognitive meaning, and this store of meanings help build a brand personality. According to Aaker's brand personality scale, this communication content shows that the brand personality displays qualities of sincerity, competence, and success. The content highlights the pleasure and pride Ercan Akçay feels in his work as a diplomatic protocol photographer for THY for 20 years thanks to the unique opportunities and learning opportunities provided to him by his work life. The pride of an employee in their company and the gratitude and appreciation displayed by the company towards its employee is the prevalent feeling. A sense of gratitude or loyalty is a very important value in Turkish culture, which shows that THY places importance on its identity as a cultural brand.

3.1.2. Chief flight attendant reels scenes

Figure 3. Chief Flight Attendant Reels Scenes



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLFclO2oY8o/>

Table 4. Semiotic analysis of the reels video with the chief flight attendant

| | | |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Date 19.06.2025 | Number of Likes 10.968 | |
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Person or persons | A female chief flight attendant who is naturally beautiful and elegant. | Highlighting an understated, natural but sophisticated and commendable simplicity, orderliness, and care. |
| Hand gestures and body movements | Motions to calmly adjust her hat, scarf, and badge, then clasps her hands in front of her. | Personal and professional care that has become synonymous with THY. An awareness of one's duty so one is always ready and unhurried. |
| Music | A gentle but powerful tune in accordance with global trends in music. | The perception of a striking but calm, measured, respectable and global brand. |
| Gestures and facial expressions | A gentle and sincere look and smile. | Experience an airline whose members of staff are confident, calm, caring, and positive. |
| Location | The image of the flight attendant remains the same despite the changing background. | An airline that flies to many locations around the world while always providing the same standard of service. |

Analysing the signifiers and denoted meanings outlined in Table 2 shows us that the aim is to create a simple but sophisticated brand personality. As the chief flight attendant adjusts her hat, scarf, and collar, we see that all these items of clothing have the THY logo on them, which emphasises corporate diligence. The woman's measured and calm but also warm, helpful, and diligent demeanour is striking. All these qualities are encoded into the flight attendant character's behaviour and attitude through the narrative, thus building the company's brand personality.

3.1.3. Reels scenes depicting THY staff with award placards

Figure 4. Reels Scenes Depicting THY Staff with Award Placards

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DLCdkq2od-o/>

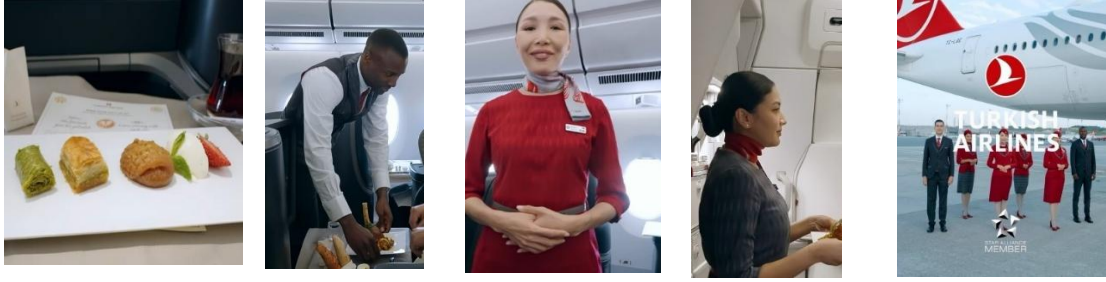
Table 5. Analysis of Reels Depicting THY Staff With Awards

| Date: 18.06.2025 | | Number of Likes: 13.557 |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Hand gestures and physical movements | A young female chef runs to the camera and covers the lens with her hand, then she lifts her hand and runs back. | Highlighting youthfulness and dynamism. Cheerfulness and humour. At the connotative level of the semiotic analysis, the chef's act of running can be interpreted as a service indicator that signifies speed and excitement. |
| Gestures and facial expressions | Flight attendants and culinary chefs take turns looking directly at the camera and smiling. | Being proud of one's success, casting a proud and self-assured look directly at the camera. |
| Event | 4 cabin crew staff and 2 chefs display awards plackets in front of the Eiffel Tower. The awards displayed are for Best Airline, Best Airline in Southern Europe and Best Business Class Cuisine. | The awards belong to THY employees, whose work contributed to their winning. THY is a company that appreciates its employees, recognises their efforts, and shows gratitude and loyalty. |
| Location | The actors quickly switch from being in an indoor business setting to in front of the Eiffel Tower. | Highlighting the speed at which the airline takes its passengers to different locations/countries. |
| Music | An upbeat song in English aligned with global music trends. The song " <i>Skip to the Good Part</i> " by the band AJB. | Encoding meaning denoting a dynamic, cheerful, and global brand personality. A segment from the part of the song where the melody reaches its peak (the drop) is used to create a strong association with feelings of achievement and pride. |

In the 2025 Skytrax awards, also known as the "Oscars of Aviation," THY has received eight different awards including best airline and best cuisine (Newsdesk, 2025). This reels video was created to announce those wins, and the fact that THY employees act in it and display the awards rather than professional actors show that THY considers their awards a shared win with their employees. The narrative emphasises appreciation and gratitude, once again reflecting the brand personality of loyalty and steadfastness. This is the second time this characteristic has been highlighted in the sample reels videos, which shows that THY considers it a core part of its brand personality.

3.1.4. Reels video to celebrate world cabin crew day

Figure 5. Scenes from Reels Video to Celebrate World Cabin Crew Day



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DKTx5FDoOR4/>

Table 6. Analysis of reels video for World Cabin Crew Day

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Date: 31.05.2025 | Number of Likes: 35.087 | |
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Hand gestures and physical movements | Placing items in the overhead bin, serving food. At the end of the video, THY flight attendants stand in front of an aircraft. Female staff stand with their hands clasped together in front of them and male staff stand with their hands to their sides. | Fulfilling cabin crew duties with care and a positive attitude. Emphasising being always ready to serve and well mannered. A clear reference to THY's brand power and trustworthiness. |
| People | Cabin crew from various nationalities, including Asian and Black employees. | Highlighting the work of cabin crew on World Cabin Crew Day. Emphasising the company's global reach by displaying the diversity of employees. |
| Clothes and colors | Standardization of the red and grey colors in the clothing. | The color gray is associated with seriousness, professionalism, and sophistication, while red encompasses meanings related to emotional elements such as courage, self-confidence, and passion (YAOT, 2026). Additionally, its association with the red color of the Turkish flag is highly evident. In this respect, red can be regarded as an almost national color for the Turkish nation, carrying strong symbolic and cultural significance. |
| Baklava and other Turkish desserts | Baklava and other Turkish desserts, which are part of Turkish cuisine and commonly associated with Türkiye's culinary heritage. | Baklava and other Turkish desserts, which constitute significant elements of Türkiye's gastrodiploacy, carry meanings that indicate the brand's attempt to construct a unique value in the international arena through cultural signifiers. |

This video, shared to celebrate World Cabin Crew Day, is once again striking in its choice of actors, who are real THY employees. By showing actions that are routinely performed by cabin crew — putting items away in the overhead bins, serving food, etc. — such ordinary actions are made into commendable works of labour and appreciated. The plot of this video once again points to gratitude and loyalty being important components of the brand's identity.

Table 7. Cultural Analysis of THY Reels

| Reels | Symbols | Heroes | Rituals | Values |
|---|---|--|------------------------|--|
| Reels video by THY employee Ercan Akçay Figure 2 | Turkish Flag Galata Tower Vintage Tram Vintage Ferry | Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Ercan Akçay, a THY employee of 20 years | Gift giving Prayer | Loyalty Helpfulness Appreciation Employee loyalty |
| Reels video showing chief flight attendant Figure 3 | Red Uniform Eiffel Tower | Chief Flight Attendant | Culture of hospitality | Care Fastidiousness |
| Reels video showing employees with award placards Figure 4 | Red Uniform Eiffel Tower | Flight Attendants Chefs | Receiving awards | Emphasising the power of unity Pride |
| World Cabin Crew Day reels video Figure 5 | Baklava Tea | Asian flight attendant Black flight attendant | Hospitality | Being a good host Emphasising the power of unity |

The THY flag, logo, and uniform pay homage to the Turkish flag directly with their colours and design features. By including symbols unique to Istanbul, Türkiye's most famous city on the global stage, such as ferries, the vintage tram, Galata Tower, and the Maiden's Tower, the city of Istanbul is used to form a cultural connection with Türkiye. Local foods included in the reels videos — baklava and tea — form a cultural link with Turkish culture through cuisine, and can be seen as factors aiding in cultural branding. Images such as the red uniform, baklava, and tea are very easily distinguishable and carry visual or physical meaning, as well as being surface-level yet strong expressions of cultural identity. Baklava and tea are universally recognised symbols of traditional Turkish cuisine and represent hospitality.

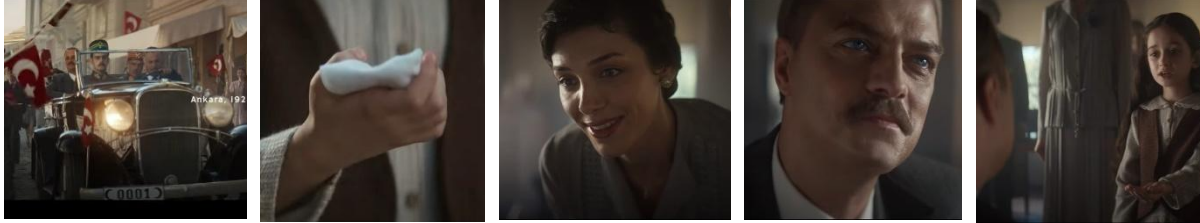
Asian and Black flight attendants represent inclusivity, diversity, and intercultural harmony on a global level. By including cabin crew members who are from a different ethnicity, the culturally diverse brand personality is highlighted, sending the message that the brand (and therefore the country it represents) prioritises not only local values but universal ones. Looking after guests is an important ritual in the airline and tourism sector, and it includes standards of behaviour such as personally greeting guests, handing out meals, and being friendly. This interaction both displays how the airline employees treat their customers, and also point to the understanding of hospitality inherent in the local culture. Emphasising hospitality and the power of unity can be interpreted as representing profound values that make up the foundation of Turkish culture.

3.2. Analysis of İşbank Reels Videos

Four Instagram reels posted by the official İşbank account that have received the highest number of likes have been analysed in terms of brand personality and cultural branding components using the semiotic analysis method.

3.2.1. İşbank Republic Day Reels Video

Figure 6. Scenes from İşbank Republic Day reels video



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBq57sisZ5L/>

Table 8. Analysis of İşbank Republic Day Reels Video

| Date: 28. 10. 2024 | | Number of Likes: 19.906 |
|--------------------|---|---|
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| People | A young girl arrives at the bank to ask for a safe to keep her father's handkerchief and the last pocket money he gave her after he dies during the war. A female bank employee, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. | Atatürk is Türkiye's most important national value, representing the country's liberation from occupation, the independence achieved through struggle, and the republic that grants sovereignty to the will of the people. Atatürk is seen as a value strongly connected with the bank. The female bank employee and the young girl representing future generations allude to the increased participation of women in economic and social life. |
| Event | Atatürk listens to the young girl, sympathises with her, and is visibly moved as he accepts her request. | Just like its founder Atatürk, İşbank respects and prepares our shared national history, the losses and tragedies suffered by the people, and their memories. By having Atatürk accept the child's request on behalf of İşbank, it is shown that the bond between the brand and its founder is still kept alive. |
| Event | The young girl wishes her money to increase so that she can study and become a doctor. | İşbank supports its clients' dreams towards a better future. |
| Dialogue | Young girl: "Is this bank's safe strong enough? If the enemy comes again, will they open it?" The female bank employee replies "They won't ever come again," and turns to look at Atatürk. | İşbank is a very trustworthy company that protects our financial and sentimental keepsakes at any cost. The sense of trust is highlighted. |

The emotional signifiers in this content point to the fact that İşbank was founded to mark the weary victory following a long struggle for national independence, and this comprises the nucleus of the

brand's communication strategy. The presence of Atatürk, associated with Türkiye's liberation from occupation, the struggle for independence, and the establishment of the republic, endows the brand with an identity that represents national values beyond being merely a financial institution. In this example, the construction of brand meaning is strategically anchored in national sentiment and historical symbolism. By integrating the story of a young girl who lost her father during the war, the narrative evokes collective memory and emotional resonance, linking the brand to themes of social responsibility, empathy, and historical awareness. Moreover, the depiction of the female bank employee and the young girl alludes to social progress, including women's participation in economic life, signaling the brand's alignment with modern societal values. Finally, İşbank's brand meaning is constructed not only through its services but through Türkiye's national history, collective memory, social values, and future-oriented aspirations, generating both cultural significance and emotional attachment among its audience.

3.2.2. 'Bring Your Report Card, Get Your Book' Reels Video

Figure 7. Scenes from 'Bring Your Report Card, Get Your Book' Reels Video



Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DK2Kf_XonFa/

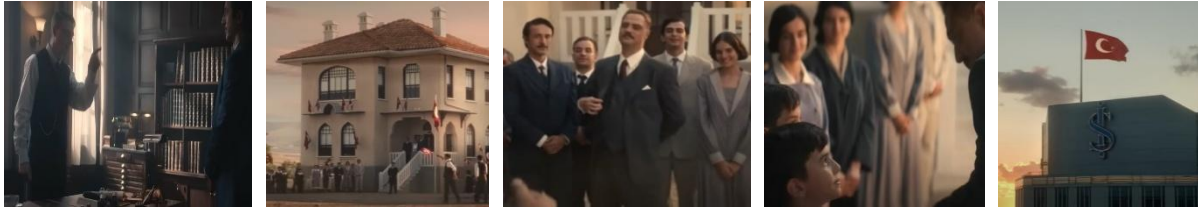
Table 9. Analysis of 'Bring Your Report Card, Get Your Book' Campaign Video

| Date: 13.06.2025 | | Number of Likes: 14.249 |
|------------------|---|--|
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Event | A security guard runs into characters from a children's book in the bank building at night, and calls the bank manager in surprise. The bank manager says that the 'Bring Your Report Card, Get Your Book' campaign is running again. | As the creators of the future, children and their personal development are important for İşbank. |
| Event | Comedic scenes involving moments such as falling over, descending the stairs, hiding, being surprised, being taken aback. | The appeal of comedy is used to target children in particular. |
| Person | Çağlar Çorumlu | The appeal of comedy. |
| Location | The imposing and tall İşbank building. | Alluding to the bank's financial strength and historic presence. |
| Dialogue | "What innovation have this lot cooked up again?" | İşbank always chases innovation. |

This video uses comedy and exuberance to communicate its message. The inclusion of actor and comedian Çağlar Çorumlu in particular shows that the intended audience is children and their parents. Comedically appealing components such as surprise, absurdity, a funny fall, curiosity etc. are used in the video. By selecting him as an actor, İşbank makes clear that the intended effect is humorous and jubilant.

3.2.3. İşbank Founding Anniversary Reels Video

Figure 8. Scenes from İşbank founding anniversary reels video



Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C_Hyk8aJH2B/

Table 10. Analysis of İşbank founding anniversary reels video

| Video Link | Date 26.08.2024 | Number of Likes 23.771 |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Private Individuals and Corporation | Foreign bank and banker, Turkish banker Ömer, and Atatürk. | The foreign bank and banker represent being beholden to foreign entities and lack of financial independence. Atatürk is the founding leader who brings the vision of independence into the bank. The Turkish banker Ömer represents the ordinary people who witness this change. |
| Event | The main character hands in his resignation letter to the foreign bank where he has been working so far in order to work at Atatürk's bank. The foreign bank manager reminds him that he won't be able to get a promotion if he resigns. | Declining attractive offers by the imperialist status quo for the sake of an independent nation; emphasising a national bank that wants to take back the power and decision making capacity from the hands of foreign capital. |
| Dialogue | The foreign bank manager insinuating that the newly established Turkish bank will fail, and the main character responding that he has faith in the Turkish people, Atatürk, and his bank. A moment of two-sided conflict. | A belief that despite those who doubt its possibility and belittle its power and strength, the newly founded bank of Türkiye and its nation will be able to overcome all adversity as they have done in the past. |
| Dialogue | Atatürk: <i>"We founded this bank, you'll keep it going".</i> Banker Ömer: <i>"With the bank you have founded, to the goals you have set out, forever."</i> | Expressing intent and faith that the legacy will continue. |

The resignation letter presented to the foreign bank by the main character represents more than itself as an action; it represents the belief in economic independence and national sovereignty, and an ongoing transformation. The promises of the foreign bank manager regarding promotions etc. can be interpreted as attractive offers by the imperialist status quo that ultimately render one beholden to them. The character refusing these offers can be viewed as a personal representation of the independence ideology.

The conflict between the foreign banker and the Turkish banker Ömer can be seen as the manifestation of the East-West conflict, which is based on the centuries-old myth that the West is perpetually rational and successful while the East is backwards and unsuccessful. The main character's response is an anti-

myth that tears down this misconception. The idea is that a country founded in adversity thanks to Atatürk’s leadership can also establish its own bank and keep it going.

Figure 9. Scenes from İş Art’s ‘100 Year Old Gift’ video



Source: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C_DS1O2MG8r/

Table 11. Analysis of İş Art’s ‘100 Year Old Gift’ Reels Video

| Video Link | Date | Number of Likes |
|------------------|---|---|
| | 24.08.2024 | 8.280 |
| SIGNIFIER | SIGNIFIED | |
| | Direct Meaning | Denoted/Deeper Meaning |
| Buildings | The historic İş Bank building located in Karaköy, Istanbul. | A century of banking. |
| Cultural element | Important names from Turkish history: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Celal Bayar. | Gratitude for the historic personages who helped set up the bank. |
| Symbolic images | Steam trains, factories at work, agricultural machinery. | A bank that contributes to Türkiye’s development. |
| Dialogue | <i>“A bank that finances works for the country with the country’s own money.”</i> | The importance of national capital and development. |

The images of the steam train, wheat field, farmer, labourer, and factory in this video point to the importance of development. It emphasises that steps taken in the path to development are aligned with the country’s vision for independence and supported by the country’s own bank.

Table 12. Analysis of cultural layers in Reels videos posted by İşbank

| Reels Videos | Symbols | Heroes | Rituals | Values |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Republic Day Reels Video Figure 6 | Turkish flag Capital city of Ankara Handkerchief | Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, young girl, female bank employee | Keeping souvenirs Saving money Remembrance | The Turkish republic Victory for the national struggle Dying in battle Respect Entrusting a keepsake |
| ‘Bring Your Report Card, Get Your Book’ Reels Video Figure 7 | Turkish flag Children | Security guard Fictional characters Bank manager | A nod to the ritual of children showing their report cards to their elders in | Valuing and trusting in the future generation |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------------------|---|
| | | | exchange for pocket money | |
| Founding Anniversary Reels Video Figure 8 | Turkish flag Capital city of Ankara | Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Ömer Foreign banker | Opening of a bank | The Turkish republic Valuing and trusting in the future generation |
| "100 Year Old Gift" Reels Video Figure 9 | Turkish flag Farmer Rural people Latin script Centenary logo | Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Historic actors | Travelling Agriculture | Independence Knowing how to be thrifty Development |

İşbank usually forms its cultural brand identity relationship with Türkiye through references to the history of the Republic of Türkiye, and for this reason includes the Turkish flag, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the capital city of Ankara in many videos. Additionally, the objectives and values of the Republican period, encompassing independence in all areas including financial independence, economic growth, national resilience, and the struggle to establish a new state, prevail. Accordingly, the brand's communication consistently recalls the national values of the era to which it owes its existence. In nearly all of its advertisements, İşbank establishes a strong connection with Türkiye's Republican history and the values of that period.

4. DISCUSSION

This study analyses the communication practices of two brands with the most powerful brand value in Türkiye from a semiotic and cultural perspective. It shows what messages the brands convey through their communications, what type of brand personality they cultivate, and which signifiers they use to relay these messages. To this end, the selected medium was Instagram Reels videos posted by THY and İşbank, being a comparatively new format to be used in brand communication. A semiotic analysis of the aforementioned content reveals that content posted by both brands possesses a strong cultural branding preference and cultural layers.

In this study a semiotic analysis of Instagram Reels content posted by THY and İşbank was conducted. THY reflects Turkish cultural values through its red-and-white logo, cabin crew uniforms, iconic dishes and drinks from Turkish cuisine, and the inclusion of prominent Turkish cities. İşbank emphasizes national sentiment through videos highlighting shared historical experiences, including Republic Day and the centenary of its founding. According to the cultural layers approach, when interpreting a culture, rituals, heroes and symbols function as the expressive practices of these values (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8). The content posted by THY reflects its values of putting the customer first, valuing employees, and acknowledging employees on a personal level. Additionally, the red and white THY logo, the red cabin crew uniforms, the iconic dishes and drinks from Turkish cuisine, and the inclusion of prominent Turkish cities as a setting can all be seen as cultural branding practices that reflect Turkish cultural values. Other studies on this subject mostly focus on how global brands optimise their characteristics for local cultural settings, while this study is unique in that it explores how Turkish brands incorporate their own cultural characteristics and national and moral values into their brand communication strategies.

Emotions can be a good adhesive when building a brand identity and in brand communication, and they are clearly at the forefront of the content posted by İşbank. In the videos, especially the video to celebrate Republic Day and the one to mark the centenary of İşbank's founding, the prevailing emotions are sentimentality, gratitude, and loyalty. The emotions included in the content rely on the shared past of the nation and national sentiment to be conveyed.

When examined from a brand personality perspective, the Reels videos show that the THY brand personality is competent, successful, proud, cheerful, sophisticated, elegant, respectable, and high-class. This study, on the other hand, focuses on a larger number of current content produced by the brands and contributes to revealing their current and cultural personalities.

The analysis indicates that both THY and İşbank address topics that integrate national identity, cultural heritage, and social values through both visual and linguistic means. Visually, THY emphasizes customer service, employee recognition, professionalism, and Turkish cultural symbols such as the red-and-white logo, cabin crew uniforms, iconic Turkish dishes and drinks, and prominent cities. İşbank foregrounds historical memory, national sentiment, and social progress through imagery of a young girl representing future generations, a female bank employee, and symbolic elements such as bank safes and Atatürk. Linguistically, both brands employ storytelling, dialogue, and references to national values, with İşbank's content particularly highlighting emotions such as sentimentality, gratitude, loyalty, and aspirations for the future. Collectively, these visual and linguistic strategies convey messages that reinforce the brands' identities while linking them to Türkiye's history, cultural heritage, and contemporary societal values.

Beyond the overt use of cultural symbols and emotional cues, the semiotic structures within the Reels content reveal how both brands strategically translate abstract cultural values into concrete visual and linguistic forms. Through recurring signifiers such as colour schemes, settings, narrative structures, and character representations, cultural meanings are naturalised and rendered familiar to the audience. In this sense, cultural elements do not function merely as decorative references but operate as meaning-making devices that reinforce brand authenticity and credibility. By embedding these signifiers within everyday scenes and emotionally resonant narratives, THY and İşbank successfully align their brand identities with collective cultural memory and shared social values, thereby strengthening audience identification and emotional engagement.

In conclusion, the cultural brand personalities of THY and İşbank were found to differ from existing brand personality inventories (Aaker, 1997, p. 352; Geuens, 2009, p. 99). The concepts of loyalty and gratitude and the behaviours depicting them, which are hugely important values in Turkish culture, are found at the forefront of both brands' cultural brand personalities. The cultural representations and their strong digital communication strategies also characterise the two brands as representatives of the country of Türkiye as a brand. THY in particular serves the purpose of a national Turkish brand that is also a global company. The "Exports" dimension of Anholt's National Brand Hexagon comprises a country's companies and brands (Ipsos, 2023, p. 6). In this context, globally recognised brands such as THY are not simple economic actors but also cultural conduits. From in-flight menus to the language and symbols used as part of the brand identity, many features of the brand reflect the hospitality culture, cultural wealth, and contemporary face of Türkiye.

Future studies on the subject can choose to analyse a large number of brands in terms of their cultural brand personality and help broaden the selection of examples in the topic. Social media platforms allow for the direct observation of the effects created by corporate posts through user comments. Posts with cultural aspects in particular receive a high number of comments that express pride and joy. It would be an interesting idea for a future study to analyse user comments and explore what sort of impression brands form in audiences' minds through the use of cultural elements.

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Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

The Presentation of Brand Personality and Cultural Branding Through Instagram

Marka Kişiliği ve Kültürel Markalamanın Instagram Aracılığıyla Sunumu

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Dijitalleşmenin hız kazanmasıyla günümüzde markalar, hedef kitleleriyle kurdukları etkileşimde hem dijital hem de geleneksel kitle iletişim araçlarını stratejik biçimde kullanmaktadır. Markaların genişleyen varlık alanı, onları sadece ürün ve hizmet sunan ekonomik birer aktör olmaktan çıkararak, anlam inşa eden kültürel özneler haline getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda marka ve marka iletişimi, sadece tüketiciyle bağ kurma çabası değil, aynı zamanda kültürel temsillerin, kimliklerin ve sembollerin dolaşıma sokulduğu bir iletişim sürecine dönüşmektedir. Marka iletişimde önemli rol oynayan unsurlar arasında marka kişiliği ve marka kimliği yer almaktadır. Aaker (1997) tarafından ortaya konan marka kişiliği boyutları, markaların insanlar gibi algılanmasına olanak tanırken, kültürel bağlamda bu kişilik özellikleri daha derinlikli anlamlar taşımaktadır. Bu noktada devreye giren kültürel marka kişiliği, markanın yalnızca bireysel kişilik özelliklerini yansıtmadığını aynı zamanda toplumsal değer ve sembolik unsurlar da taşıdığı bir kişilik yapısını ifade etmektedir. Markalar, iletişim pratiklerine entegre ettikleri kültürel kodlar aracılığıyla bir ulusun değerleriyle bütünlük kurabilmektedir. Holt (2004) markaların toplumsal sorunlara, kimlik arayışına ve kolektif arzulara hitap ederek ikonlaştığını ortaya koyar. Bu strateji, özellikle dijitalleşme çağında daha da önem kazanmış ve sosyal medya platformları sayesinde markalar kültürel temsillerini doğrudan hedef kitlelerine aktarabilme fırsatı bulmuştur.

Marka sürecinin en önemli unsuru, markayı tüketicinin zihninde konumlandırmaktır. Günümüzde pazarın genişlemesi ve artan rekabetle birlikte markalar rakiplerinden farklılaşacak özellikleri ön plana çıkarmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu açıdan bakıldığında markalar, kültürel markalaşma stratejilerini geliştirilirken genellikle yerel değer ve sembollerini iletişim pratiklerine kodlamakta ve hedef kitleyi ikna etmektedir. Dolayısıyla kitlelerin değerlere verdikleri önem, iletişim stratejilerinin belirlenmesinde kilit bir rol oynar. Hedef kitlenin talepleri, beklentileri, isteklerinin ön plana çıktığı günümüz çağında sadece yerel markaların değil, küresel markalarında kullandıkları iletişim kanallarında hedef kitleye özel içerikler oluşturduğu görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla geçmişte ne üretilirse satılır anlayışı yerine, günümüzde hedef kitleye yönelik bütünlük pazarlama stratejisini ön plana çıkaran stratejiler değerli hale gelmektedir.

Bu çalışma kapsamında, Türkiye'nin en güçlü markalarından Türk Hava Yolları ve Türkiye İş Bankası örneklem olarak seçilmiştir. Söz konusu markaların Instagram'daki en çok beğeni alan toplam sekiz reels paylaşımı, gösterebilimsel analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Brand Finance tarafından yayımlanan 2025 yılı "Türkiye 125" raporuna göre, Türk Hava Yolları 2,266 milyar dolarlık marka değeriyle Türkiye'nin en değerli markaları arasında ilk sırada yer almaktadır. Farklı bir sektörde yer alan Türkiye İş Bankası ise 1,240 milyar dolarlık marka değeriyle Türkiye'nin en değerli üçüncü markası arasında bulunmaktadır (Sağlam, 2025). Araştırmanın temel amacı, belirlenen markaların güncel dijital mecralarda hangi mesajları ilettikleri ve bu mesajları yapılandırırken hangi kültürel göstergeleri ortaya koyduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktır. Buna ek olarak kültürel kodlamalar yoluyla milli ve manevi değerlere yapılan göndermelerin markaların kişiliğine nasıl katkıda bulunduğu çalışmada irdelenmiştir. Bu

çalışma markaların kültürel değerleri iletişim stratejilerinde kullanarak hedef kitleyle nasıl bir bağ kurulduğunu göstermek açısından önem taşımaktadır.

Çalışmanın bulgularında hem Türk Hava Yolları'nın hem de İş Bankası'nın reklamlarında kültürel değer ve sembolleri sıklıkla kullandığı görülmektedir. Göstergelerin işaret ettiği anlamlar sonucunda hedef kitleye ulaşan mesajlar, duygusal ve bilişsel anlamlar oluşturmakta, biriken anlamlar marka kişiliğinin oluşmasına hizmet etmektedir. Aaker'ın marka kişiliği skalasına göre ise bu iletişim içeriği marka kişiliğinin samimi, yetkin ve başarılı karakteristiklere sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Türk hava yolları bayrağı, logosu ve üniforması, renk ve tasarım unsurlarıyla Türk bayrağıyla doğrudan ilişkilendirilebilecek bir görünüme sahiptir. Türkiye'nin dünya çapında en ünlü şehri İstanbul'a özgü vapur, nostaljik tramvay, Galata Köprüsü ve Kız Kulesi gibi sembolik unsurlara yer verilerek, Türkiye ile kültürel açıdan en tanınmış şehri İstanbul üzerinden de bir bağ kurulmaktadır. Reels'lerde yer alan baklava, kalbura bastı ve çay görüntüleri Türk kültürüyle yiyecek yollu kurulmuş kültürel bir ilişkiyi gösterirken bu örnekler kültürel markalaşmaya hizmet eden öğeleri de temsil etmektedir. Kırmızı üniforma, baklava, çay gibi unsurlar, kolayca tanınabilen, görsel ya da fiziksel anlam taşıyan, kültürel kimliği yansıtan yüzeysel ama güçlü ifadelerdir. Baklava ve çay, Türk kültürünün evrensel düzeyde bilinen, misafirperverliği temsil eden geleneksel lezzetleridir. Asyalı ve Afrikalı hosteslerin reelslerde yer alması ise küresel ölçekte kapsayıcılığı, çeşitliliği ve kültürler arası anlayışı temsil etmektedir. Farklı milletlerden olduğu ortaya konulan kabin hizmeti görevlileri bu markanın ya da ülkenin sadece yerel değil, evrensel değerlerle bağlantılı olduğu yönünde çok kültürlü bir marka kişiliğine gönderme yapmaktadır. Ağırhama, özellikle havayolu sektöründe ya da turizmde önemli bir ritüeldir. Misafirlerin karşılanması, ikram sunulması, güler yüz gibi davranış kalıplarını içermektedir. Bu durum bir yanı sıra misafirle kurulan ilişkinin nasıl şekillendiğini gösterirken, diğer yanı sıra bir ulusun misafir ağırhama kültürünün nasıl olduğuyula ilişkilendirilebilecek bir etkileşim biçimidir. Türk Hava Yolları'nın misafirperverlik ve birlikteliğin gücüne vurgu yapması, Türk kültürünün özünü oluşturan derin değerleri temsil etmektedir. Dolayısıyla hem markanın hizmet verdiği alanla hem de kültürel değerlerle bir bütünlük oluşturulduğu görülmektedir. Bu da hem ulusal hem de uluslararası alanda Türkiye'yi temsil eden önemli kodları hedef kitlelerin zihnine yerleştirmektedir.

İş Bankası'nın reels videolarına bakıldığında ise yerel unsurlara, kültüre ve değerlere yer vermektedir. Marka kişiliği inşasında ve marka iletişiminde önemli bir harç işlevi gören duyguların, İş Bankası gönderilerinde öne çıktığı görülmektedir. Videoların içeriğindeki duygu türleri olarak özellikle Cumhuriyet Bayramı veya İş Bankası'nın yıl dönümü gönderilerinde hüzün, minnet ve vefa duygularının yoğunluklu olarak işlendiği dikkat çekmektedir. Gönderilerde yer alan duygular, genellikle ortak geçmiş ve milli duygular zemininde temellendirilmiştir. İş Bankası'nın Türkiye ile kültürel marka kimliği ilişkisini genellikle Cumhuriyet tarihi üzerinden kurulduğu ve buna bağlı olarak birçok videoda Türk Bayrağı, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ve başkent Ankara'nın yer aldığı görülmektedir.

İncelenen markalar, kültürel temsilleri ve dijital mecralardaki güçlü iletişim stratejileriyle Türkiye'nin ülke markasını da temsil etmektedirler. Özellikle Türk Hava Yolları'nın global bir marka olması Türkiye'nin ulus marka algısına da hizmet etmektedir. Anholt'ın Ulus Markalama Altıgeni'nde yer alan "İthalat ve Ürünler (Exports)" boyutu ülkelerin şirketlerini/markalarını kapsamaktadır (Ipsos, 2023: 6). Dolayısıyla THY gibi dünya çapında tanınan markalar, yalnızca ekonomik aktörler değil, aynı zamanda kültürel aracı rolü de üstlenmektedir. Bu sayede Türkiye'nin diğer ulusların zihninde bir imaj oluşturmasını da sağlamaktadır. Uçak içi menülerden, marka kimliğinde kullanılan dil ve simgelere kadar birçok unsur, Türkiye'nin misafirperverliğini, kültürel zenginliğini ve çağdaş yüzünü temsil etmektedir.

Gelecek çalışmalar daha fazla yerel markayı kültürel marka kişiliği özellikleri açısından analiz ederek, kültürel marka kişiliğinin örneklerinin güçlendirilmesine hizmet edebilirler. Sosyal medya platformları, kullanıcı yorumları aracılığıyla kurumsal paylaşımların oluşturduğu etkinin doğrudan gözlenebildiği mecralardır. Özellikle kültürel unsurların bulunduğu paylaşımların kullanıcı yorumlarında, coşku ve gurur duygularının açığa çıktığı görülmektedir. Gelecek araştırmalar açısından, kullanıcı yorumlarının analiz edilerek markaların hangi kültürel öğelerle izleyicide nasıl bir algı oluşturduğuna odaklanmak kültürel değerlerin hedef kitlede nasıl bir izlenim oluşturduğuna dair önemli veriler sunacaktır.