

# Media and Communication in the Digital Age: *Changes and Dynamics*

Editors:

Prof. Dr. Füsün Topsümer • Yasemin Durmuş • Baha Ahmet Yılmaz



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*to Ege University Faculty of Communication Dean Prof. Dr. Bilgehan  
GÜLTEKİN, supporting us in every way and situation...*



## Preface

While the world is changing rapidly in the shadow of technological developments, the wonderful combination of the internet and artificial intelligence makes the boundless lines of the new world more invisible with each passing day. With its limitless and eclectic structure, the new media understanding created by this new world with blurred borders serves as a huge agora where every individual can easily access and at the same time be a source of information. The fact that this world, in which a new reality, or in other words, surrealism, has emerged, provides the opportunity to reach the story at first hand, as well as the fact that the story can be transmitted directly to the senses of individuals, whether it is real or not, taking it to a completely different dimension, separating it from the truths of the physical world, or seeing it as if it were. It makes it possible to feel like This extremely powerful and lively communication undoubtedly includes countless dangers and manipulative scenarios, in addition to all the benefits it provides. Therefore, monitoring the process of events in the new media and all kinds of innovations is considered important and valuable in terms of developing predictions for positive or negative possible returns.

With this book, it is aimed to define the facts and problems in many subjects, from the effect of the new media on politics to the new application forms of abuse, from the disinformation produced in health communication and social structure to the use of advertising in the field of e-sports that entered our lives with this new world, and to provide original and strong contributions to the field with possible solutions. . We hope that this study, which brings together highly valuable academicians and their studies, will offer a new perspective to the literature and to all interested readers.

**Yasemin DURMUŞ**



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# Political Communication in the New Media Environment: The Impact of Digital Transformation on Political Processes

Baha Ahmet Yılmaz<sup>1</sup>

Füsun Topsümer<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Political communication plays a crucial role in shaping democratic processes and public discourse. Over the past decades, the emergence and rapid advancement of digital media have revolutionized the way political information is disseminated, received, and interacted with by individuals and communities. The widespread adoption of the internet, social media platforms, and mobile technologies has fundamentally transformed the dynamics of political communication, presenting both opportunities and challenges for political actors, citizens, and the overall democratic system.

The purpose of this study is to explore the intersection of political communication and digital media in the new media environment. Specifically, we aim to examine the impact of digital transformation on various political processes, ranging from election campaigns and voter behavior to political activism and public diplomacy. By analyzing the characteristics, strategies, and effects of political communication in the digital age, this research seeks to shed light on the evolving landscape of political engagement and the ways in which digital media shape political dynamics.

Within this context, this study acknowledges the inherent complexities and limitations associated with the topic. The scope of the research focuses

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on the interplay between political communication and digital media, emphasizing the transformative effects of the digital revolution on political processes. While it is impossible to cover all aspects and dimensions of this vast and rapidly evolving field, this study aims to provide insights into key concepts, trends, and empirical examples to deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between politics and digital media (Bozarth, 2010: 11).

The subsequent sections of this article will present a conceptual framework that elucidates the fundamental concepts of political communication and digital media. We will then delve into the characteristics of political communication in the new media environment, highlighting the role of the internet, social media platforms, mobile applications, and data mining in shaping political interactions. Furthermore, we will explore the impact of digital transformation on political processes, including the digitalization of political campaigns, the influence of digital media on voter behavior, the power of social media in political activism, and the emergence of new actors in the form of digital public diplomacy.

Additionally, this study will utilize content analysis to provide empirical examples and case studies that illustrate the intricate relationship between political communication and digital media. These examples will encompass social media strategies employed by political parties, digital communication methods in election campaigns, the use of digital media by political activists, and instances of digital public diplomacy.

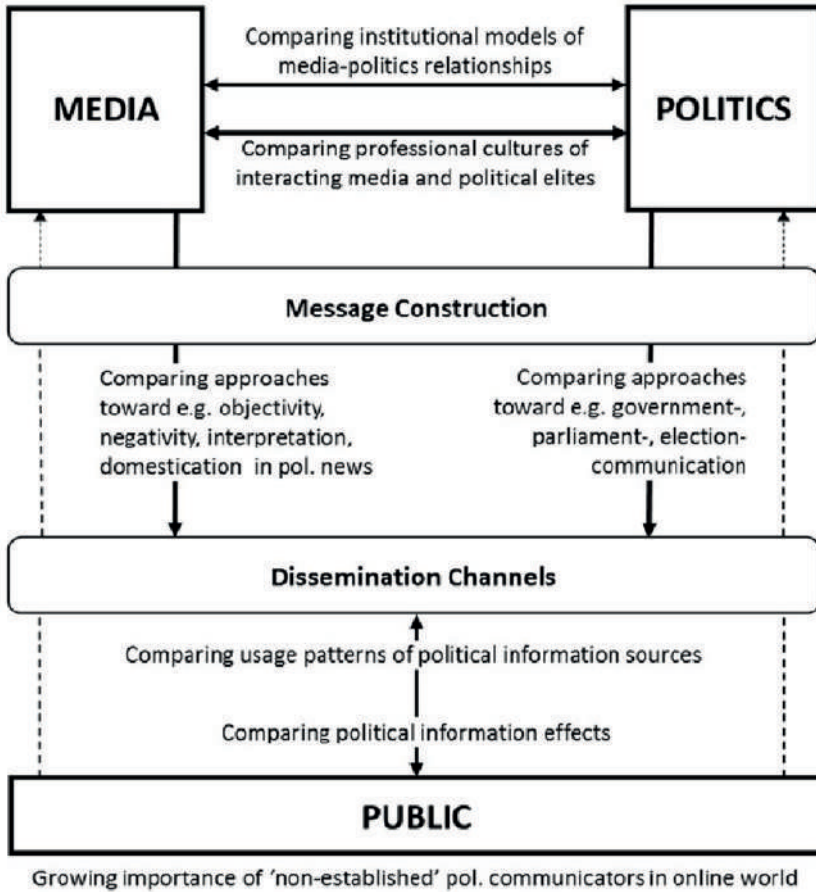
Finally, the research will conclude with a comprehensive evaluation of the findings and a discussion on the implications of the study. Furthermore, the conclusion will provide insights into future directions and potential developments in the field of political communication and digital media, considering the dynamic nature of technology and its continuous influence on political processes.

## **1. Political Communication and Digital Media: Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of political communication and digital media provides a theoretical lens through which to understand the complex relationship between these two domains. Political communication involves the dissemination and exchange of political information, messages, and ideas among political actors and the public. It encompasses various forms of communication, including mass media, interpersonal communication, and mediated communication. Digital media, on the other hand, refers to

the use of digital technologies, such as the internet, social media platforms, and mobile applications, to create, share, and interact with content. It has revolutionized the way information is produced, consumed, and disseminated, allowing for instant connectivity and engagement across geographical and social boundaries (Binark, 2007: 5)

In the table below, the relationship between the media and politics, along with the message and dissemination stages, is detailed.



*Figure 1: Relationship Between Media and Politics (Esser, 2016: 39)*

The conceptual framework recognizes that digital media has fundamentally transformed the landscape of political communication. It has altered the dynamics of information flow, enabling greater access to political content, increased citizen participation, and the democratization of communication channels. Political actors, such as political parties, candidates, and activists,

now have the ability to directly reach and engage with audiences through social media platforms and online campaigns.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework acknowledges the unique characteristics of digital media that impact political communication. These include interactivity, user-generated content, real-time communication, and the potential for virality and amplification of messages. Digital media platforms also facilitate the formation of online communities, fostering political discussions, and mobilizing collective action.

The framework highlights the importance of understanding the implications of digital media on political processes, including its effects on political participation, public opinion formation, and the dynamics of power. It recognizes the need to examine the strategies, tactics, and effects of political communication in the digital age, as well as the challenges and opportunities that arise with the evolving media landscape.

### **1.1. Characteristics of Political Communication in the New Media Environment**

The new media environment, shaped by the widespread adoption of digital technologies, has given rise to distinct characteristics in political communication. Understanding these characteristics is essential for comprehending the evolving dynamics of political discourse and engagement in the digital age (Gibson and Ward, 2000: 305).

- **Interactivity:** Unlike traditional mass media, the new media environment fosters interactive communication between political actors and the public. Digital platforms allow for immediate feedback, dialogue, and engagement, enabling citizens to actively participate in political conversations and shaping the direction of discourse.
- **User-Generated Content:** The proliferation of social media and other digital platforms has empowered individuals to create and share their own political content. User-generated content, including posts, comments, videos, and memes, plays a significant role in shaping public opinion, amplifying political messages, and fostering grassroots movements.
- **Real-Time Communication:** Digital media enables real-time communication and information dissemination, breaking the barriers of time and space. Political actors can engage with their audiences instantaneously, responding to events, issues, and crises as they unfold, while citizens can access and share political information in real-time.

- **Fragmentation and Personalization:** The new media environment offers diverse sources of information and allows individuals to tailor their content consumption based on personal preferences. This leads to the fragmentation of audiences and the creation of echo chambers, where individuals predominantly encounter content that aligns with their existing beliefs, potentially reinforcing polarization in political discourse.
- **Virality and Amplification:** The viral nature of digital media means that political messages and content can spread rapidly and reach a vast audience. Memes, hashtags, and other shareable content have the potential to gain widespread attention and influence public opinion, making them powerful tools in political communication.
- **Data-Driven Targeting:** Digital media platforms collect vast amounts of data on users' behaviors, preferences, and demographics. This allows political actors to employ targeted advertising and communication strategies, tailoring their messages to specific audiences, and maximizing the impact of their campaigns.
- **Global Reach and Transnational Communication:** Digital media transcends geographical boundaries, enabling political communication to occur on a global scale. Political actors can engage with international audiences, mobilize transnational movements, and participate in cross-border debates, thereby expanding the reach and impact of political communication (Miscicka, 2011: 127).
- **Multi-Modal Communication:** The new media environment offers a range of communication formats, including text, images, videos, livestreams, and podcasts. Political actors can leverage multiple modes of communication to convey their messages effectively and engage with audiences through diverse content formats.

Understanding these characteristics is vital for analyzing and navigating political communication in the digital era. It underscores the need for political actors, citizens, and researchers to adapt their strategies and approaches to effectively harness the potential of the new media environment while addressing its challenges.

## 1.2. The Impact of Digital Transformation on Political Processes

Digital transformation has had a profound impact on various political processes, reshaping the way political actors engage with citizens, mobilize support, and navigate the political landscape. The integration of digital

technologies into political processes has brought about significant changes and challenges. Digital transformation has revolutionized election campaigns. Political actors now leverage digital platforms to reach a wider audience, engage with voters directly, and tailor their messages based on data-driven insights. Online fundraising, targeted advertising, and social media strategies have become integral components of modern election campaigns, enabling candidates to connect with voters on a more personalized and interactive level (Akca, 2014: 40).

Digital media has influenced voter behavior in numerous ways. Voters now have access to a wealth of political information, allowing them to engage with diverse perspectives and fact-check claims. Social media platforms have facilitated political discussions, enabling citizens to voice their opinions, engage in political activism, and form online communities based on shared political interests. Additionally, digital tools have made it easier for voters to register, find polling locations, and participate in the electoral process. Digital transformation has provided new avenues for political activism. Activists can leverage digital platforms to mobilize support, organize protests, and advocate for social and political causes. Online petitions, social media campaigns, and viral content have become powerful tools for driving political change and raising awareness on critical issues (Samav Uğursoy, 2015: 7).

Digital technologies have transformed the relationship between governments and citizens. Online platforms and mobile applications enable citizens to access government services, provide feedback, and participate in decision-making processes.

E-government initiatives have streamlined administrative procedures, enhanced transparency, and increased public engagement in governance.

The digital transformation has disrupted traditional media landscapes. Online news outlets, citizen journalism, and social media platforms have challenged the dominance of traditional media sources, enabling political actors to bypass traditional gatekeepers and communicate directly with the public. However, this has also raised concerns about the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and the erosion of trust in media institutions.

Digital media platforms have become crucial arenas for shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse. The viral nature of content on social media can amplify certain narratives and ideas, affecting public sentiment and agenda-setting processes. Political actors and interest groups can employ targeted messaging and micro-targeting techniques to sway public opinion and mobilize support (Atton, 2006: 17).

The availability of vast amounts of data has enabled political actors to employ data analytics and machine learning algorithms to understand voter preferences, predict behavior, and fine-tune their campaign strategies. Data-driven insights allow for more precise targeting, messaging, and resource allocation, making campaigns more efficient and effective. As digital technologies continue to evolve, the impact on political processes will likely continue to shape the way politics is conducted. It is important for policymakers, political actors, and citizens to navigate these changes responsibly, considering the ethical implications, privacy concerns, and the need to ensure inclusive digital participation for all members of society.

### **1.3. The Digitalization of Political Campaigns**

The digitalization of political campaigns has transformed the way political actors strategize, communicate, and engage with voters. Digital technologies and platforms have become essential tools for political campaigns, enabling candidates and political parties to reach wider audiences, mobilize support, and shape public opinion. Digitalization has made it crucial for political campaigns to establish a strong online presence. Candidates and parties utilize websites, social media accounts, and online platforms to showcase their policies, values, and engage with voters. These online channels provide a direct means of communication, allowing candidates to share their message, respond to inquiries, and engage in real-time interactions with voters (Bimber, 2001: 58-59).

Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, have become vital tools for political campaigns. Candidates and parties utilize these platforms to disseminate campaign messages, share updates, and engage with supporters. Social media enables candidates to reach a broader audience, encourage grassroots activism, and generate momentum through viral content.

Digital technologies offer precise targeting capabilities for political campaigns. Candidates can utilize data analytics and user insights to identify specific voter segments and deliver personalized messages. This allows for more efficient use of campaign resources by focusing on key demographics, interests, and geographic areas that are most likely to be receptive to the campaign's message. Digital platforms have revolutionized campaign fundraising. Online fundraising tools and platforms enable candidates to solicit donations, organize crowdfunding campaigns, and engage with supporters. Social media and email marketing campaigns are utilized to build donor databases, cultivate relationships, and maintain ongoing engagement with contributors (Gibson and Ward, 2000: 304).



Digital technologies have facilitated grassroots mobilization efforts. Campaigns can utilize online platforms and tools to organize volunteers, coordinate door-to-door canvassing, and rally supporters for events and demonstrations. Digital communication channels enable rapid dissemination of information, ensuring efficient coordination and maximizing the impact of grassroots activities.

The digitalization of campaigns allows for the collection and analysis of vast amounts of data. Data analytics help campaigns gain insights into voter preferences, sentiment, and behavior. This data-driven approach allows for targeted messaging, micro-targeting, and personalized campaign strategies.

Digital platforms enable political campaigns to respond quickly to emerging issues and crises. Campaigns can address controversies, counter misinformation, and manage the narrative in real-time. Social media provides a direct channel for candidates and parties to engage with the public and manage their public image during challenging situations. Digitalization has expanded the opportunities for political engagement and debates. Candidates can participate in online forums, town hall meetings, and live-streamed events to interact with voters directly. These platforms foster greater transparency, accessibility, and public participation in the political process (Severin and Tankard, 1994: 4).

The digitalization of political campaigns offers unprecedented opportunities for candidates and parties to connect with voters, tailor messages, and mobilize support. However, it also poses challenges, including the need to navigate privacy concerns, combat misinformation, and maintain ethical standards in the use of digital technologies. Effective campaign strategies must strike a balance between leveraging the benefits of digitalization while ensuring inclusivity, transparency, and responsible engagement with the electorate (Atton, 2006: 19).

#### **1.4. Political Activism and the Power of Social Media**

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for political activism, providing individuals and communities with new avenues to express their opinions, mobilize support, and advocate for political and social change.

Social media platforms allow individuals to share their perspectives, stories, and grievances on a global scale. Activists can leverage social media to amplify their voices, reaching a wider audience than traditional communication channels. Through the use of hashtags, viral content, and online campaigns, social media can facilitate the rapid dissemination of messages, raising awareness and sparking conversations on critical issues.

Social media platforms have played a significant role in mobilizing political movements. Activists can use social media to organize protests, rallies, and demonstrations, facilitating coordination among participants. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram enable activists to spread the word, gather supporters, and coordinate actions more efficiently, resulting in larger and more impactful mobilizations (Atton, 2006: 21).

Social media has lowered the barriers to entry for political activism. It provides a platform for individuals who may not have had access to traditional media outlets or established networks to express their concerns and contribute to political discourse. Social media allows marginalized groups and grassroots activists to challenge dominant narratives, advocate for their rights, and demand social and political change. Social media serves as a real-time source of information and news. Activists can use these platforms to share updates, live-stream events, and disseminate information about ongoing protests, human rights abuses, or political developments. This enables activists and supporters to stay informed, mobilize quickly, and respond to evolving situations in a timely manner.

Social media enables activists from different parts of the world to connect, share experiences, and build solidarity across borders. It facilitates the formation of transnational networks, where activists can collaborate, learn from one another, and amplify their collective voices. Social media platforms have been instrumental in supporting global movements like the Arab Spring, #BlackLivesMatter, and #MeToo, fostering global awareness and solidarity.

Social media provides a platform for activists to hold political leaders, governments, and institutions accountable. By leveraging social media, activists can expose corruption, human rights abuses, and injustices. They can challenge official narratives, engage in fact-checking, and mobilize public pressure to demand accountability and transparency (Sancar, 2008: 20).

Social media platforms have become essential tools for fundraising and resource mobilization in political activism. Activists can launch crowdfunding campaigns, share donation links, and engage with supporters directly, allowing for financial contributions from a global audience. Social media also enables activists to connect with potential sponsors, donors, and organizations that can provide resources and support for their causes. It is important to note that while social media empowers political activism, it also presents challenges such as the spread of misinformation, algorithmic biases, and surveillance concerns. Activists need to navigate these challenges responsibly, ensuring that their activism on social media is driven by accurate

information, respectful dialogue, and a commitment to inclusivity and social justice (Sancar, 2008: 28).

## **2. Content Analysis: Examples of Political Communication and Digital Media**

This study examines the impact of political communication and digital media in the new media environment. The findings of the research are presented below:

**The Impact of Digital Transformation on Political Processes:** The research demonstrates that digital transformation has a significant impact on political processes. The use of digital technologies in political communication, election campaigns, and citizen participation has fundamentally changed the dynamics of political processes.

**The Digitalization of Political Campaigns:** The study shows that the digitalization of political campaigns is a significant trend. Digital media tools provide political actors with the opportunity to reach a wider audience, mobilize support, and personalize their messages. Digital tactics such as targeted advertising, social media strategies, and online fundraising enhance the effectiveness of election campaigns (Büyükerşen, 2000: 2-3).

**The Power of Social Media:** The research highlights the powerful influence of social media on political communication and activism. Social media platforms enable individuals to express their political views, mobilize support, and drive social change. Hashtags, viral content, and online campaigns allow for the rapid spread of political messages and generate societal impact.

**Increasing Civic Engagement through Digital Media:** The study reveals that digital media enhances civic engagement. Online platforms provide citizens with access to political information, opportunities for participation in discussions, and involvement in political movements. Digital media empowers citizens to actively engage in political processes and voice their opinions.

**Content Analysis Results:** Content analysis has yielded valuable insights into the relationship between political communication and digital media. Examples include analyzing the social media strategies of political parties, digital communication methods, the use of digital media by activists, and digital public diplomacy. These analyses contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the use, strategies, and effects of digital media in political communication.

These findings underscore the significance and impact of political communication and digital transformation in the new media environment. They provide insights into the opportunities and challenges brought about by digital media in political processes and offer guidance to political actors, policymakers, and researchers. Understanding the impact of digital media on political processes is a crucial step in promoting democratic participation, improving political communication, and supporting societal change (Aziz, 2014: 80-81).

### **Conclusion and Discussion:**

The study on political communication and digital media has shed light on the intricate relationship between these two domains in the contemporary era. Through the exploration of various aspects, including the impact of digital transformation on political processes, the digitalization of political campaigns, the power of social media in political activism, and content analysis of political communication in the digital realm, several key findings and insights have emerged. The digital transformation has significantly impacted political processes, from election campaigns to voter behavior and political activism. The integration of digital technologies has revolutionized the way political actors engage with citizens, mobilize support, and navigate the political landscape.

The digitalization of political campaigns has brought forth new strategies, such as targeted advertising, online fundraising, and grassroots mobilization, transforming how candidates and parties interact with voters and shape public opinion.

The power of social media in political activism has become increasingly evident. Social media platforms provide individuals and communities with a platform to express their voices, mobilize movements, and hold power accountable. Through the amplification of voices, mobilization of movements, democratization of activism, and global solidarity, social media has become a powerful tool for advocating for political and social change.

Content analysis has played a crucial role in understanding the strategies, themes, and effects of political communication in the digital media landscape. By examining the social media strategies of political parties, analyzing digital communication methods in election campaigns, exploring the use of digital media by political activists, and investigating digital public diplomacy, researchers have gained valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of political communication in the digital age.

In conclusion, the study has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay between political communication and digital media. It has highlighted the transformative effects of digital transformation, the role of social media in political activism, and the significance of content analysis in understanding political communication in the digital realm. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field and have implications for political actors, policymakers, and researchers.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The rapidly evolving nature of digital media and political communication presents ongoing challenges and new avenues for exploration. Future research should continue to examine the dynamic relationship between politics and digital media, addressing emerging issues, ethical considerations, and the impact of technological advancements on political processes and democratic engagement.

In conclusion, the study underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges posed by digital media in the realm of political communication. By leveraging the power of digital technologies responsibly, political actors and citizens can harness their potential to foster democratic participation, promote transparency, and facilitate informed political discourse in the digital age.

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# Reconstruction of Discourses in Victims of Cyber Abuse in New Media: Derya Kuş Case

Yasemin Durmuş<sup>1</sup>

Elif Yıldız<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

While the internet world changes social life completely with the new universe it has created, it makes it inevitable for new crimes and new tools for these crimes to emerge in every aspect of daily life. These new crimes are reinforced by the opportunities offered by the internet to perpetrators such as accessibility, pervasiveness and anonymity; In addition to the numerous innovations, it brings today, it combines with the power of artificial intelligence, which is seen as a new weapon, and paves the way for the emergence of brand new grievances in cyberbullying. Deepfake technology, one of the most dangerous tools produced by artificial intelligence as a weapon, completely changes the perception of reality, while making it difficult to predict the consequences of this threat with the fake content it creates. Undoubtedly, one of the biggest dangers caused by deepfake applications is seen as the output in which people are included in pornographic content without their consent. With the motivation to manipulate people, the content of pornography without consent, which is used in various ways, can sometimes be used to displace a politician, sometimes to gain power or money, and sometimes for revenge.

It is possible to say that Deepfake applications, which emerged with the use of Hollywood stars (such as Gal Gadot, Maisie Williams and Taylor Swift) in porn content, target women the most. The study conducted by Deeprace in 2019 shows that 96% of the 14,678 Deepfake videos in

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circulation are pornographic, and the number of views of these videos published on pornography sites is at a striking level of 134,364,438 (Ajder et al., 2019). In another study conducted by Sentinel in 2020, it is seen that the number of pornographic Deepfake videos reached increased to 27,271 (Tammekänd et al., 2020), and in this sense, this number has increased/is increasing exponentially in the period until today. The increase in pornographic Deepfake videos is due to the ease of access to the applications used, the publication of detailed instructions that provide user convenience to amateur users who want to produce such videos, and the increase in platforms where users come together to support each other today.

Deepfake creators, who come together on these platforms that benefit from the opportunities provided by technology, create dangerous underground communities and their numbers are increasing day by day. In the study based on the size of these communities, it is seen that there are more than 100,000 users as of 2020, and these users are encouraged by both contests and referrals where they can earn money for the development of pornographic content. Women are much more vulnerable when it comes to pornography, and the consequences can be even more devastating for victims, even though they know the content is fake. The fact that it is not necessary to be famous in order to suffer in this regard, and that anyone with a photo on the internet can be a victim of these contents reveals the seriousness of the issue (Tammekänd et al., 2020).

In our country, Derya Kuş's call for help on Twitter, whose face is used in pornographic content with the Deepfake application, exemplifies this issue. With its posts, Deepfake shows the tremendous impact of its content on the perception of reality, while also allowing us to see the trauma of the event through the eyes of a victim. This incident, which is the first public example of the use of deepfake for blackmail and harassment in the lives of ordinary people (non-famous), is not only a phenomenon that can be encountered at every level of our daily life, but also one of the tools of violence at this new point where technology has come. and it is considered important in terms of being a warning story in terms of the difficulties that may be encountered in the future.

In this study, it is aimed to discuss Derya Kuş's posts, together with other known pornographic Deepfake victims, from the perspective of sexism in the dimension of hostility, and to describe the discourses produced by cyber victimization, in particular Derya Kuş. For this purpose, the comments under the title "young woman threatened with deepfake" in Ekşi Sözlük were analyzed with an analytical perspective with Critical Discourse Analysis

(CDA). In this topic, which was opened on February 6, 2022, while discussing the new face of cyberbullying by discussing Derya Kuş's posts, it is planned to reconstruct male-dominated discourses on "harassment" and "cyberbullying" and to show descriptively how it is shaped in terms of social codes.

As a result of the examination, the contents of the entries in which the dominant codes of the sexist language are frequently seen; "Implication that the woman had an emotional relationship with the harasser in the past", "The implication that the woman produced fiction to gain fame", "The implying that the woman had a crime to justify the harassment", "The emphasis on the need for a woman to be protected by a man", "The harasser is again feminized through the female body" being punished" and "Masculinizing the Reactions to Perceived Sexist Discourses".

### **1. Deepfake and Consensual Pornography in the New Internet World**

As in all other crimes, it is seen that one of the biggest phenomena in the increase and diversification of harassment crimes in today's world is the internet. Despite the fact that the technological opportunities provided by the internet, its contribution to the benefit and development of humanity is an undeniable fact and all the opportunities it creates in a positive way, malicious users can become a tool for a new crime every day. Parallel to the development of technology, the encouraging nature of the internet makes it unpredictable about new crimes that will occur in the future.

The internet emerges as a new paradigm in democratic development with its liberating, self-developmental structure and enabling the masses to communicate easily by establishing social networks, and the participatory and transparent environment it creates (Akgül, 2008). In this democratizing process, it is seen that the participants form a new social identity by getting rid of the identities they carry outside or the social norms they have in the uncontrolled and free environments they were born into. These social identities are sometimes veiled with an avatar and sometimes a nickname, and mostly they use the invisible power of this internet curtain. In this respect, a social identity can have the power to speak as it wishes, to share the image it wishes or the news it wishes regardless of its accuracy or falsity.

It would not be wrong to say that a new world environment has been created in today's world where the world population is 7.91 billion and the number of internet users is 4.95 billion (Wearesocial, 2022). The easily accessible and constantly renewed nature of this world causes the emergence

of pornographic items and new sexual crimes that do not exist in the offline world as a means of communication at the global level. Today, it provides an environment for the emergence of internet pornography as a sub-genre of the porn industry and to operate as a part of the global capital (Soydan, 2009). According to Cooper (1998), online pornography has three characteristics, also referred to as triple A, from which it gets its strength; anonymity is seen as accessibility and affordability (anonymity, accessibility, affordability). In other words, it is seen that the content whose creator is unknown, easily accessible and affordable by the users, paves the way for internet porn and allows users to produce and distribute their own obscene content (Cooper, 1998; Döring, 2009).

It can be said that this visual environment of internet pornography is saturated with images based on the presentation of women, especially with male-dominated content and therefore focused on the viewing pleasure of the male audience (Finn, 1985). The porn industry, produced in this online world, is trying to create new content while interpreting the existing one. In this respect, it is seen that the products in which women suffer, humiliate and are depicted in content ranging from harassment to rape, rather than content produced based on mutual and consent, are increasing (Soydan, 2009). Undoubtedly, there is a risk that everyone may become the material of a pornographic content at any time, and there is the danger that individuals can be X-rayed and distributed unannounced (Atayman, 2008).

Apart from the use of non-consensual pornography as a means of violence to physically use real images of the person, the fact that the person can be transformed into a pornography material by using only his/her face, with the Deepfake technology that has emerged with the development of artificial intelligence, carries the dimension of the danger to a completely different position.

## **2. The Digital Dimension of Consensual Pornography: Deepfake**

Deepfake technology, which consists of the words “deep” and “fake” in meaning; It can be defined as a kind of algorithms, known as “neural networks”, obtained from large data sets on the basis of machine learning. The purpose of using deepfake technology; It is seen as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) base to produce content that does not exist in reality, by producing fake content that looks like real and while doing this, by overlapping or changing different visual materials. This technology allows to imitate the physical features, voice, body language and even accent without the actual presence of the applied person (Westerlund, 2019: 40). The fact

that videos, photos or sound recordings for the use of the image or voice of the person for humor, political manipulation or pornographic purposes without the consent of the person brings with it various dangers as well as the opportunities it creates (Day, 2019; Bazarkina & Pashentsev, 2019; Maras & Alexandrou, 2019; Villasenor, 2019). In other words, it becomes possible with this technology to make people act as if they did what they did not do, as if they had happened in environments where they were not, or as if they said things they did not say.

It is seen that this manipulation power created on people leads to hyper-realistic products and even faces produced with this technology can be perceived more reliably than indistinguishable or realistic faces (Nightingale & Farid, 2022). Nevertheless, the possibility that Deepfake content can be used to manipulate and blackmail people for money, location or revenge, shows that it can be a dangerous weapon today.

The fact that the incident we met with Deepfake was when a Reddit user placed the faces of famous women in pornographic videos and the uncontrolled increase in these contents since that day shows that personal privacy is in great danger in the face of this technology. Although it is generally seen that it is used on the videos of celebrities, it is now observed that these cyber victimizations also target ordinary individuals. This danger, which is also included in the literature as Revenge Porn, points to non-consensual pornographic products that may cause the most victimization. Revenge porn can be based on the production and distribution of content for the purpose of taking revenge from a past relationship, or it can occur in any field where there is competition and for any reason, except for the motivation of rejection in the relationship between men and women.

It is possible to define non-consensual pornography products produced with Deepfake for whatever reason, as fake content based on the deliberate production of the face of a person who is not actually in the film, by placing the actor in a pornographic video or photograph, in order to gain power and control. While the fact that non-consensual pornographic products account for 96% of 15,000 Deepfake videos found on the internet is seen as a striking data showing the extent of this danger, it is observed that it is rarely mentioned besides the political threat (Ajder et al., 2019; Maddocks, 2020).

Since the first use of the Deepfake application, the resulting access and ease of use paves the way for users from all walks of life to reveal such products containing unsolicited pornography and use it as a weapon. In fact, it seems that anyone with a home computer, a deep learning algorithm,

a few publicly available images and some free time has all the tools they will need to produce this content, and it is provided with free access to applications, as well as instructions to guide novices through the process (Beamonte, 2018; Cole, 2018).

It is clear that non-consensual pornography products are and will continue to be targeted largely at women. A study conducted in 2017 on this subject shows that women experience victimization 1,5 times more than men when it comes to being exposed to non-consensual pornography (Eaten et al., 2017: 13). It would not be wrong to think that this rate has increased in parallel with the development of Deepfake technology in the period from the date of the study to the present day. Pornographic content produced by deepfake technology is often used for purposes such as severe humiliation, inflicting pain, or discrediting victims rather than gaining commercial interest from it. Deepfake, in a sense, uses the speech of the targets as a weapon against them, and according to Franks, it creates a technology that has the power to inflict all necessary harm on the world's worst misogynist (Citron, 2019: 1773).

Considering that social media users are much more willing to share fake information, Deepfake products can spread about six times faster than the right content with the potential to produce remarkable and striking content (Vosoughi, Roy & Aral, 2018) and can be remembered much more with their sticky feature (Kensinger, 2007). Once the Deepfake content is produced and distributed, victims face many serious problems. Since these images can often turn into strong content that is indistinguishable from the real thing and can continue to exist in the digital archive even if they are deleted, it is often not possible for the victims to prove the falsity of these contents and to eliminate the damage by giving an effective response to everyone who sees the content (Ckooke, 2018). In this respect, the content produced undermines all the rights of individuals, including the freedom of expression, silences people with the pressure it creates, imposes self-censorship on people's sexual orientation, and takes prejudices to the extreme (Franks & Waldman, 2019).

Apart from the Deepfake attacks targeting famous women, it is now seen that ordinary people also experience this victimization. With this technology, which has physical, social, emotional and economic consequences, women in the context of pornography without consent; It is known that they encounter situations such as harassment, blackmail, exclusion, dismissal, receive death threats, and experience severe anxiety and panic attacks as a result of all these situations. Such content increases the risk of offline harassment and physical assault. Victims state that they were threatened with rape and

death by unidentified strangers, and that they systematically received e-mail messages for this purpose, after the posts were published on pornographic addresses. In this respect, they internalize these humiliating and frightening messages they receive, and with the deep fear they experience, they find the solution to prevent strangers from finding them, to stay away from all their social media accounts and stay at home. It is seen that the naked images of the people used in this content are revealed when their names are searched, losing their reputation, status in the social arena and subsequently their jobs. The research published by Microsoft in 2019 shows that more than 80% of employers take into account the online history of the people during the hiring process, and 89% of them trust their online searches. In this respect, companies mark people who they assume to live an inappropriate life as people who will reflect badly on their companies and avoid this (Citron, 2014).

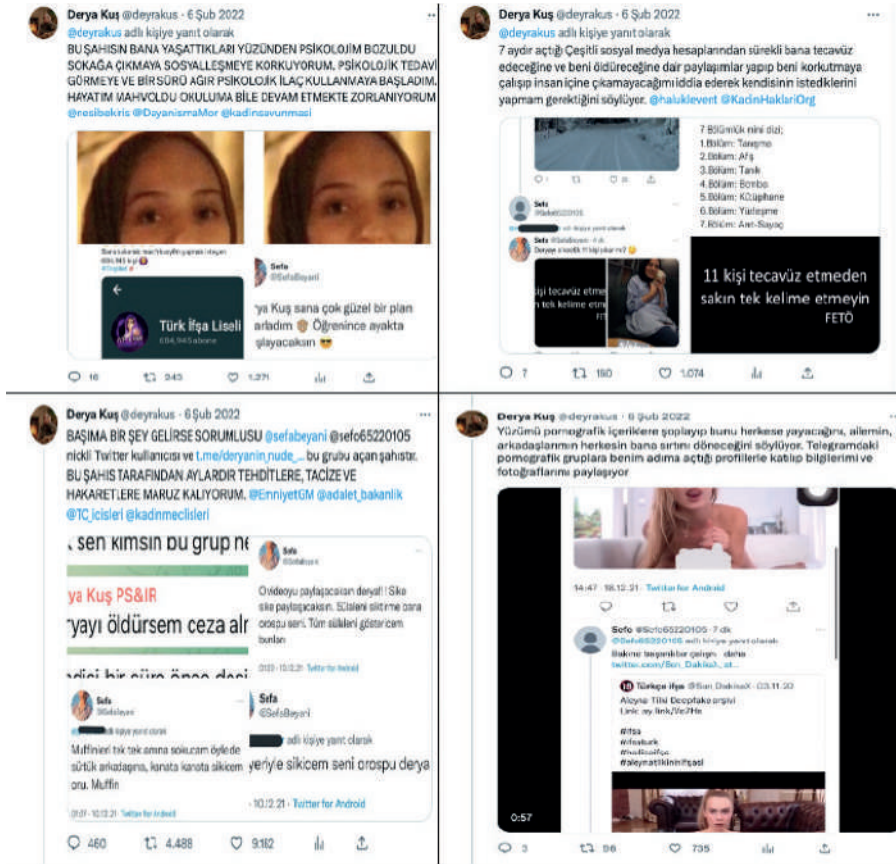
In this respect, victims have to cope with the economic consequences of cyber abuse. It can be said that the presence of people on social media does not only shape their recruitment processes or their future in their working life, but also plays a very large role in their entire lives. It is seen that especially women who raise their voices about sexual abuse or who work on this subject are targeted in order to silence their critical voices.

Journalist Rana Ayyub, who reported on a girl who was raped as a child in India in 2018, was bombarded with rape and death threats after a fake Deepfake porn was published on the internet, and a lynching campaign was started with fake tweets produced along with this incident all over the world. made a great impression. Ayyub describes her experiences after this incident as follows; “I was referred to the hospital with heart palpitations and anxiety, the doctor gave me medicine. But I was vomiting, my blood pressure skyrocketed, my body reacted very violently to stress. The whole country was watching a porn video claiming to be me, and I couldn’t do anything.” pornographic content was distributed on the internet. After the incident, Thorne said, “These images are floating around and everyone thinks it’s really me. It doesn’t have to be just a celebrity you admire, you can use this app for anyone” (Ayyub, 2018; Citron, 2019; Mohan, 2019; Maddoks, 2020) draws attention to the accessibility of Deepfake content and its applicability to everyone at any time.

As a matter of fact, the Derya Kuş case, which is seen as one of the first examples of the use of Deepfake application outside of celebrities in Turkey, also supports this determination. Announcing her voice on Twitter on February 6, 2022, Kuş announced that she was systematically harassed



by someone she did not know, that pornographic content was created using her face, and that these were distributed uncontrollably over the internet, especially to her family and close circle, and called for help.



The posts of Derya Kuş, who received support from various non-governmental organizations after the event, which took place in traditional media channels as well as new media sources, were discussed by the authors of Eksi Sözlük under the relevant title. The sexist messages reconstructed in the discourses of the authors, who commented with their anonymous identities in the discussions that arose, were examined, and in this way, it was tried to describe the interpretation of cyber exploitation on new media platforms and social identities, in particular an exploit produced with the Deepfake application.

### The implication that the woman has a crime to justify the abuse

Emphasizing that men need a feminine obedience mechanism for their acceptance and approval in masculine society Bourdieu (2018), states that

in addition to physical violence, they also need a tool of symbolic violence, thus building male identity and developing gender discourses. It is seen that this obedience relationship determines the behaviorally invisible limits of how women should act in the society they live in and provides legitimacy for all kinds of violence that will be applied if these limits are violated (Yıldız, 2009).

In the first narrative exemplified below, it is observed that the male person accused of harassment is portrayed as the victim and an attempt is made to gain sympathy while emphasizing his masculinity as a young man. In the second narrative, it is emphasized that the woman does not comply with the norms of society in a stance that justifies harassment, while posting nude photographs is given as the reason for this. The thought that the victims may have shared their images with their own consent, makes women the initiator of crime and the main responsible of victimization by the society, which causes the view of crime and the criminal to soften, while weakening the guard of the victim in a way (Dülger, 2021). In other narratives, it is seen that comments are made about the mistakes of the woman, which are thought to cause harassment.

*“I feel sorry for the young man, who knows what he went through”*

*“Women, be careful who you date and what kind of photos you post. it’s the son of a…… is not getting through.”*

*“It should be a lesson to the girls, that’s what happens when you spend time with nonsense people.”*

*“Oh my daughter, are you a stupid, you are still sitting and talking with such a man. The man’s problem is that being addressed makes you crazy, there is a certain inner pain. I’m not going to say wrong choice of men, let’s not get lynched for nothing, it’s no use anyway, you will continue to choose the same people.”*

*“I passed he is son of a …… , but where do you find such men? I mean, why are you dealing with these people from social media, etc., and these people are obsessed with you. No one is obsessed with someone who has no chat and only sees their profile picture, if they are not famous or not. Is it because of the enthusiasm of getting attention, why do you deal with such mentally ill types, then wow, why did I get split into 5 pieces in the bathtub? Keep quality people around you, get quality people into your life. It is not difficult to understand that he is a quality person without talking to someone. At least know that a man named sefo85838 will not be of good quality.”*



### **Emphasis on women falling into a disgraceful situation**

While men are expected to establish authority over women in all male-dominated regimes, it is emphasized that women should fulfill all the rules from how they dress to how they behave, if necessary, out of fear of sexual harassment, and that they should also protect themselves from harassment. This protection, which is seen as the responsibility of the woman, can only be prevented by controlling the male sexuality by the woman. Women who fail to achieve this face being blamed, devalued, questioned, and ignored by the society (Cameron & Frazer, 1998).

It can be said that from past to present, sexual harassment is seen as a deserved punishment as a result of not obeying the rules and which should be shamed/shame on the perpetrator rather than the perpetrator. In the first narrative below, it is emphasized that the abused woman is disgraced and unable to go out in public, while in the second narrative it is emphasized how vulnerable and disgraced a man can be if faced with such a situation.

*“No person should be subjected to such bullying and harassment for more than 1 day. If we were in a country where there are fair people and justice is practiced, this abuser would be under bars right now, but the girl has become disgraced for 7 heifers and cannot go out in public.”*

*“You may think this incident is trivial, but if there is no exemplary punishment, no one will be safe. Anyone can use deepfake as a weapon. If someone is annoyed with you, they can add your picture to gay porn and easily disgrace the world. Contrary to what you might think, men are more vulnerable in this regard. because we are more afraid of losing reputation in society than women.”*

### **The implication that the woman must have had a past emotional relationship with the abuser**

In the news of harassment, violence and murder against women, the statement that the victim of violence had an emotional relationship with the suspect in the past appears as an argument that is frequently voiced. It is often seen that it is also used as an allegation brought forward by the suspect in order to provide penal abatement in court.

It is seen that the main concern of the allegations in the narratives exemplified below is the use of the image of a woman as a light woman living outside of social norms, to gain an advantage over men. The perception that these discourses authorize the use of force to the man, who is expected to establish authority in the home in terms of social codes, emerges as a dominant male-dominated discourse.

*“Includes a psychopath obsessed son of a ..... with his ex. Before receiving the news of a murder of a woman, the psychopathic personality should be treated in a mental hospital and sent to prison.”*

*“I’ll say it’s an ex-girlfriend.”*

*“The beginning of these stories is always clear for those who understand.”*

### **The implication that the woman produces fiction to gain fame**

In the exemplified quotations, it is emphasized that the woman fictionalized this event in order to increase her recognition and gain benefit from it. While it is observed that these narratives are seen as manipulations on behalf of men accused of harassment, it is thought that they can also be interpreted as homosexual behavior in order to protect the male-dominated regime socially.

According to Cameron and Frazer (1998), while this understanding expresses a collective and culturally sanctioned misogyny, apart from personal anger and anger, it emphasizes that violence against women is political and is carried out in the name of the continuation of the regime.

*“I can claim that this is a PR activity to gain followers, but I can’t prove it.”*

*“If the fact of the matter turns out to be fiction, I will see these idiots of EKŞİ’s faces.”*

*“I guess she started posting ads when she got enough traffic.”*

*“Let two adult people solve the problem themselves, if they can’t, they go and file a criminal complaint with the prosecutor’s office. This is not a court, you are not a judge or prosecutor. You jump into every subject where women are alleged to be victims, and then when a completely different truth emerges, you say “but but” because it is difficult to lick your saliva.”*

### **Emphasis that women should be protected by a man**

It is seen that the domination of men over women’s spaces and bodies affects the respect they receive in the public sphere. Thanks to this dominance, the female body and sexuality become open to male abuse, while at the same time it is seen as an object that must be protected by men (Scully, 1994). It is a common thought that women are seen as inadequate to protect themselves in male-dominated regimes and should be protected by a father, a brother or a husband who will represent them.

In the exemplified narratives, it is seen that it is emphasized that a father or a relative can respond to this abuse and should not be blamed for this,

like the first narrative that states that as a man, he can give the punishment himself. In this respect, it can be observed that only a male power can be deterrent or punishing, and it is thought that women should be protected under the auspices of a man.

*“If anyone shares the address of this friend called Sefa with me, I would like to bring him to the mercy of the right. too lukewarm to deal with the law.... The solution is to really smash his nose so that he can never do such things to a woman again.”*

*“I think I would be a murderer if something like this were done to my sister, relative, loved one. Where justice ends, anarchy begins. The lack of justice in the country drives me crazy more than the cost of living.”*

*“Although it was not the same for me, something happened. My ex-boyfriend started blocking my way after we broke up. he was waiting in front of my house, following me wherever I went. He even slapped once. constantly disgusting messages, threats, insults. For I couldn't tell my father that I had a boyfriend, I couldn't explain the torment that my ex-boyfriend had inflicted on me, and he trusted that too. I took a few months, I couldn't order anything to the house, but after the slap I said no more, whatever happens, I went and told my father. Thanks to my father, I did not see the boy again, even though we were in the same school. could not face me. Sometimes things have to be solved in ways you don't know how.”*

*“She is a woman who believes in justice. now if this girl's father kill this bust... I guess he will be judged for at least 20 years or something. Let me love the justice of the world.”*

### **Cursing the harasser, again through the female body/feminization**

Cursing and slang discourses are mostly constructed on the sexual passivity of women and the activeness of male sexuality, thus they are used as a tool to reconstruct or strengthen the roles of masculinity and femininity. For this purpose, it is seen that references are generally made to the sexual organs of women, and curses related to masculinity are used as a reference to women over homosexuality. In these curses, son of a.... It can be said that addressing the woman as her child aims to humiliate the other individual by attributing the woman's perception of being a light woman, which is outside of the social norms, to the mother, and to eliminate the crime by placing the blame on the woman who gave birth to her, not on her, in the aforementioned situation.

*“a... k... look at that mental sick, my blood was drawn while reading what was written. He's the one who should be found and flattens his face... I hope his kid*

*gets caught and deep deeps... The main thing that draws attention to this dude in prison is that the staff member can report it wherever you want, no one can do anything to me, nothing will happen in his mind anyway. the bastard is so sure he won't be punished. God damn those who brought the justice system to this point."*

*"It is an issue that needs to be kept on the agenda. This pure son of a b... child who has reached the nirvana of abuse and bullying... I hope his identity will be revealed and he will not be able to go out."*

*"Oh son of a b..., I got on nerves in the morning. If you don't beat them like that, the sun will forget the night."*

*"I bled while reading it. If he did such a thing to one of my family, I would not leave his unbroken bone..... son of a b..... I read where I was sitting, my tooth hurts. Even if one breaks his bones, it does not get cold inside. You will find a thinner, fill your stomach and put cigarettes in your pocket. They obey those who stroke their two heads. You will go and have the bastard burned alive."*

*"You're going to offer these guys a date, gather your relatives and friends and flatten them. he wouldn't get wise otherwise this son of a b....."*

### **Masculinization of Responses to Perceived Sexist Discourses**

As with all other sexual abuse crimes, incidents that occur in terms of non-consensual pornography or cyber sexual crimes give the message to women that even if they are not directly exposed to harassment, it can happen on their own at any time and that it can be justified by seeing it for entertainment purposes. In this respect, the attacks target not only the victim at the centre of the crime, but also the entire women's community (Dülger, 2021).

In this respect, it is seen that in the comments made with anonymous identities, there is a gender representation excluded from the discourses of the people other than the gender they belong to, and it is assumed that the commentators who accuse the victim of abuse or seek reasons for the perpetrator are included in the male gender. In the reactions to the messages that are perceived to target the women's community, it is seen that all men are targeted with generalizations and a masculine language is used in these accusations.

*"The title that has also revealed the perverse lovers in the dictionary. who knows what the girl did and those who choose her contacts well are still walking around. I hope there is no woman who chooses you because you are no different from this problematic person. If the girl has done something very bad, many aggrieved men who say that he will rape you and create an escort account by montage her girl on*

*pornographic images, let her explain the beginning of communication and what the girl did, which is much worse, instead of deleting her account and running away with a crush. In addition, you can understand a man's point of view on a woman from the entries in the supplement. For example, who knows, I don't think there will be women who are texting with girls who do not communicate. mindset is clear and unambiguous. If a woman stumbles upon this, her heels will slam against her hips. But social media is not like that. You do not need to have a deep communication with the other person. Just adding it can lead his to become obsessed with your photos and your life. unfortunately, in the profile of the person you added or two words, "hello, I'm an obsessive maniac" or "if a guy is obsessed with you, I find the fault on you. who knows how you did or how are you, hello, how are you, I'm fine thank you, you approached the sentence in a sensual way, which happened." unfortunately it doesn't. The girl probably either didn't answer at all or just talked nonsense for a day or two and ended her communication when she realized it wasn't normal."*

*"You know, I'm a 33-year-old woman, nowadays I'm afraid of men! Men watch porn 24/7 and chase after photos of naked women on disclosure sites. This hunger, this insatiability frightens me. I'm afraid to talk to a man, to have a conversation, to have a relationship. As you can see, if you speak or deny it, they take your photo and post it on disclosure sites, threatening to humiliate everyone and rape. In the dictionary we wrote, some of the male authors shared the nude photo they said belongs to a female author in the group they formed among themselves. When the woman heard, she was shocked and had to make a statement. Shame on that woman! Is it that simple to slander a person? Were men always like this and we were unaware of it, or whether the Internet has led such astray, I can't decide. There is only one thing I know, more and more logical reasons are coming up to stay away from men day by day..."*

*t: a young girl. I'm so sorry bro. I will say I hope the dishonest pervert will be jailed, but even female rapists and murderers are walking around outside waving their arms. I honestly have no hope. God help you."*

*"who knows what the young woman has done?" There are mentally ill, potential perverts who see bullying as normal. What normal person can think of something like this? and also "where do they find these types, yea?!" Those who say... it's written on their foreheads, my brother, right in the middle of their forehead, but our women can't read. You are all human gurus, you have superpowers to recognize people even through their eyes, but unfortunately the women of this country do not have that skill. A woman writer who normalizes this bullying by saying "if you share your photos, if you are a fool, if you meet with people you don't know on the internet, if you trust so many everyday men", but who says, "I want to stay anonymous",*

*who does not share her photo or any information about herself. Even those who label them as “kezbán” and say their mouths under many titles should not be overlooked. This is Turkey my friend, I can understand a woman’s distrust of a man she doesn’t know very well. if he trusted, wow, was he reliable in that long time, if he didn’t trust that much, did he not understand at all, what a courage; If he doesn’t trust, what century are we living in, are you a ghazi or a child. If you are not involved, there must be a reason and “women deserve it”; if you’re involved, “are you crazy! I am the most reliable person in the world”. Who knows, maybe this psychopath also said that to this young woman. maybe he doesn’t know at all, he’s a heretic like a samurai sword killer; but no! we must find a reason to blame a victim, we must criticize the victim, “who knows what he did?” We must ensure that other people who are being bullied also lose the courage to have their voices heard.”*

## CONCLUSION

With new media platforms, the internet world is changing social life completely, while also allowing new crimes and crime tools to emerge. Today, with the irresistible rise of artificial intelligence, it is seen that one of these new crime tools is the Deepfake application. The opportunities offered by the Internet to perpetrators willing to commit crimes, such as accessibility, pervasiveness, and anonymity, make it more and more dangerous day by day. Undoubtedly, the biggest danger is the attacks on the freedom and privacy areas of individuals.

The shocking effect of Deepfake technology, which allows people’s images to be used in pornographic content without consent, takes the effects of fake content to a whole new level and makes it unpredictable in terms of its consequences. With the motivation to manipulate people, the content of pornography without consent, which is used in various ways, can sometimes be used to displace a politician, sometimes to gain power or money, and sometimes for revenge.

In this study, in which the heavy psychological effects of these attacks on the privacy of individuals can also be observed on the victims, it was observed that the opinion of such cyber-attacks that, due to the nature of the internet, creates a recurring victimization in terms of enabling continuous access, was observed. In addition to this situation, which prevents the victims from covering their wounds, it can be said that the comments made by anonymous identities are also circulated in these channels, deepening the traumas of the victims with repeated feelings of blame, humiliation, and shame. In the words of Erin Andrews, this situation can also be expressed as “not being able to get rid of being a victim every day”.

While it is seen that the sexist discourses seen in the way anonymous identities handle and interpret the event, reconstruct the hostile sexism through the victims; It can be said that the reactions to these sexist discourses also contain a sexist attitude and do not differ in terms of discourse, except that the discourses change direction.

In this study, it is emphasized that non-consensual pornography content produced with Deepfake can be used as a crime tool to interfere with the lives of non-famous people, and it is becoming easier as well as becoming widespread enough to be encountered in all areas of daily life. In this respect, in the case of Derya Kuş, the victimization of involuntary pornography produced by the Deepfake application, together with other pornographic Deepfake victims, was discussed from the perspective of sexism in the dimension of hostility, and in the case of Derya Kuş, the discourses produced by cyber victimization were tried to be described.

It is considered important to follow the new cyber-crimes, which emerged with the partnership of new media and artificial intelligence, in order to detect and prevent the damages they will cause in the future, and to contribute to the literature in this regard, in terms of taking precautions.



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# Media and Communication in the Digital Age: Esports and Marketing Communications

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## Introduction

Electronic sports, or esports in short, is a product of innovations brought by technological developments. Developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) constantly affect our world socio-culturally and economically. The scope of these effects is increasing day by day. Sports branches, which have been actively followed as an important means of leisure, entertainment and socialization from past to present, are also affected by this change. In addition to traditional sports branches such as football, basketball and athletics, electronic sports as a new type of sport has emerged due to the developments in ICT. The term esports is formed by the combination of the words “electronic” and “sports” and sometimes means competitive game (Scholz, 2019). Kocaömer (2019) refers to electronic sports as “a new type of sport in which a competitive professional game competition or tournament, which takes place individually or as a team, is presented through gaming platforms and the competitions are followed in a stadium or through mass media”. In this context, esports is inspired by traditional sports branches in terms of elements such as competition, individuality, team phenomenon, live broadcasting of competitions or broadcasting in mass media.

When it comes to esports, computer, console and mobile esports games such as League of Legends, Dota 2, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Valorant, Overwatch, Fortnite, PUBG Mobile come to mind. These games

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are considered as esports in terms of the features they have. There are also forms of esports where a traditional sport is digitally enhanced (Cranmer et al., 2021, p. 6). Esports versions of traditional sports such as FIFA, NBA, Formula 1 can be given as examples. In these games, esports players compete with each other as in traditional sports. The main goal is to win the fight. In this respect, esports is described as the gamified version of sports. However, it is necessary to understand that it is not possible to qualify every game as esports. Funk et al. (2018), state that all esports are video games, but not all video games are classified as sports. For video games to be considered sports, they must have a specific structure (for example, standard rules), organized (for example, adherence to rules) and competitive (for example, the presence of a winner and a loser) (Funk et al., 2018, p. 9). In this respect, esports represents the institutionalized structure where professional players and teams compete by participating in a league or tournament and this competition is broadcast live.

As a new sport of the digital age, esports is important and popular for the sports industry. Esports is also closely related to the concepts of media and communication. Esports is also a product of new media emerging as an alternative to traditional media. Esports games can be played via computers, consoles or mobile phones. In this context, it is also possible to evaluate it within the scope of new media due to the social interaction it contains. The esports game gives the player the opportunity to communicate with other players before, during and after the game. In this direction, players can sometimes be friends only in the game and sometimes in real life. Although esports games are themselves a new media product, media platforms such as YouTube and Twitch, where they are broadcast, are also new media products. In this context, it is necessary to evaluate esports within new media in terms of both the game itself and the platform on which it is broadcast, in terms of enabling digital interaction.

As a new sports and media product, esports has become used by businesses to achieve their marketing goals. For brands, sports is an important element of marketing communication. For years, brands have been trying to associate their brands with sports by using the popularity of sports. In this direction, brands have tried to make themselves an important stakeholder of the sports industry by using promotional items such as sponsorship and advertising. As in sports, esports is used by brands due to its popularity and potential. In this context, it is necessary to understand and evaluate the marketing communication potential of esports in today's digital age. In this section, first of all, the basic components of esports are mentioned, and then, in line with the characteristics of these components, esports marketing, esports

marketing strategies, the future of esports and marketing communication potential are mentioned.

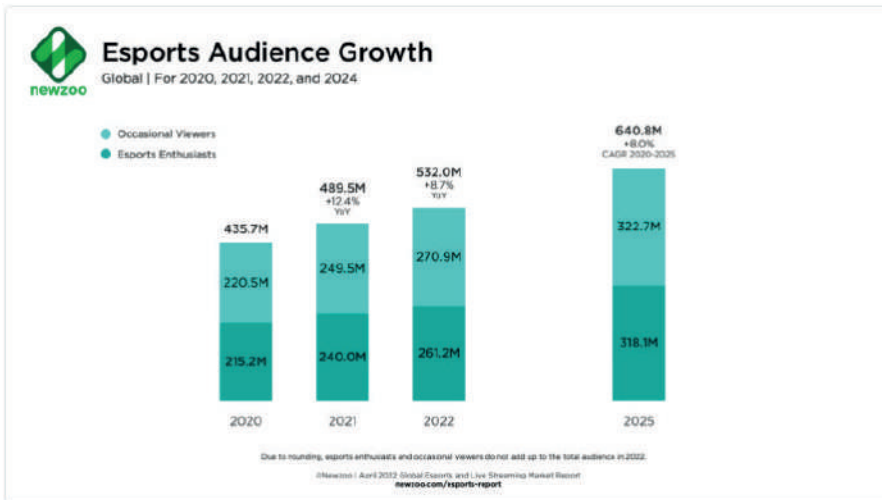
### **Key Components of Esports**

The esports ecosystem has seven main components. These components include consumers, game publishers (developers), teams, professional players, leagues and events, media channels and brands.

#### **1. Consumers**

Consumers, who are the most important components in esports, are defined as individuals who watch or play competitive games. The presence of consumers also has an impact on other stakeholders (producers, teams, brands and media channels) involved in esports. The main factor in investing in esports is to generate income from consumers. There is an integrated interaction between all stakeholders involved in esports and the focus is on consumers (Kocaömer, 2018, p. 34; Qian et al., 2020).

In order to understand the popularity of esports, it is useful to examine the number of esports viewers. The number of esports viewers is increasing day by day. In 2022, the number of viewers in esports increased rapidly. As of 2022, the number of esports viewers reached 532 million with an increase of 8.7%. Esports enthusiasts who follow esports content more frequently constitute 261.2 million of this number, while those who watch it occasionally consist of 270.9 million people. In 2025, the total number of esports viewers is expected to exceed 640 million (Newzoo, 2022). Esports audiences and players constitute esports consumers. It should not be overlooked that the above-mentioned audience count only includes the esports audience and not the esports players.



*Image 1. Esports Audience Growth*

*Source: (Newzoo, 2022).*

The fact that esports broadcasts are free on the internet makes it possible for the audience to increase and the audience to follow esports broadcasts in different countries and times (Saiz-Alvarez et al., 2021). Esports broadcasts can be followed by consumers using their phones, tablets or computers and internet connection. In addition, consumers can be not only followers of esports, but also producers who contribute to the participatory culture that shapes, transfers and reframes media content. This can happen thanks to information communication technologies (ICT) (Jenkins et al., 2013). An example of participatory culture is the transition of consumers who evaluate esports to the position of producers (Pu et al., 2021). In this framework, consumers become broadcasters and present their own broadcasts to sports audiences through Twitch, YouTube and similar media channels.

Esports viewers may be fans of all or some of the components included in esports. These components are in the form of players, games, teams, nations and tournaments (Taylor, 2015). Esports audiences also have various motivations. These can be a sense of accomplishment, skill, escape from real life, social interaction, recreation, and player attractiveness, as well as team commitment and commentary (Orme, 2022; Sjöblom et al., 2020). In this context, Hamari and Sjöblom (2017), who study on audience motivation, found that people's reasons for watching are discharge, emotional, social integrative and cognitive needs in their research on why people watch other people's playing content. It has also been determined that competing is

effective in watching and playing esports. This is a sign that people can get satisfaction while playing games, and in addition, they can achieve satisfaction while watching.



*Image 2. Spectators at Esports Match*

*Source: (Baki, 2020).*

## 2. Game Publishers (Developers)

One of the most important stakeholders of esports is game publishers. Publishers are also characterized as the concept that shapes producers, developers, and distributors. In addition, those who own all rights to game content are defined as game publishers. The first names that come to mind when it comes to esports publishers are Valve (developer of Dota 2 and Counter Strike), Blizzard Entertainment (developer of Starcraft II, Overwatch and Heroes of the Storm) and Riot Games (developer of League of Legends). Those who take part in the organization of esports events/organizations/champions/leagues and produce games are called game developers (Kocaömer, 2018). The game developer has an esports title and has an intellectual property right. In addition, it is necessary to apply for the legal and technical permission of the game developer to create a product (Partin, 2018). On the other hand, it is seen that esports publishers shape the game through three different models while designing the game. These are expressed as free to play, pay to play and pay to win (Özbiçakçı, 2016):

- In the free-to-play game model, every player can play the game without paying anything.
- In the pay-to-play model, players can take part in the game, usually by paying monthly.
- In the pay-to-win model, players who pay for the equipment become superior/stronger than their other competitors in the game.

Interest in esports and online games is growing at a high rate all over the world, and institutions are making great efforts to partner with game manufacturers (Gawrysiak et al., 2020). For example, with platforms such as Activision, Apex, Capcom, Valve (Newzoo, 2022), which are considered under the title of publisher and esports games in Europe, the number of users and publishers is increasing day by day and partnerships are being developed. In this context, due to the high demand for online games, game manufacturers earn very high incomes from the games they produce.

### **3. Teams**

In order to carry out esports activities, clubs must exist and clubs must have teams (Mastromartino et al., 2020). The teams within the clubs aim to generate income through esports, find sponsors for their teams, and sell their commercial products to their fans by participating in championships, leagues, tournaments and similar events organized by the organizers (Kunz et al., 2022). More than one team can be established within a club within the possibilities (material) of the club. Regarding esports, there are clubs in many countries around the world (Germany, Spain, Turkey, Russia, Brazil, America, South Korea and Australia etc.). In addition, the number of participating countries is increasing day by day (Yılmaz, 2016). In esports events such as FIFA, CS: GO, and League of Legends, there are teams established by traditional clubs as well as teams established by various investors. The team, which was founded by Beşiktaş Gymnastics Club for League of Legends, is the first esports team in the world to be established by a sports club. As the interest in esports continues to increase, other sports clubs (Valencia, PSV, Santos, FC Volga, Baskonia and Fenerbahçe etc.) have also established esports teams (Altunbaş, 2023).

In addition to the teams established by traditional sports clubs in the world, the teams established or sponsored by institutions and brands take part in esports organizations (Kramer et al., 2021). For example, in the developing regions esports ecosystem, teams such as Infinity, Mbr, Nasr, Loud and Supermassive can be cited (Newzoo, 2022). The biggest goal of businesses with esports teams is to familiarize esports fans with the names of



their brands and to sell their products and earn commercial income (Bertschy et al., 2020).

Esports teams try to recruit the best players possible. Teams support this situation with coaches, training opportunities and better competitive environments (Scholz, 2019). In this context, the best esports teams of 2022 are ranked as DRX LoL (which became the champion in the World Championship); FaZe Clan in CS:GO; Loud in Valorant; Tundra Esports in Dota 2 and LA Thieves in Call of Duty (Kurt, 2022).

#### **4. Professional Players**

Individuals who continue the esports activity professionally and generate economic income within the scope of the activity are considered as professional players. Individuals participating in these sporting events participate in the events as a team, act as a team and represent the group they are a member of in the game arena. In addition, the opportunity to reach individuals participating in this sporting event is easier than in other sporting events. The reason for this is that these players take advantage of social media platforms in a participatory way, open broadcasts and connect with their audience by communicating (Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017). These players communicate with their viewers by broadcasting live on platforms such as Twitch.tv, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Faker, Bang, Ruler, Perkz are among the well-known international and foreign broadcasters, while Armut (İrfan), Broken Blade (Sergen), Closer (Can) are Turkish players who play and broadcast in international esports teams.

Professional players usually broadcast their broadcasts on the Twitch platform. To give an example of professional players, Bjergsen, Doublelift, Sneaky can be counted (Kocaömer, 2018). Professional esports players have short careers. In this context, professional esports players do other esports-related jobs (Zhao & Zhu, 2021). A former professional esports player usually streams on Twitch.tv or can become a coach, game analyst, commentator (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019). In this direction, the profession of professional streamer has emerged in recent years. Esports players are professional streamers as well as acting professionally. The fact that esports players can reach large audiences through social media attracts the attention of brands. In this context, it has become important for brands that professional players can reach their target audiences through new media channels (Instagram, Twitter, Youtube). In this direction, brands accelerated their efforts to reach esports publishers and started to pay them to promote their brands (Kocaömer, 2018).



Esports organizations with professional players include LoL (League of Legends), CS:GO, Call of Duty, Pokemon, PUBG Mobile and VALORANT (Esports, 2023). Some examples of teams in esports organizations that feature teams and professional players are Astralis, Team Liquid, Neon Esports, Team Queso, Unicorns of Love and Cloud9. In addition, professional players taking part in esports games and earning the most international income are listed as Faker, Duke, Bang, Wolf, Bengi, JackeyLove, Ruler (Charts, 2023). On the other hand, there are many reasons why people want to be professional players in this ICT supported environment. While making a profit is at the top of these reasons, taking part in a participatory culture, gaining awareness and interaction are among the reasons.

The fundamental rights of the teams that professionally pursue esports and the members of the teams are legally protected by contracts. The legal contract made binds the team and the player and provides benefits to both parties. In addition, players have obligations that they are responsible for in accordance with the legal contract.

## **5. Leagues and Events**

Leagues and events are a component of esports organizations. Leagues and events are organized by organization representatives and game content developers. In this framework, it is ensured that the players of the teams come together in a competitive environment, brands introduce themselves, sponsorship activities are exhibited, and advertisement contents are shared. At this point, ICT enables many activities to be carried out online and offline, allowing viewers to reach leagues and events (Kocaömer, 2018). Examples of league scope include LCS (League of Legends Championship Series) and GSL (Global Starcraft II League). The scope of the event includes organizations such as ESL one, IEM (Intel Extreme Masters), League of Legends World Championship (Esports, 2023; Charts, 2023).

As of 2023, the most watched esports game in the world is Mobile Legends: Bang Bang. It is followed by League of Legends, CS:GO and Valorant, respectively. The most watched games since the esports event was founded are ranged as Free Fire, LoL, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang and Pubg Mobile (Charts, 2023). At the same time, esports events and tournaments watched worldwide are listed as DreamHack, LoL World Championships and Regional Leagues, Blizcon, Electronic Sports League (ESL) and Major League Gaming (MLG).

## 6. Media Channels

Esports events meet their followers on platforms such as YouTube and Twitch with new media extensions with online streaming opportunities (Sjöblom et al., 2019). In addition, the increase in interest in esports has activated traditional mass media and some organizations have started to be published on these platforms. However, the success of esports has been made possible by the developments in ICT. Esports organization is the first sports branch whose success has increased without traditional mass media (Taylor, 2015). Since the target audience of esports organizations is mostly young people, reaching this segment has become easier with the increase of online platforms. Online platforms such as MLG.TV, Azubu TV, YouTube, ESL and Twitch have started to be used more frequently for the display of individual screenings and content based on team organizations (Kocaömer, 2018). The awareness and diversity of these broadcasting channels is increasing day by day. Channels that offer esports broadcast content are evaluated under two headings:

- **Online Streaming Channels:** Environments that allow Internet-based broadcasting are called online streaming. The most well-known platform that allows broadcasting and is conducted online is Twitch. tv. In addition to this platform, esports broadcast opportunities are increasing day by day in areas such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. According to Newzoo (2022), platforms such as Nimo TV, Trovo, and Booyah! have been developed in addition to these broadcasts in the Emerging Regions Esports Ecosystem. The reason why there is such a tendency towards online streaming platforms is due to the demand-indexed feature of instantaneity, accessibility, participation and benefiting from internet opportunities (Taylor, 2015).
- **Television:** Esports is in a rising trend for television broadcasts. The underlying reason for this is that the esports infrastructure is established based on ICT and is more suitable for new media supported platforms. According to Kocaömer (2018), this situation has begun to change today. One of the main reasons behind this is shown as supporting televisions with ICT and gaining breadth without reaching target audiences. Utilizing television by both game-oriented organizers and game developers also contributes to the formation of a win-win understanding. It is possible to say that esports matches are now added to the volleyball, basketball and football matches watched on television. The advantage created by this internet-connected system contributes to the progress of the interest in this field of sports, which will increase day by day, with the lower cost of watching esports for

viewers who pay to watch Turkish Airlines Euroleague or Champions League competitions on television in the future. In addition, the first country where esports met with the television screen is South Korea. Professional games, OGN (ongamenet), MBC Game and cable broadcasts have started to be brought together with esports lovers in this country since the first quarter of the 21st century (Jin, 2010). In the Western World, the meeting of professional esports organizations with esports lovers through television was ensured with the broadcast of the Dota 2 championship on ESPN in 2014 (Valve, 2017).

## 7. Brands

In esports events where a competitive environment is created, the way to reach the audience and consumers in professional game content is possible with brand-oriented sponsorship and advertising activities (Ejjaberi et al., 2020). In this context, brands are looking for ways to reach consumers together with esports players, events, competitive players and teams as a basic component of esports organizations (Cranmer et al., 2021).

In esports content, teams, players representing teams, and organizations themselves have become brands. At this point, what is meant as a brand are corporate formations such as Coca Cola, Ülker, Vodafone and Samsung that sponsor teams, players and organizations (Kocaömer, 2018). Within this framework, a brand can reach esports viewers and fans in eight different ways. These are (Keller, 2015):

- Immersive experiences and web-focused landing pages
- Experience-based marketing
- Organizing promotional white label organizations
- Organization sponsorship
- Using sponsor opportunities for the esports team
- Leveraging influencer reviews
- Editing branded content

It is not possible to say that institutions that adopt and exhibit the above-mentioned features will achieve definite success. In this context, the situation that comes to the fore is the measurement of impact. Identifying the items that will provide success in reaching consumers and going over them will have an impact on providing a positive image. In this context, if brands can spend the necessary budget in terms of reaching the esports audience and consumers, they will also be effective in reaching the fans.

Sponsor brands in esports consist of different sectors such as automobiles, computers, banking, informatics, marketing, telecommunications, fashion, food, businesses (holdings). In image 3, key sponsors of the Asia Pacific Esports Ecosystem is listed. Puma and Nike in athletic & sportswear; RedBull, KFC in the food & beverages area; Exxon Mobil in Oil & Gas, Mercedes and BMW in automotive manufacturer; Intel and Lenovo in Computer Hardware; Samsung, Oppo Oneplus in the field of mobile phones & tablets,; HanaBank and Pingan Bank in the bank area; Logitech in the field of gaming hardware & peripherals can be given as examples (Newzoo, 2022). These sponsors become part of the esports ecosystem by supporting teams, players, tournaments and broadcasters. Thus, they reach esports consumers for their marketing purposes.

### The Global Esports Ecosystem



Image 3. The Global Esports Ecosystem

Source: (Newzoo, 2022)

## Esports and Marketing Communications

Marketing communication is a concept that expresses the use of promotional items such as advertising and sponsorship by brands to convey their messages to their target audience. Esports has become one of the most popular forms of digital entertainment in recent years. It has become even more popular, especially due to COVID-19 (Cranmer et al., 2021). Esports creates opportunities for brands to reach hard-to-reach young consumers (Newzoo, 2022). Esports also reaches a digital and international audience (Scholz, 2019). Therefore, esports sponsorship offers significant opportunities for sponsor brands to communicate and interact with the technology-oriented and young consumers of esports (Huettermann et al., 2020). Properly executed esports marketing is an important way to reach esports' engaged and passionate audience for the game (Duelit, 2022). In general, the players make up a very large community. If a brand wants to deliver its messages to a specific target audience within this community, it must offer a value to the players and develop a special strategy (Turkowski, 2021). Brands use key components of the esports ecosystem, such as esports teams, professional and amateur players, esports leagues, esports events, and real-time streaming media platforms, to reach esports consumers. It is seen that brands want to benefit from the competitive nature of esports by incorporating into the esports ecosystem through sponsorship and advertising collaborations. With esports marketing for brands, the goal is to establish a bond with esports players and/or audiences. As a result of the bond established, brands hope to achieve their marketing communication goals.

The main income sources of the esports industry are sponsorship, media rights, digital sales of in-game items, live streaming, ticket sales, product sales and publisher payments (Newzoo, 2022). Among these income sources, sponsorship takes the most important place. Sponsorship has been and still is an important driving force in the development of esports for many years (Scholz, 2019). In 2021, 63% of global esports revenues consist of sponsorship revenues. Sponsorship revenues in esports are obtained through sponsorship agreements made by organizations and teams. These agreements include the following situations (Newzoo, 2022):

- Event sponsorship (including product placement).
- Team sponsorship,
- Payments made by brands for the use of team rights, event rights and game-specific IP rights in the marketing communication activities of the brands,

- Ads sold within the sponsorship package.

Esports organizations, esports teams, esports players and esports influencers benefit from sponsorship and advertising in esports.

Brands, which have become important stakeholders of esports, are involved in the esports industry through sponsorship and advertising activities. By advertising on broadcast platforms, brands display their brands on that platform in return. Similarly, brands make their brands visible by sponsoring esports events, esports teams and professional players or influencers (Newzoo, 2022). Examples of such sponsorship partnerships are the Team Liquid esports club and brands such as Alienware, Coinbase, Honda, Verizon, Monster Energy, SAP, IMC, Twitch, Thorne, Kingston, HyperX, HUYA, Secretlab (Team Liquid, 2023). As can be seen from this example, the brands sponsoring esports teams can be different brands from many different sectors. Whether these brands are endemic (brands related to the esports industry such as Microsoft, Logitech, Casper) or non-endemic brands (brands that are not directly related to the esports industry such as Nike, Pepsi, Mercedes), they become a part of this ecosystem by supporting esports. As in sports marketing, in esports, sponsor or advertiser brands do not need to be an endemic brand specific to the gaming world in order to be welcomed positively (GMR, 2016). The research results of Huettermann et al. (2020) also show that non-endemic sponsors can reach and benefit from the esports target audience by associating their brands with esports. In short, every brand has the opportunity to be successful with the right marketing strategy.

Unlike sponsorship, marketers use in-game product placement, brand engagement, events, contests and giveaways to reach esports' niche audience (Lehnert et al., 2022, p. 127). Brands contribute to the sustainability of the esports industry by being included in the esports ecosystem to achieve their marketing goals. There seems to be a double benefit here for both the esports industry and brands. By providing cash support to esports events, teams, players and influencers, brands in turn gain value for their brands.

### **Esports Marketing Strategies**

With the increasing interest in esports in recent years, it is seen that esports has an important marketing potential as in traditional sports (Lehnert et al., 2022, p. 124). The increasing interest of esports players and audiences in esports has led game publishers to market their own esports games and brands that want to reach esports consumers include esports in their marketing strategies. Brands resort to various marketing strategies to reach the unique consumers of esports. Duelit (2022) divides esports marketing strategies into 5 different categories. These are:

### **1. Identifying the target audience**

What is meant here is that game companies and brands accurately determine their target audience. Gaming companies should use their marketing strategies to reach people who are more likely to play and watch their games. After determining the target audience, it should be considered how to reach that audience (Duelit, 2022). Brands should also determine their target audiences correctly within the scope of esports marketing. Identifying the right esports audience within their marketing strategies is an important point that helps them achieve success (Sy, 2021; Garcés, 2023; Game Marketing Genie, 2020). First of all, they should understand whether their target audience and the target audience of esports have similar characteristics, and then if they want to reach the relevant audience, they can join the esports game as a sponsor or advertiser. Thus, sponsor brands can use esports as a communication channel to reach the young consumer audience of esports (STWS, 2022).

### **2. Finding the right communication channels**

Another important point of marketing strategies is choosing the right communication channels to reach the esports target audience. After the target audience is determined, it is necessary to identify the correct platforms where this audience spends their time (Game Marketing Genie, 2020; Duelit, 2022). For example, using Twitch and Reddit platforms can be a good option for a brand that wants to reach a gamer community. Knowing the target audience and using the right communication channels provides the opportunity to reach the target audience more effectively (Duelit, 2022). Esports is mostly followed through digital platforms such as Twitch and YouTube. In this direction, brands should choose the esports game that is compatible with their target audience and then come up with the right strategy to reach this audience. Brands must implement the right esports game, the right time, the right place, the right platform and the right message strategy to achieve their marketing goals. Paying attention to these is more likely to result in a successful marketing communication campaign.

### **3. Collaborating with influencers**

Esports influencers transmit the screenshots of the game they are playing to an online audience with their own screenshots while they are playing (STWS, 2022). An important way to reach the



esports target audience is to cooperate with these popular gaming influencer that have a large following on social media (Turkowski, 2021; Duelit, 2022). The most important criterion for a successful influencer marketing campaign in esports is to find the right esports phenomenon with which the brand will partner (Game Marketing Genie, 2020). Brands should partner with influencers who have a similar audience to the target audience they have previously determined and have an effective audience on the designated communication platform (Game Marketing Genie, 2020). In the selection of the influencer, it is an important criterion that influencer has an active target audience that is compatible with the brand. The correct use of influencer marketing by brands plays a critical role in the success of the esports marketing strategy (Duelit, 2022). In particular, esports develops long-term relationships instead of establishing a one-time cooperation with the influencer, which is an important criterion for the success of influencer marketing (Turkowski, 2021). In the selection of an esports influencer, features such as the personal characteristics of the influencer, the type of esports he/she publishes, the compatibility of the target audience of the esports game and the influencer with the target audience of the brand should be taken into account. A collaboration based only on the number of followers is an obstacle for the brand to achieve its marketing goals. In this context, the brand needs to choose the right influencer suitable for its target audience and communicate with its target audience through the right platform through this influencer.

#### **4. Sponsoring teams and/or players**

Today, brands that want to be included in the esports ecosystem sponsor a team or a player. Sponsorship is an important marketing strategy for brands to connect with esports players and audiences. The important point in esports sponsorship for a brand is the harmony between the brand and the esports team or esports player. Choosing the right team and esports player increases the success of the sponsorship and positively strengthens the brand's image (Duelit, 2022). Brands are similarly diversifying their marketing strategies by sponsoring esports events and esports influencers. As stated above, sponsoring the right team, esports players, events and influencers returns the brand as brand value, brand image, brand loyalty, brand trust, brand preference, and purchase intention.



## 5. Hosting white label events

White label events are events organized by another business rather than game publishers or developers. Hosting such tournaments or team events creates an opportunity for brands to reach people interested in esports (Game Marketing Genie, 2020). These events benefit the esports industry by adding more competition and diversity (Duelit, 2022). Such events are created by certain brands to establish positive bonds between esports players and audiences. For example, it involves organizing an esports-related event to associate brand A itself with esports. Esports consumers are grateful to the relevant brand for their experience in esports by participating in such events organized by the brand. This situation benefits both the brand and the esports consumer.

The more successfully an esports game is marketed, the more brands aim to establish commercial relations with the stakeholders of this game. While trying to be a part of the esports ecosystem, brands use marketing strategies like the ones above.

### **The Future of Esports and its Marketing Communication Potential**

Many sports events have been postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19, which has affected our world (Üçüncüoğlu et al., 2021, p. 83; Lehnert et al., 2022). The cancellation of major sports events due to COVID-19 has made esports an alternative to sports for sports fans. Thus, participation in esports, the popularity of esports and the number of viewers have also increased (Newzoo, 2020). Restrictions such as curfews and quarantines due to COVID-19 have significantly increased activities such as streaming and gaming (Cranmer et al., 2021). Many traditional sports brands have also started to invest in esports after the COVID-19 global pandemic (Kim et al., 2020, p. 1870). Esports has started to be used as a new way for the sports industry to both reach their target audience and keep the bond they have created with their target audience active (Üçüncüoğlu et al., 2021, p. 95). In this context, live broadcasting of esports and video games has led to the emergence of a new player in the entertainment industry (Lehnert et al., 2022, p. 122). Being aware of this situation, brands have started to use esports as part of their marketing strategies.

Considering the marketing potential of esports, the role of components such as consumers, game publishers, teams, professional players, leagues and events, media channels and brands within the esports ecosystem should be well understood. Scholz (2020), describes the esports industry as an

interconnected network formed by many stakeholders coming together. In this context, he states that all stakeholders need each other to work and be successful. With the correct analysis of these components, esports marketing strategies such as identifying the target audience, finding the right communication channels, cooperating with influencers, sponsoring teams and/or players, hosting white label events are becoming more effective and strategic. All kinds of brands have had the opportunity to interact with esports consumers for marketing purposes by taking advantage of opportunities such as esports sponsorships, partnerships and co-branding (Big Village, 2019).

Immersive technologies such as virtual reality include in esports things that require physical activity such as moving, reacting, running, walking or picking up things, and pointing at objects. Technological developments like these will further accelerate the development of esports (Cranmer et al., 2021, p. 4). In addition, the rapid rise of esports on mobile as mobile esports creates substantial opportunities for brands. Brands can also take an important role in the development of esports by following such technological developments, and in this way, they can get an opportunity to achieve their marketing goals.

At the point of using the marketing potential of esports successfully, brands have to pay attention to some points. One of the points to note is that esports is a field that is still developing and may vary. For example, a game like Overwatch may be the most important game in esports, or it may disappear completely in a year or two. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse such risks well when investing in esports (Scholz, 2019). Another point to be considered is the negative behaviours that the influencer may have, especially in the cooperation of brands with influencers at the point of reaching the marketing potential of esports. In this context, careful evaluation of influencers to work with is also an important criterion.

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## E-Health Literacy: A Conscious Approach to Combating Cyberchondria

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### Introduction

Digital health literacy has become a concept that gains importance with the increase in easy access to health information. In this context, the ability of individuals to accurately evaluate health-related information and question their accuracy plays a critical role in reducing inaccurate beliefs about research on extreme health anxiety and disease diagnoses called cyberchondria. Digital health literacy or e-health literacy provides individuals with the ability to obtain health information from reliable and scientifically-based sources. However, developing critical thinking skills and questioning the reliability of information sources reduce the risk of exposure to misinformation about health. Cyberchondria has become an increasing problem with the spread of the internet. Continuous access to health information on the Internet encourages individuals to be unduly concerned about their own health and to continually conduct research on their disease diagnosis. While the Internet offers people access to a large pool of health-related information, it can sometimes lead to exposure to inaccurate, exaggerated or unsafe information. At this point, e-health literacy comes into play. E-health literacy aims to provide individuals with the ability to accurately evaluate health-related information from the internet and other digital sources. This includes skills such as recognizing reliable sources, using accurate information-seeking techniques, thinking critically, and avoiding information overload. This study discusses how e-health literacy can provide a conscious approach to combating cyberchondria and the importance of keeping people away from exaggerated

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health concerns. While this study explores the advantages of e-health literacy, it also aims to review the responsibilities of health professionals and individuals.

### *1. Cyberchondria: Definition and Symptoms*

Cyberchondria is a medical phenomenon that emerged with the rapid development of modern technology. This situation is manifested by individuals constantly worrying about their own health status through internet research and preoccupation with imaginary diseases. The origin of the term is not known for certain. However, it is estimated that journalist Ann Carrns appeared in her 1999 article in the Wall Street Journal titled “Diseases that cause hypochondriasis patients to worry are very common on the Internet” (Walley, 2001). The term cyberchondria is formed by the combination of the terms hypochondriasis and cyber, and is commonly known as “hypochondriacism” among the people. It is defined as the digital state of the “Hypochondriasis” disease, which is defined as the state of constantly feeling sick even though there is no symptom or disorder in the person’s body, and the behavior of going to the physician frequently (Taylor et al. 2002, cited by Demirhan and Eke, 2021, p.2).

According to yet another source, the term cyberchondria is defined as a disease in an article titled “Cyberchondria, a rapidly spreading disease on the Internet” published in The Independent (Valley, 2001). Therefore, at this point, it is possible to say that cyberchondria is a phenomenon that spreads on the internet and that individuals tend to access health information obsessively by increasing their health concerns excessively. Cyberchondria is considered to be a condition where health concerns and obsessions are combined with internet use.

Cyberchondria, which has become widespread especially with health-related websites and social media platforms, is used as a diagnostic method in health searches on the internet. Even if there are no somatic signs or symptoms, people with this condition constantly seek information about their disease, apply possible diagnoses to themselves, and deal with health concerns intensely. For example, when someone who feels pain in the chest area or left arm searches for it on the internet, they may find the symptoms close to a heart attack and think that they are having a heart attack and apply to a health institution. Even if nothing comes out as a result, the person may think that he is constantly having a heart attack and continue to be restless. In this case, cyberchondria can lead to fears that are incompatible with reality, restlessness, sleep problems and a decrease in quality of life. In addition, it should not be forgotten that this situation can cause constant stress and

anxiety and negatively affect social relations. Therefore, cyberchondria is accepted as a condition that affects the mental and emotional health of individuals.

It is observed that there is a lack of trust in the physician in individuals with symptoms of cyberchondria, and the relationship between the physician and the patient is also in danger. At this point, even if the person has a diagnosed disease, he can increase his health anxiety by constantly searching for his illness caused by the behavior of searching for health information online. According to White and Horvitz (2009, p.700), searching for health information online raises the concerns of cyberchondriac individuals, and cyberchondriac individuals find themselves in a constant vicious circle because of the nature of the algorithm of search engines, the symptoms of the disease being searched are ordered according to the popularity of access rather than the probability of diagnosis or accuracy. However, not every online health information seeking behavior can be associated with cyberchondria. At this point, if this search for information causes anxiety and concern in the individual, it is described as cyberchondria (Starvevic & Berle, 2013, p. 206). In a study conducted by Muse et al. (2012, p.192) on this subject, it is seen that individuals with high health anxiety have a high rate of online health information seeking behavior.

Cyberchondria, which has emerged with the development of the internet and the digital age, shows itself as an obsessive follow-up and research behavior towards various health problems by increasing the health concerns of individuals excessively. People with cyberchondria become overly dependent on health information on the internet, constantly worrying about any signs or symptoms. This can lead to unrealistic and overestimated health concerns, affect social relationships, and adversely affect quality of life. Cyberchondria emerges as a problem that requires an important awareness for individuals to understand their health information accurately and to obtain information from the right sources. McElroy and Shevlin (2014, p.260) define cyberchondria as a disease that reflects health anxiety and compulsiveness multidimensionally. As a matter of fact, it appears as a situation that manifests itself with individuals' constant research on health on the internet and excessive concern about imaginary diseases. People who experience this condition are constantly checking health-related websites and social media platforms, researching possible symptoms on themselves, and constantly questioning themselves about their diagnosis. If we itemize all the symptoms of cyberchondria;

- ***Conducting Continuous Research:*** Individuals with cyberchondria constantly search the Internet for diseases, symptoms and treatments, even if they do not have any health problems. Even the slightest symptom can cause great anxiety, and the person may find oneself constantly busy searching for signs of illness.
- ***Being Overly Concerned With Her/His Own Body:*** Cyberchondria is manifested by an excessive concern with one's own body and health. The person may think that there is something abnormal even in normal bodily functions and constantly checks herself/himself.
- ***Taking Even Unrelated Symptoms Seriously:*** People with cyberchondria often take even normal and common symptoms as a sign of serious illness. For example, a simple headache or muscle pain may raise concerns that a person may have a serious brain tumor or rheumatic disease.
- ***Constant Worry and Anxiety:*** Cyberchondria are associated with constant worry and anxiety. These individuals may feel stressed and tense by constantly thinking about their diagnosis. This can negatively affect the overall quality of life and make social relationships difficult.
- ***Hypervigilance:***<sup>3</sup> Individuals experiencing cyberchondria are extremely sensitive to noticing the slightest changes or symptoms in their body. This can cause them to constantly check their bodies and may cause them to over-interpret any change.

In the light of all these, cyberchondria has become an increasing problem in the internet age and has serious effects on the health literacy of individuals. So much so that individuals constantly refer to the internet to search for health-related symptoms and diseases, and excessive anxiety about this issue increases cyberchondria. In fact, individuals turn to unnecessary medical tests because their hypochondriac thoughts are triggered. At this point, individuals with health literacy can distinguish health-related information by using the right resources, are not vulnerable to fake or misleading information, and can contribute to health decisions more consciously.

## ***2. Definition and Importance of E-Health Literacy***

With the rapid progress of the digital age, transformation in the field of health is becoming inevitable. Now, instant access to information, online

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3 **Hypervigilance** is an enhanced version of sensory sensitivity accompanied by an exaggerated intensity of behavior whose purpose is to detect threats. <https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hipervijilans>

access to medical resources and the possibility of using other health services over the internet are important factors that affect individuals' health-related decisions. At this point, digital health, which is one of the important concepts, is defined as improving the health of individuals and societies through information and communication technologies and benefiting from health services (Kostkova, 2015, p. 5). The concept of digital health, which emerged with the use of technology in the health sector, provides individuals with access to health services, information and resources in the digital environment and makes it possible to record health-related data electronically. Digital health represents a transformation where patients can access medical resources and experts online, health services are offered online and personal health data is kept electronically. Thus, the shareability of medical information is increased, and it supports the provision of health services more efficiently and effectively by providing easier access to health services. Digital health also includes the use of technologies such as personal health apps, health trackers, telehealth services and artificial intelligence. In this way, individuals can benefit from technology to monitor their own health, administrate their diseases and participate more actively in health services. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), digital health literacy refers to an individual's online search and evaluation of health-related information and the most appropriate use of digital health applications. Although access to health-related information has become easier with the widespread use of the Internet today, some problems arise regarding the accuracy, reliability and quality of this information. At this point, the importance of e-health literacy emerges. According to Norman et al. (2006, p.506), the concept of e-health is seen as the ability to search and find health-related information in electronic media, to evaluate the results, and as a result to solve the existing health problem. As a matter of fact, this concept is defined as a concept that includes the ability of individuals to access, understand, evaluate and use health-related information in digital environments. Therefore, it is possible to define e-health literacy as the ability of individuals to access health services using digital technologies, to research and evaluate health information, and to make health decisions based on this information.

Individuals who take a conscious approach to the quality, sources and up-to-dateness of health-related information can administrate their health concerns more effectively and prevent unnecessary health research. According to Can et al. (2014, p. 491), individuals with low e-health literacy have problems in accessing accurate information about the disease in online environments, so they believe in wrong information and turn to wrong

diagnosis and treatment. It is possible to make such an order regarding the importance of this concept, which is at such a sensitive point:

- ***Access to digital health services:*** E-health literacy facilitates individuals' access to digital health services. Thanks to digital tools such as online appointment systems, tele-medicine applications, health portals and mobile health applications, individuals can access health services more quickly and effectively.
- ***Access to information:*** The Internet has become a resource that provides easy access to health-related information. E-health literacy helps individuals research and evaluate accurate and reliable health information. Individuals can search for information about a particular health problem, learn about symptoms of diseases, or access healthy living tips.
- ***Understanding health information:*** E-health literacy also helps individuals to understand complex health information. Understanding the information provided by the use of technology tools is important for making accurate health decisions. E-health literacy provides individuals with the necessary skills to understand health-related terms, symbols and statistics.
- ***Effective use of digital health tools:*** E-health literacy enables individuals to use health applications, health tracking devices and other digital tools effectively. For example, individuals can track blood pressure or heart rate, analyze health data, and share this information with their doctor with a health app.
- ***Awareness of digital health risks:*** E-health literacy makes individuals aware of the potential risks of digital health services. Issues such as confidentiality of private data, security measures, detection of inaccurate or misleading information are considered within the scope of e-health literacy. Individuals have the information they need to safely use digital health applications and protect their personal data.

As a result, e-health literacy facilitates individuals' access to digital health services, provides access to accurate and reliable health information, helps them understand health information and enables them to use digital health tools effectively. Increasing e-health literacy enables individuals to act more confidently and consciously in the digital health environment.

### ***3. The Role of E-health Literacy in Combating Cyberchondria***

Today, the widespread use of digital technologies and the ease of access provided by the internet make it easier for individuals to obtain health-related information from online platforms. However, with this ease comes a phenomenon called cyberchondria, where people become over-indulged in online health research and a constant fear of illness. Cyberchondria causes people to have negative thoughts about various diseases and to worry excessively about their health as a result of searching for health symptoms on the internet. There are factors such as undisturbed, easy access to information, low cost and asking any information they can think of without being bored and shameless under the online health information seeking behavior of individuals. Such online searches can also be effective in the patient's informed decision-making process. However, as a disadvantage of this behavior, there are many factors such as patients are drawn towards inaccurate information among the intense information bombardment, tend to believe more in possible bad scenarios about their disease, damage the relationship between the patient and the physician, make his own diagnosis without consulting the physician, or try different treatment methods (McMullan, 2006, p.27). At this point, the concept of e-health literacy emerges as an important educational approach that aims to enable individuals to understand, evaluate and critically analyze online health content.

E-health literacy is becoming an important issue today, with the rapid development of digital technologies and the widespread use of the internet, as health information becomes easily accessible on online platforms. The situation, which is marked by an overindulgence in online health-related research called cyberchondria, and a constant worry of illness, increases when individuals are exposed to health-related information on the Internet. However, much of the information on the internet is often unverified or unreliable. In this situation, people may be inclined to make inaccurate or overdiagnosis based on the information they have obtained from their research on their symptoms. As a result, the person may worry unnecessarily and their fears about health may increase. Cyberchondric individuals tend to overly rely on information on the internet rather than accurately diagnosing any health problem and seeking treatment from healthcare professionals. This can affect a person's mental health and lead to unnecessary stress, anxiety and depression. Therefore, it is not always wrong to search for information online on health-related topics, but it is important to choose information from reliable and verified sources. Also, it is best for people who suspect they have serious health problems to consult a healthcare professional and seek professional help for diagnosis and treatment.

Discussing the reliability of health information published on the Internet reveals the importance of e-health literacy. Although individuals with low health literacy are more likely to believe the information published on the internet, it also causes them to adopt the wrong treatment method (Deniz, 2020, p.86). In particular, in the study conducted by Can et al., the fact that 48% of the websites containing health information do not include specialist opinion reveals the seriousness of the situation (2014, p. 491).

While e-health literacy aims to provide people with the skills to access, evaluate and use accurate health information, cyberchondria refers to excessive and exaggerated health concerns. Individuals can recognize healthy information sources, evaluate information reliability, and filter inaccurate or exaggerated information while conducting health-related research. In this way, e-Health literacy can reduce the risk of cyberchondria and encourage people to access information in a more discreet way. On the other hand, in cases where e-health literacy is lacking, individuals may be exposed to inaccurate or misleading information, which may increase the risk of cyberchondria. While all kinds of health information can be easily accessed on the Internet, people without e-health literacy may find it difficult to distinguish the accurate information and may be overly concerned about their health. In this case, cyberchondria may arise based on inaccurate or overloaded health information.

E-health literacy also encompasses the ability of health professionals to communicate accurate health-related information to the public and to communicate clearly. Health professionals play an important role in combating cyberchondria by empathizing, providing healthy information and keeping people away from exaggerated health concerns. E-health literacy can help healthcare professionals develop these skills and support effective communication in the combating cyberchondria.

In conclusion, e-health literacy could be an important tool for reducing the risk of cyberchondria. Access to accurate information, the ability to filter information and the ability to communicate accurately with health professionals can be effective in combating cyberchondria and encourage people to get information in a healthier way. Taking a conscious approach to this issue is an important step in making the right health decisions and activating personal health administration. Digital health literacy aims to improve the ability of individuals to critically evaluate this digital health information and reach accurate information.



## CONCLUSION

E-health literacy is of great importance for individuals to have access to accurate and reliable information on health in an era where access to health-related information is rapidly increasing through online platforms. The tendency of people to self-diagnose as a result of excessive research on the internet, called cyberchondria, can lead to inaccurate and unnecessary worries. By minimizing such negative effects, e-health literacy improves individuals' ability to evaluate their health information and select the right resources.

Health-related internet content may contain accurate and up-to-date information, as well as misleading, distorted or speculative information. E-health literacy trains individuals to deal with disinformation and teaches them to critically examine internet resources. In this way, it provides access to reliable information based on the opinions of health professionals while researching health-related problems. In addition, e-health literacy increases the ability to evaluate the reliability of health content on online platforms and to avoid misleading health-related content. E-health literacy not only helps individuals make informed decisions about their own health, but also contributes to a more effective communication with healthcare professionals. Individuals who have the accurate information about their health problems facilitate the accurate diagnosis and treatment processes by communicating with healthcare professionals more effectively.

In conclusion, e-health literacy is an important tool that improves individuals' ability to access and evaluate health-related information in the age of digital health. With its role in the combating cyberchondria, it contributes to individuals' access to accurate and reliable health information, avoiding unnecessary worries and making more informed health decisions. For this reason, the importance of e-health literacy is gaining more and more importance in the digital age, where health-related information traffic is increasing.



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## Empowering Citizens Through Media Literacy: Countering Disinformation on Social Media

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### **Introduction**

Media literacy plays a pivotal role in countering the spread of disinformation across social media platforms. In today's digital age, where information is readily accessible and easily shared, critical evaluation and analysis of media content are essential. By providing individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate the complex media landscape, media literacy empowers citizens to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information, thus combating the disinformation surge.

The surge of disinformation on social media has become a pressing concern in recent years. Inaccurate and misleading information can spread rapidly, leading to harmful consequences for individuals and society. The impact of disinformation can range from influencing public opinion and political outcomes to jeopardizing public health and safety. Hence, individuals must develop the skills to navigate this intricate media landscape and effectively discern between credible and unreliable information sources. Only those who have the ability to correctly read, select and distribute texts produced in the media can effectively counteract malicious communication.

Media literacy encompasses skills and competencies that enable individuals to engage with media messages critically. This includes not only the ability to access and consume media but also the ability to analyze, evaluate and create media content. Media literacy provides individuals the tools to navigate the

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overwhelming amount of information available and assess its credibility, accuracy, and potential bias. Social media platforms have allowed information to spread faster and more widely. However, the rapid spread of information also means that false and misleading content can easily be amplified, leading to a blurred line between fact and fiction.

Media literacy education plays a critical role in addressing the challenges posed by disinformation. By integrating media literacy into formal education curricula, individuals can develop critical thinking skills and become more adept at evaluating media content. Educational institutions can teach students to identify credible sources, fact-check information, recognize biases, and critically interpret media messages. Thus, individuals are better prepared to navigate the complex media landscape and make informed decisions based on reliable information.

Beyond formal education, media literacy can be promoted through various channels, such as community organizations, nonprofit initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. These efforts aim to raise awareness about the importance of media literacy and provide resources and tools for individuals to develop these skills. Media literacy workshops, online courses, and informational materials can empower individuals to actively participate in the media landscape actively, questioning and challenging disinformation.

In an era where false information can rapidly spread and influence public perception, media literacy equips individuals with the necessary skills to critically evaluate and navigate the media landscape. By empowering citizens through media literacy education and promoting its importance, we can foster a more informed and discerning society better prepared to identify, counteract, and mitigate the harmful effects of disinformation. Through collaborative efforts involving educational institutions, community organizations, and public awareness campaigns, we can endorse media literacy to combat disinformation in today's digital age.

### **1. The Need for Media Literacy in the Era of Disinformation**

Emerging from the development of the global network, the internet, and new communication technologies, digital media environments facilitate the rapid, instant, and interactive transfer of information (Demirel, 2018). In today's context, the emergence of the "New Times" necessitates new multiliteracy skills, transforming our definitions of literacy and literacy education. Alvermann and Hagood (2000) emphasize the need to critically examine the influence of media on students' in-school and out-of-school

literacies; a sentiment echoed in several studies from the mid to late 1990s (p. 193).

Global studies consistently attribute the generation and proliferation of mis- and disinformation campaigns to the poor media and information literacy skills of social media users (Chakrabarti et al., 2018; Dodda & Dubbudu, 2019; Machado et al., 2019; Nugent, 2018; Guess et al., 2020). Various methodologies exist for categorizing disinformation and misinformation (Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang, & Liu, 2017; Tandoc Jr, Lim, & Ling, 2018). One such approach is the Media Literacy for Citizenship framework introduced by Steinberg (2017), which has been adopted by a nonprofit organization to guide citizens in navigating this challenging media landscape and utilized by Malaysia's Cyber Defense Operations Centre (Centre, 2018).

The evolving concept of literacy and the redefinition of literacy education necessitate acknowledging the influence of media to adapt to these "New Times." The significant role of social media users' limited media and information literacy skills in creating and disseminating false and misleading information has been established. Therefore, developing new approaches to media literacy and expanding research in this field is imperative. Various methodologies for categorizing disinformation and misinformation exist, and their implementation can assist citizens in becoming more discerning and critically thinking individuals within this complex media environment.

The prevalence of disinformation on social media platforms has become a significant and pressing issue in today's digital age. False and misleading information can spread like wildfire, leading to detrimental consequences for individuals and society. It is crucial to shed light on disinformation's negative impact and provide substantial evidence to support the urgent need for media literacy to counter this alarming phenomenon.

In a study conducted by Dib et al. (2021), the researchers highlight the alarming spread of mis/disinformation surrounding the benefits and risks of vaccines, which has fueled vaccine hesitancy. They emphasize the critical importance of addressing the influence of online mis/disinformation on vaccine uptake. The authors argue that enhancing eHealth literacy, including media literacy, is indispensable for effectively navigating the vast expanse of the web and processing health information encountered through social media platforms. By increasing eHealth literacy skills, particularly media literacy, individuals can acquire the necessary tools to recognize and mitigate the detrimental effects of erroneous information on their vaccination decision-making process.

Online disinformation poses a significant challenge for contemporary democracies, characterized by misleading content created for profit, political objectives, or malicious deception. Humprecht, Esser, & Aelst (2020) argue that certain countries exhibit greater resilience to online disinformation than others. They employ a comparative cross-national approach to investigate the factors influencing this resilience. First, they develop a theoretical framework that conceptualizes country conditions as theoretical dimensions. Next, they operationalize these dimensions into quantifiable indicators to enable cross-country comparisons. Their study empirically examines eighteen Western democracies and employs cluster analysis, revealing three distinct country groups: high resilience (including Northern European systems) and low resilience (comprising polarized Southern European countries and the United States). The authors conclude by discussing the framework's heuristic value for comparative political communication research in the era of information pollution.

Understanding the detrimental impact of disinformation and recognizing the importance of media literacy is crucial for combating this phenomenon. By enhancing eHealth literacy skills, particularly media literacy, individuals can confidently navigate the web and effectively identify and mitigate the harmful effects of false information. Additionally, a comparative cross-national approach can aid in understanding the factors that contribute to resilience in the face of online disinformation. We must prioritize media literacy initiatives and foster a society that is well-equipped to critically evaluate information in the digital era.

In another study by Richter (2019), the focus is on exploring the mechanisms of accountability and media literacy as effective counteractions to disinformation, specifically in Europe. The study underscores the significance of media literacy in empowering individuals to evaluate and analyze media content critically. By developing robust media literacy skills, individuals are more likely to become resilient to disinformation and better equipped to discern reliable sources of information amidst the noise and chaos of the digital age.

Moreover, Shengelia (2022) delves into the effects of online disinformation within a digital society, particularly in a fragile democracy. The research highlights the challenges posed by the spread of online disinformation and emphasizes the crucial role of media literacy in combating its detrimental effects. It stresses the importance of educating individuals about media literacy and actively engaging in activities that promote discussions about political issues, thus fostering a more informed and discerning citizenry.

These studies and references emphasize the critical need for combatting disinformation on social media platforms due to its profound negative impact. Media literacy stands as a powerful tool to navigate this landscape. By honing media literacy skills, individuals can resist online misinformation and make informed decisions, especially on crucial matters like vaccination.

The studies discussed emphasize media literacy's pivotal role in disinformation. We can empower individuals to discern truth in the vast digital landscape by promoting critical evaluation and media literacy initiatives. Investing in media literacy education is essential for a resilient and informed society.

## **2. The Role of Media Literacy in Empowering Citizens**

Media literacy is an indispensable skill in today's digital age, providing individuals with the tools to navigate the vast information landscape and make informed decisions. This section defines media literacy, emphasizing its role in combating disinformation on social media. Moreover, it will explore how media literacy empowers citizens to recognize and effectively combat disinformation, drawing support from various scholarly references.

Defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media content (Koltay, 2011), media literacy in the digital era extends to critical evaluation of diverse sources, empowering individuals to discern reliability, identify biases, and grasp media's societal impacts.

The empowering role of media literacy in enabling citizens to recognize and counter disinformation on social media cannot be overstated. By honing their media literacy skills, individuals become discerning consumers of information, less susceptible to manipulation, and more capable of critically evaluating the credibility and accuracy of sources. They acquire the ability to identify misleading or false information.

Dadaczynski et al. (2021) underline the significance of digital health literacy, encompassing media literacy, in navigating web-based COVID-19-related information and service environments. The study emphasizes the need for individuals to develop digital health literacy skills to effectively evaluate and comprehend health-related information encountered through social media platforms. This further underscores the crucial role of media literacy in enabling individuals to navigate the complex and often deceptive world of online information.

Another study focuses on a Ukrainian news media and information literacy program. This program aimed to empower citizens to engage critically with

media messages (Murrock et al., 2018). The study's findings demonstrated that media literacy interventions can significantly enhance individuals' ability to analyze and evaluate news content, resulting in improved media literacy skills and critical thinking abilities. It highlights the transformative potential of media literacy initiatives in equipping individuals with the skills required to navigate the intricate web of media messages.

Media literacy equips them with the ability to critically evaluate information, discern reliable sources, and counter the spread of disinformation on social media platforms. The significance of media literacy is evident in its capacity to empower citizens, enhance critical thinking abilities, and foster a more informed and discerning society. By investing in media literacy education and promoting its practice, individuals can actively participate in the digital landscape, effectively countering disinformation and making well-informed decisions based on reliable information.

In another study conducted by Ločmele (2022), the emphasis is on the importance of media literacy in the education of young people. The study suggests that media literacy education equips individuals with the necessary skills to critically evaluate media content, identify biases, and engage in informed decision-making. By fostering media literacy skills, individuals are empowered to navigate the complex media landscape, discern reliable information, and make informed choices based on evidence and critical analysis.

Another research project centers on the role of media propaganda education in preventing political extremism (Spiliotopoulou, 2019). The study underscores the importance of media literacy in empowering individuals to critically analyze and evaluate media messages. By honing media literacy skills, individuals become less susceptible to manipulation and can actively resist the influence of propaganda. It enables them to engage in informed political discourse, critically evaluate sources of information, and make informed decisions uninfluenced by extremist ideologies. Through media literacy skills, individuals can contribute to a more engaged and informed society where diverse voices are represented and critical thinking is encouraged. Media literacy empowers individuals to become active producers and consumers of media, thereby fostering a more democratic and inclusive media landscape.

Collectively, these references underscore media literacy's pivotal role. By bolstering these skills, we not only combat disinformation but also champion a more informed, engaged society where citizens actively participate in democratic processes.



### **3. Strategies for Promoting Media Literacy**

Promoting media literacy is crucial for equipping individuals to navigate the complex media landscape and critically evaluate knowledge. Various strategies, including education and training programs, can be employed to foster media literacy among individuals. These programs provide structured opportunities for individuals to develop their media literacy skills, enabling them to become discerning consumers and active participants in the media ecosystem. Integrating media literacy education into school curricula and offering specialized training for educators can provide students with comprehensive guidance on navigating the digital realm and critically assessing media content. Furthermore, community-based initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and partnerships with media organizations can promote media literacy and create a culture that values critical thinking and analytical skills (Koltay, 2011).

In a study conducted in 2018, researchers focused on a Ukrainian news media and information literacy program designed to empower citizens to engage critically with media messages (Murrock et al.). The study's findings demonstrated the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in enhancing individuals' ability to analyze and evaluate news content, ultimately leading to improved media literacy skills and critical thinking abilities (Sedgwick et al., 2019). This research supports the notion that targeted media literacy initiatives can significantly equip individuals with the skills to navigate the complex media landscape and discern reliable information from disinformation.

Implementing comprehensive media literacy strategies, encompassing educational programs, training initiatives, and community engagement, can help individuals develop the necessary skills to evaluate media content critically and make well-informed decisions. Promoting media literacy empowers individuals to navigate the ever-evolving media landscape effectively, recognize biases, and engage in informed discourse. It is vital for stakeholders, including educational institutions, policymakers, and media organizations, to collaborate in promoting media literacy as a fundamental component of a digitally literate society.

The critical importance of media literacy education underscores its role in equipping individuals, especially young people, with the necessary skills to evaluate media content critically. The study highlights the need for educational programs to develop media literacy skills, enabling individuals to effectively navigate the media landscape (Mackey & Jacobson, 2011). By incorporating media literacy education into school curricula and providing



targeted training for educators, young people can develop the necessary critical thinking abilities to navigate the vast array of media messages they encounter.

Similarly, Spiliotopoulou (2019) delves into the role of media propaganda education in preventing political extremism. The study underscores the significance of media literacy in empowering individuals to critically analyze and evaluate media messages, enabling them to resist manipulation and engage in informed political discourse (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011). By honing their media literacy skills, individuals become more adept at identifying propaganda techniques, recognizing biased information, making well-informed decisions, and actively participating in democratic processes.

In another study by Dewanti (2022), the focus is on exploring the use of black campaign social media as a communication strategy by political actors during elections in Indonesia. The study highlights the necessity for media literacy interventions to enhance individuals' ability to critically evaluate and discern the credibility of information encountered on social media platforms (Soroya et al., 2021). This research emphasizes the need to equip individuals with the skills to critically assess information on social media, as these platforms play a significant role in shaping public opinion and can be breeding grounds for disinformation.

These references provide compelling evidence of the effectiveness of various strategies for promoting media literacy. Education and training programs, which focus on developing critical thinking skills and providing individuals with the tools to evaluate and analyze media content, can enhance media literacy skills and empower individuals to navigate the media landscape effectively. By implementing media literacy programs, individuals can develop the skills to evaluate information critically. These programs foster media literacy and contribute to creating a more engaged and informed society, better equipped to counter disinformation and navigate the complexities of the digital age.

In conclusion, media literacy education is paramount. Targeted interventions empower individuals, especially the youth, to critically assess media, resist manipulative content, and participate in democratic processes. In an age inundated with information, equipping citizens with media literacy skills is vital for ensuring a discerning populace and preserving the integrity of our information ecosystem.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the importance of media literacy in tackling the pervasive problem of disinformation on social media. The dissemination of false and misleading information on these platforms poses significant challenges that can harm individuals and society. However, by fostering media literacy, individuals can develop the essential skills to critically evaluate and analyze media content, enabling them to identify and combat disinformation effectively.

We mainly discussed several vital points, including the urgent need for media literacy in the disinformation era, media literacy's role in empowering citizens, and strategies for promoting media literacy. The references provided have offered compelling evidence of the effectiveness of media literacy interventions, such as education and training programs, in enhancing critical thinking skills and empowering individuals to navigate the intricate media landscape.

Media literacy plays a pivotal role in countering disinformation on social media by equipping individuals with the ability to discern reliable sources of information, identify biases, and make informed decisions. By developing media literacy skills, individuals become more resilient to manipulation and better equipped to navigate the complexities of the digital age. Therefore, it is essential to continue research and action in media literacy. Future studies should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of various media literacy interventions and identifying best practices for promoting media literacy among diverse populations. Collaboration between educational institutions, media organizations, and policymakers is paramount in implementing comprehensive media literacy programs catering to diverse individuals.

In conclusion, media literacy is a powerful tool in countering disinformation on social media. By empowering individuals with the skills to evaluate media content critically, we can foster a more informed and discerning society better equipped to identify and counteract the spread of disinformation. Through concerted efforts in promoting media literacy, we can mitigate the negative impacts of disinformation and cultivate a more resilient and well-informed digital landscape.

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## Social Responsibility Campaigns on New Media: A Semiotic Analysis on Elidor’s Advertising Film and Nft Mural “Dedim Olabilir”

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### Introduction

The production of social responsibility campaigns on a global scale indicates a long-standing practice. In the capitalist business environment based on competition, social responsibility campaigns should not be considered as an extension of charity work which is as old as human history. Social responsibility campaigns serve the corporate purpose of ‘value creation’ in the free competition environment where profit is prioritized. In this regard, the benefit of all the three parties involved in the act of marketing is aimed to be provided. While ‘the company’ which conducts or supports the campaign strengthens its image, ‘the consumer’ gets psychological satisfaction upon supporting the campaign by consuming the company’s product, and ‘the voluntary organization’ which is the partner of the campaign raises fund both for the wealth of the society and for achieving its goals (Er Özden, 2020: 274). However, it should be remembered that commercial companies prioritize their marketing goals and targets in these practices. With a social responsibility campaign, a company gains benefit in terms of supporting brand positioning, creating brand preference, creating traffic and increasing sales (Kotler & Lee, 2006: 118). As indicated by Silsüpür (2020: 19), in order to get support, businesses and brands raise awareness in society by their effective communication with society through the social responsibility activities they conduct to raise social awareness towards the

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values that society gives importance to and is sensitive about. Furthermore, simultaneously, an effective activity is also carried out concerning matters such as building brand trust in society and making positive contribution to the brand image, reputation, and value. In this sense, a positive relationship with the consumer is established by way of the brand culture created through social responsibility campaigns. In addition, a sense of belonging is tried to be created by raising sympathy for the brand and it is aimed to create brand loyalty. Thus, the brand stands out from its competitors through the psychological satisfaction created by the consumer's thought of contributing to social benefit by using the brand.

Social responsibility campaigns, which are important in terms of enhancing brand image and brand loyalty, can reach to larger masses with the new media increasing in parallel with technological developments. In this new communication world where digitalization and the new media it brings along create various opportunities, it appears that the codes of traditional media have changed. Consumer individuals who are the target audience have started to be involved in a more active communication process through social media platforms; and hence, a structure in which interaction increases is constructed. In this structure provided by new media, overcoming time and cost limitations, businesses are able to share all the content regarding their campaigns with masses and obtain data for the evaluation of the success of the campaign more easily by receiving instant feedback.

In the literature review, the significance of social responsibility campaigns and the impact of new media on this process have been addressed first. In the research, Elidor's social responsibility campaign titled 'Dedim Olabilir' [I said why not] which focuses on gender stereotypes has been scrutinised. The advertising film, released by Elidor within the scope of the campaign, featuring Ebrar Karakurt as the role model and the 'NFT Mural' created by KienArt as a consequence of social media interaction have been examined through semiotic analysis.

## **1. Social Responsibility Campaigns**

Showing existence in social life brings along the impact of changes and developments occurring in time. As in every field, these changes are felt in economic and cultural fields as well. The changes in cultural field are effective on changing organizations', corporations' and people's points of view on the phenomena in social life. While the reflection of this situation is evident in every field, the situation can also have a determining role on the economic activities of businesses. At this point, the issues in social life that should especially be taken into consideration socially become apparent.



In order to show they care about the issues society is sensitive about, businesses include social responsibility campaigns in their activities. They carry out social responsibility activities to draw attention to social phenomena and simultaneously, raise awareness towards their brand. As stated by Ferrell et al. (2022: 18), social responsibility refers to the commitment to minimize the negative impact of an establishment on society while maximizing its positive impact on society. Particularly, as new media became popular and effective, this process has been changed and accelerated. Through the social responsibility campaigns they carry out, businesses not only fulfil their responsibility to society, but also contribute to their brand image.

Constituting a large and effective part of social marketing which is defined as major activities that a corporation undertakes to support social causes and to complete corporate social responsibility commitments, social responsibility campaigns also require a corporate planning as they touch the issues that society is sensitive about (Öztürk, 2009: 220). Planning and integrating programmes that will affect the target audience and designing their control is what is meant with social responsibility campaigns included in social marketing activities (Gürgen, 1988; Rundle-Thiele et al., 2013).

With these activities in which profit is not prioritized, it is aimed to change the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour of the individuals involved in social life concerning the social problem that is intended to be highlighted towards finding a solution to the problem (Yılmaz Sert, 2012: 34). In this way, the individuals are encouraged to think about the problem that the campaign is on and the solutions generated within the campaign; and sometimes they are even expected to be a part of the solution by buying the product of the brand conducting the campaign.

A company conducting or supporting a social responsibility campaign primarily increases its brand and market value. Thus, it gains an advantage when entering new markets, starts to be valued by society and can establish brand loyalty towards its products (Argüden, 2002: 12; Öztürk, 2017: 13). As indicated by Tuna and Akbaş Tuna (2007: 119), the corporate image is shaped as a result of the activities of the corporations. The corporate image perceived by the target audience determines the fate of the corporations that aim to stand out in global competition. In this sense, a positive image carries the nature of being a necessity for the success of the corporation.

## **2. The Impact of New Media on Social Responsibility Campaigns**

Everything in life evolves, progresses over time, and transforms within a motion. All the dynamics within the social structure undergo continuous



change in the process, both internally and in their communications with each other. Within such an interaction, the economic and social developments have transformed businesses from production-oriented into customer-oriented. The rapid advancements in communication technologies in recent years have led to a new dimension in customer-orientedness. In this context, a digital communication process has emerged which focuses on interaction and places the customer in the centre where the customer has a say.

The developments in the digitalization process which has undergone a rapid transformation due to the effect of technology have significantly impacted every field including the media sector. At this point, the concept of new media, which has reached a considerable power against traditional media, has emerged. Unlike traditional media environments, which include tools such as radio, television, and newspaper, new media encompasses various media, and is frequently preferred by businesses due to the opportunities it offers such as reaching countless audiences without time limitations and low costs. Through new media, especially social media, it becomes possible to spread and announce social responsibility campaigns created on socially significant issues to large audiences. Furthermore, it serves an important function in allowing large audiences to share their ideas and drawing attention to the issue.

Advancements in new media technologies have led to an increase in the number and diversity of media through which target audiences can be reached. Consequently, there has been an expansion in the areas where campaigns are announced and advertisements are broadcasted. Hence, target audience analyses aiming to reveal which platforms are used by individuals having which demographic characteristics have become highly important. Now, besides having a detailed knowledge about usage habits related to traditional media, there is a necessity to have a detailed knowledge of the usage habits concerning the media of new media as well.

The hierarchical pressure inherent in the vertical organization of traditional media has been replaced by a horizontal convergence with new media. In other words, users, regardless of their identities and demographic characteristics, can engage in free discussions and express their opinions openly without revealing their identities, all under equal conditions (Bulunmaz, 2014: 27). Now, through their comments or written blogs, they have become active subjects of communication as content creators. The content such as photos, videos, and comments developed and contributed by individuals who are recipients and simultaneously function as sources as they use new media to create or convey content, as emphasized by Binark (2013: 56), is referred

to as “user generated content” or “user created content”. The production of user generated content transforms the consumer into “a prosumer”. Thus, the individual occupies a transitional position as an active participant in new media, playing both the role of a producer and a consumer.

Interaction and interactivity are among the most significant advantages offered by new media. Therefore, businesses that value their consumers’ opinions especially use social media, where individuals have a say and their comments are present, to create and reinforce a positive image, as well as to build brand loyalty. Curley and Noormohamed (2014: 61) note that “social media marketing is becoming a richer vehicle to allow corporations to interact with various customers, who increasingly view themselves as ‘active co-creators’ of corporate programs, rather than as mere “passive recipients” of corporate messaging”. In parallel with their view, Gomez and Chalmeta (2013: 281) highlight that “using social media for communication presents great benefits for companies such as inexpensive collaboration, real-time communication, public relations, and online archiving”.

Another reason for the active use of social media in corporate social responsibility campaigns is its ability to facilitate the evaluation of campaign success. Social media enables the assessment of the reach of advertisements and messages to the target audience through the number of clicks and allows for the evaluation of their impact on the target audience through comments made.

These new digital communication processes, where customer expectations are placed at the centre and feedback is obtained rapidly and directly through customer comments and messages, highlight the concept of ‘speed’ and have also reduced costs in reaching the target audience. Furthermore, with the offered online chat alternatives, immediate responses to the consumer’s questions are provided, allowing for proactive communication and resolution of potential problems from the outset. Due to all these advantages, social media is considered as the most beneficial medium for creating marketing strategies (Pavlíček & Doucek, 2015: 326). Therefore, businesses aware of this fact leverage social media in their social responsibility activities. On one hand, they strengthen consumer trust and loyalty, encouraging their followers to take action and participate in the campaign. On the other hand, they make significant positive contributions to their brand image (Curley & Noormohamed, 2014: 61). In this way, businesses that increase their target audience’s interest in their brand also pave the way for strengthening corporate loyalty through building a tighter corporate bond with them (Batu & Yanık, 2020: 103). Therefore, businesses make their campaigns

more easily embraced by establishing effective communication through different media of new media with users who feel that their ideas are valued and contribute to the increase in awareness and support for their campaigns through the emotional connection they create with users. Businesses that harness the power of new media in creating a positive brand image gain an advantage over their competitors and stand out among them.

### **3. Methodology**

The aim of this study is to analyse the underlying meanings of the visual messages in the work of corporations on gender equality within the framework of criticism of patriarchal order. Another purpose of the study is to put forth the socio-cultural phenomena that influence corporate social responsibility activities through social media. The study focuses on campaigns that combine advertising and corporate social responsibility phenomena in the context of gender and use social media in an integrated manner throughout the communication process. Within this scope, the universe of the study consists of campaigns that have participated in Felis, Kristal Elma and MIXX awards and have received awards in the categories of 'women and gender equality' and 'gender equality in advertising'. The sample of the research consists of the campaign 'Dedim Olabilir' [I said why not] which has received major awards in the mentioned categories. Conducted by Elidor as part of their project 'Kendi Yolumuzda' [On Our Own Way] in 2021, the campaign has been fronted by Ebrar Karakurt. Accordingly, the complementary elements of the campaign which include the advertising film and the NFT mural created through collaboration with KienArt have been analysed in the research. Within this framework, semiotic analysis, which is among qualitative analysis methods, has been used in order to reveal the ways of raising awareness by drawing attention to gender roles from a feminist perspective within the context of criticism of patriarchal order through Elidor's corporate social responsibility campaign which has been conducted simultaneously on social media.

Considering all phenomena involving communication efforts related to individuals, society, and the world as subjects of analysis, semiotics enables the interpretation of images and contents (Rifat, 2009: 20). While exploring the meaning universe, semiotics is concerned with the meanings and secondary constructions that are expressed which underlie every phenomenon that is created in the social and cultural structure and considered a sign (Guiraud, 1994: 58). Semiotics, also described as the science of signs and meanings, is a discipline that focuses on sign systems such as language, code, image and signal. Through semiotics, the forms in which messages are expressed,

the qualities of the meanings behind the signs, and the second meanings of the messages are analysed (Fiske, 2003: 62). Saussure (1998: 70) states that semiotics is used to investigate the functioning of sign systems shaping life within society along with the meanings lying behind them. On the other hand, Barthes (1979: 26) points out that semiotics, which he defines as the method of interpreting signs constituting one of the building blocks of everyday life, can analyse all signs with a communicative purpose through a set of rules.

Barthes, one of the prominent representatives of modern semiotics, relies on the concepts of denotation and connotation in the process of interpreting signs. As indicated by Barthes (1993: 32), who developed a structural analysis method, the sign phenomenon constitutes the basis of semiotic analysis breaking into two elements as denotation and connotation. Denotation, one of the two fundamental elements referred to in semiotic analysis, represents the concrete dimension of signs and at the same time, emphasizes the first and direct meaning the sign possesses. On the contrary, connotation represents the abstract dimension of the sign and defines the hidden meanings in the background.

In this study, the advertising film of Elidor's campaign 'Dedim Olabilir', which was fronted by Ebrar Karakurt as part of their project 'Kendi Yolumuzda' in 2021, and the 'NFT Mural created in collaboration with Kien Art have been analysed through semiotic analysis developed by Roland Barthes. Accordingly, the picture of the NFT mural and frames from the advertising film have been examined in detail through the elements of sign, signifier, signified, denotation and connotation and the meaning universe has been analysed.

#### 4. About Elidor – “Dedim Olabilir” Social Responsibility Campaign

Tag	<p>Advertiser: Unilever - Elidor          Advertising Agency: Medina Turgul DDB          Director: Sedat DüNDAR &amp; Umut Dizdar          Production Company: Yapar İstanbul          Postproduction: İmaj          Music: FFW Creative Audio          PR Agency: Sobraz          Media Agency: Mindshare          Celebrity Management Agency: Portal Rights Management</p>
Awards	<p>The 16<sup>th</sup> Felis Awards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Responsibility and Sustainability (Women and Gender Equality): Big Award &amp; 1 Felis</li> <li>• Integrated Campaigns (Personal Care): 1 Felis</li> <li>• Film (Personal Care): 1 Felis</li> <li>• Media (Personal Care): 1 Felis &amp; 2 Success</li> <li>• PR (Social Media and Digital Community Management): 1 Felis</li> <li>• Social Media (Works of Interaction): 1 Felis &amp; 1 Success</li> </ul> <p>The 33<sup>rd</sup> Kristal Elma Awards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production / Direction (Best Celebrity Management): Crystal</li> <li>• Film (Cosmetics, Personal Care, Beauty): Crystal</li> <li>• Integrated Campaigns (Image and Social Responsibility): Silver</li> <li>• Integrated Campaign (Best Integrated Media Use): Crystal</li> <li>• Product and Service (Rapid Consumption): Crystal</li> <li>• Creative Use of Data (Social Data and Insight): Silver</li> <li>• Gender Equality in Advertising: Crystal</li> <li>• Film Big Award: Kristal Elma Big Award</li> <li>• Media Big Award: Kristal Elma Big Award</li> </ul> <p>The 12<sup>th</sup> MIXX Awards Turkey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best of the Year Award</li> <li>• Gender Equality: Gold</li> <li>• Social Media: Bronze</li> </ul>
Target Audience	<p>Since the project aims to create social visibility and raise awareness on LGBT issues, the target audience encompasses the entire population of Turkey including young girls aged 15-24 who constitute Elidor's main target audience.</p>
Marketing and Advertising Goal	<p>Providing a significant increase in Brand Power metrics as a result of the campaign compared to the same period in the previous year of the campaign. At the same time, obtaining a significant media value by creating recognition and awareness of the brand.</p>
Strategy	<p>Changing the perspective towards women within the patriarchal order by breaking free from gender stereotypes.</p>

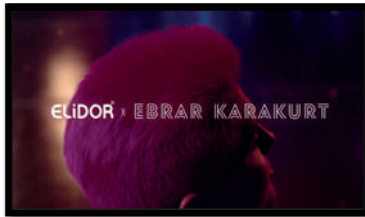
A member of the Turkey women's national volleyball team, Ebrar Karakurt, who has been the centre of interest worldwide for some time and a source of inspiration for young girls with her successful performance in all the matches she played with her team and the national team, has been positioned as the main element in the advertisement to strengthen the message to be conveyed through the project. By casting Ebrar Karakurt – who has been subjected to harsh criticism and pressure in Turkey due to her colourful personality, sexual orientation, and the image she portrays in the public eye – in the 'Dedim Olabilir' advertisement, the purpose has been to raise awareness. Accordingly, aiming to highlight gender equality and encourage those who want to fulfil their dreams, Elidor established a media and communication partnership with Ebrar Karakurt. Another goal of this project has been to draw attention to social issues by working with a short-haired model, which is quite unusual in advertisements and other communicational work concerning shampoos, personal care, and beauty.

In order to support Ebrar Karakurt who has become the advertising face of the brand, the advertiser and the corporation undertaking the project shared various posts on social media throughout the championship. Particularly, the promotional videos highlighting the phrase 'Dedim Olabilir' which was identified with Ebrar Karakurt made tremendous impact on social media. At the same time, the advertising film prepared within the scope of the project was frequently broadcasted on both traditional and new media platforms. The outdoor advertising and promotion displays as part of the campaign delivered to the target audience the vision to inspire women who want to pursue their dreams and to boost their self-confidence by conveying Ebrar Karakurt's message to many cities of the country.

Emphasized throughout the project, the phrase 'dedim olabilir' [I said why not] turned into an everyday phrase used by the target audience. They shared their own 'dedim olabilir' stories through their social media accounts with the campaign's hashtag #DedimOlabilir. Among thousands of different posts shared by the target audience, a young woman's 'dedim olabilir' story in which she tells an incomplete dream of hers was materialized first as a large mural and then as an NFT. In this regard, the artwork "pembe saçlı kızlar" [pink-haired girls] which Dr. Elanur Yılmaz had left unfinished approximately 25 years ago was adapted as a mural at Kadıköy Square through mural artist KienArt's interpretation. Designing at the same time a digital version of the mural with KienArt, Elidor sold the NFT through an auction and supported young women by donating the proceeds from the sale to the youth scholarship fund of Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfı [The Community Volunteers Foundation]. 'Dedim Olabilir NFT Mural' won a

success award in the Large Scale Outdoor Works category at the 17<sup>th</sup> Felis Awards organized in 2022. Moreover, the same work won the silver award in the Integrated Use of Media category and the bronze award in Outdoor& Indoor Use category at the 34<sup>th</sup> Kristal Elma Awards.

### 5. A Semiotic Analysis of the Advertising Film Elidor – “Dedim Olabilir”



**Signifier:** Hair colour / hair style

**Signified (Denotation):** Pink / short

**Signified (Connotation):** Pink is used as a colour traditionally associated with the feminine image. On the contrary, it is considered ‘marginal’ and odd by the society when an adult woman has short or pink hair. Focusing on short pink hair in the advertisement is for the purpose of challenging the limitations of the patriarchal society and what traditional values expect of women. Pink hair, which at the same time serves as a criticism of the authoritarian order, implies that women’s dreams of independence and freedom can turn into reality. In order to further strengthen the social message intended to be conveyed through the advertising film and the campaign, the opening frame of the commercial directly focuses on the short pink hair belonging to Ebrar Karakurt, a volleyball player in the national team and the advertising face and the role model of the campaign. Hence, the message that the advertisement intends to underline is revealed with the very first frame.

**Signifier:** Facial expression

**Signified (Denotation):** A sharp and determined gaze looking forward

**Signified (Connotation):** The athlete’s facial expression as looking forward with a sharp and clear gaze aims to convey the athlete’s self-confidence and self-belief. Having an expression indicating that she is aware of her value in this frame, Ebrar Karakurt represents freedom. In this context, especially by instilling confidence in the target audience, it is tried to make them express their true selves comfortably.



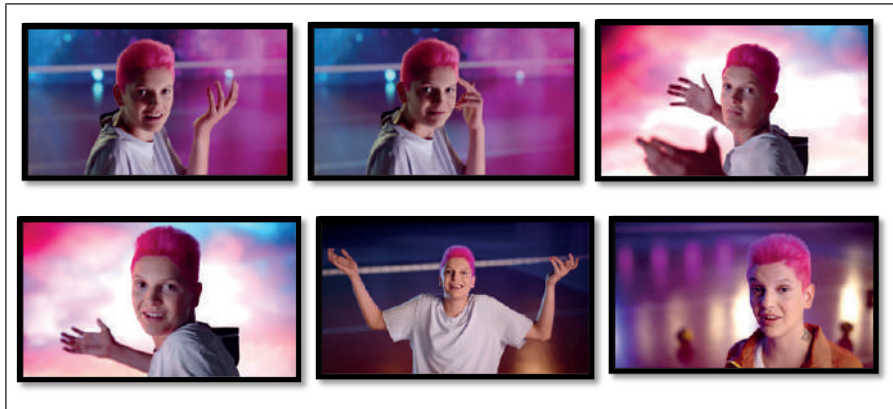
**Signifier:** Text

**Signified (Denotation):** Elidor x Ebrar Karakurt

**Signified (Connotation):** Placing Ebrar Karakurt – who, by some segments of society, is considered ‘indecent’ due to her colourful personality, marginal statements, sexual orientation and the image she portrays to the public and viewed negatively in terms of gender stereotypes formed within the patriarchal order – directly together with the brand name Elidor in the opening frame enables the transfer of the player’s individual characteristics to the brand. In this way, all the image and reputation that Ebrar Karakurt possesses individually are intended to be transferred to the brand. Particularly, emphasizing the products in pink packaging in the following scenes of the advertising film serves to strengthen the message intended to be conveyed and enables the product/brand features to be identified with Ebrar Karakurt.

**Analysis:** In the first frame of the advertising film, which starts with focusing on Ebrar Karakurt’s short pink hair accompanied with her voice asking the question “how could there be a girl with short hair in an Elidor advertisement?”, the name of the brand and the athlete’s name are displayed side by side. In this way, the athlete’s personality, which is considered ‘marginal’, is intended to be directly transferred to the brand. With the image of a volleyball player with short pink hair, the message that the brand wants to convey to the target audience concerning breaking away from gender stereotypes is strengthened. In this context, Elidor wants to position its brand as a brand that stands up for the idea that every individual should be what they feel like. With this frame, the advertisement also challenges the stereotypes used in beauty, personal care, or shampoo advertisements, whom can be often met in daily life. The direct emphasis on the short pink hair style in the first frame represents a courageous defiance against traditional beauty standards. In this frame, where the brand identity is aimed to be blended and identified with the identity of the national volleyball player and the image of the athlete is intended to be transferred to the brand/product, social stereotypes are shattered as well. Accordingly, the thought of woman as long-haired, submissive, and staying quietly in the background, which is an expectation brought along by patriarchal understanding, is profoundly challenged.





**Signifier:** Gesture

**Signified (Denotation):** Conveying self-confidence through the movements of hands and arms

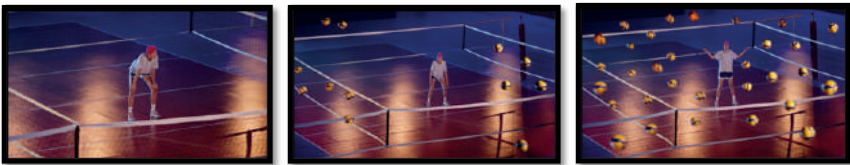
**Signified (Connotation):** Shattering social stereotypes and having a marginal image, Ebrar Karakurt reflects her belief that nothing is impossible or unsolvable by expressing through her gestures that every hard condition is actually a part of life. The gestures used convey the message that despite the pressure society imposes on the individual in various ways, being marginal is always an option and that one should be self-confident while pursuing this path. Through her gestures, Ebrar Karakurt confidently indicates that it is not obligatory to conform to patriarchal order or social restrictions and norms, and though difficult, there is a path to woman's freedom.

**Signifier:** Facial expression

**Signified (Denotation):** Conveying the feeling of comfort and happiness stemming from self-assuredness

**Signified (Connotation):** Through the facial expressions, it is intended to express that overcoming difficulties is also a part of life. In addition, Ebrar Karakurt's close-up facial expressions in the advertising film indicate a confident attitude towards achieving her goals. In the frames of close-up facial expressions, Ebrar Karakurt says the slogan 'dedim olabilir' [I said why not]. In this regard, it is highlighted through the facial expression and the simultaneously uttered words that whatever it takes, struggling against difficulties and shattering the expectations concerning gender stereotypes is possible.

**Analysis:** All the frames with close-ups to the protagonist Ebrar Karakurt's face reflect the expressions of facing the difficulties brought by life with confidence and comfort. In fact, Ebrar Karakurt's gestures and facial expressions along with the phrase she says, 'dedim olabilir', reveal the necessity to take a firm stand against all the difficulties society will bring about. In these frames, Ebrar Karakurt gives sharp and self-confident answers both by saying "dedim olabilir" and through her gestures and facial expressions when the voiceover says, "the road ahead is long, there'll be challenges and you'll be overwhelmed" and "do not fly too high, what kind of dream is this?". Thus, it is conveyed to the target audience that all obstacles encountered in social context throughout life can be overcome. Through the gestures and facial expressions of the national volleyball player a strong blow is struck against traditional woman stereotype. Besides, Ebrar Karakurt's self-confidence, colourful personality, and relaxed image, which she reflects in her daily life and are particularly emphasized in the advertising film, are transferred to the brand through the advertisement.



**Signifier:** Body language

**Signified (Denotation):** Portraying Ebrar Karakurt on the volleyball court waiting, ready for anything that will come from the rival

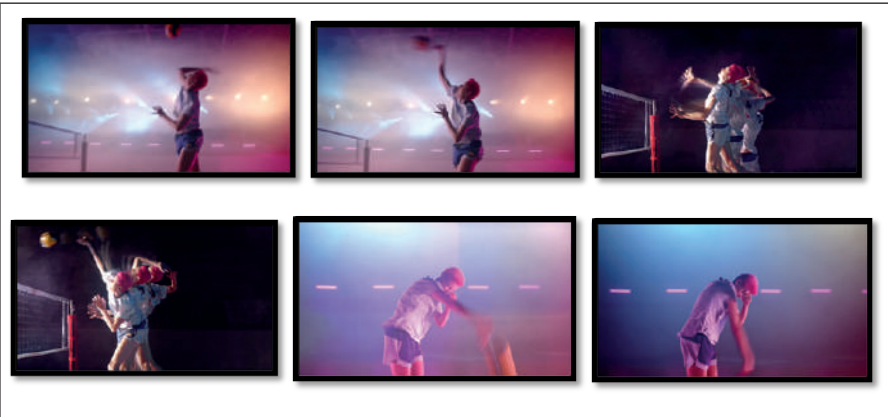
**Signified (Connotation):** The state of being attentive and ready, which is highlighted through the body language of the national volleyball player, is emphasized as an indicator of professionalism. The athlete, displaying a posture as ready and alert at all times, reflects through the advertisement frames that she is prepared for any situation that may arise.

**Signifier:** Ball

**Signified (Denotation):** Throwing many balls towards the net and Ebrar Karakurt

**Signified (Connotation):** Throwing many balls beyond the expectation towards the athlete represents the pressure of society and the obstacles in the way to success.

**Analysis:** With her self-confidence stemming from being prepared, Ebrar Karakurt is not surprised when many balls are thrown at her, even though it should be only one ball according to the rules of the game. As a reaction to the balls suddenly thrown at her, the national volleyball player responds again with her body language and reflects her state of mind in the face of the situation by spreading out her arms. The intensity of patriarchal society's expectations from women and of the criticism against marginality is conveyed to the target audience through the balls. In this sense, the balls serve as a means of pressure against Ebrar Karakurt and the values she represents.



**Signifier:** Body language

**Signified (Denotation):** The national volleyball player, Ebrar Karakurt rising with all her strength, delivering her powerful spikes and successfully sending the ball to the opponent's side of the court

**Signified (Connotation):** In the advertising film, the frames featuring Ebrar Karakurt playing volleyball challenge the images of women portrayed in the patriarchal social order as weak, delicate, timid, and confined to the role of a housewife. The national volleyball player's successful serve along with her powerful spike over the net represents breaking free from gender stereotypes. Hence, it is underlined that just like men, women can also be powerful, skilled, and successful in the patriarchal society.

**Analysis:** In the advertising film, the national volleyball player's ability to send the ball to the opponent's side of the court with maximum power and effect indicates that it is possible to struggle with and overcome the challenges in society. While Ebrar Karakurt is hitting the ball, she refers to the opinions of the society saying, "there can be criticism besides the praise" and right after her successful spike, with a sarcastic and determined expression, she says, "I said why not, we can handle it!" as a reply to the previous statement. Here, establishing a link between the use of "we can handle it" as the linguistic element and Ebrar Karakurt's movement as she is retrieving the ball with all her strength conveys the message that challenges in society can be handled and overcome and that women living under pressure can also achieve this. At the same time, in the same frames, Ebrar Karakurt's ambition for success is portrayed with her fast and powerful serves and spikes. Through the advertisement frames created within the scope of 'Kendi Yolumuzda' [On Our Own Way] and 'Dedim Olabilir' [I said why not] campaigns by Elidor, Ebrar Karakurt has been positioned among the pioneering women calling for social change and it is aimed to make her a source of inspiration for millions of women. Within these frames, there are purple dashes in the background. The colour purple, used as one of the symbols of the feminist movement, is presented with dashes indicating the possibility of transition between the two sides (pink-blue). With purple dashes, the gender stereotypes embraced and promoted by the male-dominant society are shattered and the transitivity in this phenomenon is indirectly underlined.



**Signifier:** Lighting colour

**Signified (Denotation):** Blue

**Signified (Connotation):** The colour blue represents the 'male' gender in the context of gender stereotypes. In this regard, the colour blue reflected in the frames serves as a reference to patriarchal society and male-dominancy.

**Signifier:** Lighting colour

**Signified (Denotation):** Pink

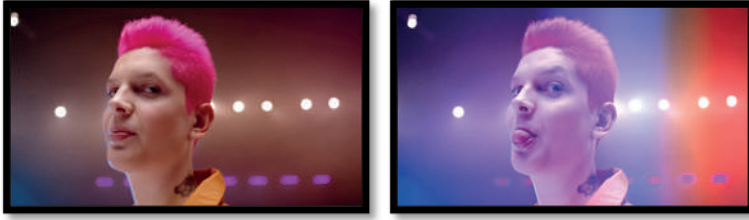
**Signified (Connotation):** Regarded as an expression of femininity, the colour pink represents women in society. The pink elements appearing in this advertisement are associated with women in the context of gender.

**Signifier:** Lighting colour

**Signified (Denotation):** Purple

**Signified (Connotation):** Considered as one of the main symbols of the feminist movement, the colour purple appears on the screen as the colours blue and pink get blurry and merge into each other. The use of the colour purple as a reflection of woman's strength and courage reflects women's powerful and determined side.

**Analysis:** It has been observed that social situations and gender foundations are especially depicted in the advertisement frames. In this context, first of all, the illuminated curtain facing Ebrar Karakurt reflects the summary of the social condition. Illuminated with pink and blue, the curtain characterizes the contrast, struggle and competition of gender roles in the first half of the advertising film. With this characterization, the static images of the perception of woman-man as a dominant order in society are portrayed. The colours facing the volleyball net, which are shown as rivals both with each other and with the values represented by Ebrar Karakurt, get blurry and merge into each other as the frames progress. In the second half of the advertising film, the contrast of the pink and blue lights on the curtain seem to fade as the colours merge into each other. At this moment, the colour purple, the colour of the feminist movement, appears. The emergence of the colour purple with the combination of the two colours represents the breaking down of gender roles and the expectations of the society. The transition of colours also naturalizes what society considers marginal and break downs the misguided perception of competition between the sexes in the patriarchal society. This frame underlines that it is wrong to position woman and man stereotypes as enemies. While the colours pink and blue are merging into each other, the national volleyball player rises to spike the ball and she is depicted as if she is flying. At that moment, when she says "dedim olabilir" [I said why not] as a reply to "do not fly too high, what kind of dream is this?", she is shown as flying high; and thus, all stereotypes are shattered.



**Signifier:** Facial expression

**Signified (Denotation):** Expressing feelings of excitement, happiness, and freedom that the situation arouses in her through a mischievous smile and sticking out the tongue

**Signified (Connotation):** With a mischievous smile on her face, Ebrar Karakurt reflects the message that she is ready for challenges and that she dares to defy the criticism. The identity and image of the national volleyball player is conveyed through her facial expressions. Moreover, the image of sticking out the tongue to the camera is associated with indifference, rebelliousness, and self-assuredness.

**Signifier:** Lighting

**Signified (Denotation):** Transition from dark and dull colours to light and bright

**Signified (Connotation):** The lighting in the frames before Ebrar Karakurt's smile is highlighted is in dark and dull colours, which reflects her mood. Accordingly, when the athlete displays a mischievous smile, and immediately after that, when she sticks out her tongue to the camera, the lighting simultaneously becomes vibrant. As the colours get brighter and merge into each other with an instant transition, a shade similar to the colour purple emerges in the background. The colour purple is again used in a sense that challenges gender stereotypes.

**Analysis:** The wolf tattoo on Ebrar Karakurt's neck is associated with her surname [Karakurt translates as black wolf] and her personality. Accordingly, the tattoo, especially highlighted in the frames when the athlete turns her neck, is reflected to the target audience as a symbol of freedom, courage, pride, power, and nobility. Ebrar Karakurt smiles and sticks out her tongue after she says, "if you are ready, all your dreams can come true!", which indicates her self-confidence. In this way, it is aimed to encourage especially the women who have been suppressed by the society and may have lost hope or are on the verge of losing hope and to emphasize that their dreams of freedom can come true. The intended message is strengthened by reflecting the national athlete's identity and character to the target audience. In addition, Elidor transfers Ebrar Karakurt's character traits, personality type, and emotional aspects to its target audience.





**Signifier:** Elidor products and her bag

**Signified (Denotation):** The advertising messages are intended to be strengthened with the use of Elidor products in pink packaging

**Signified (Connotation):** Presenting Elidor products in pink packaging in a large bag with one shoulder strap serves as a reference to the bags carried by athletes and to the sports culture. This indicates a departure from certain clothing and accessory stereotypes imposed on women by society. Moreover, showing Ebrar Karakurt having Elidor products in her bag paves the way for the intended image transfer.

**Signifier:** Lighting

**Signified (Denotation):** Illuminating the background using a bright purple colour

**Signified (Connotation):** The lighting effects and colours used in the previous frames of the advertising film continue to be used in this frame as well. The purple colour reflected quite brightly in the background symbolizes the essence of feminism by breaking away from traditional gender stereotypes.

**Signifier:** Body language

**Signified (Denotation):** Displaying a posture facing the camera with gestures expressing comfort and self-confidence

**Signified (Connotation):** Maintaining her unique demeanour in the final frame of the advertisement, Ebrar Karakurt portrays a relaxed image through her gestures, facial expressions, and posture. She is in her comfortable tracksuits when the camera approaches to her as she throws her sports bag, in which she carries the Elidor products, over her shoulder. As the camera approaches to her, she reflects her satisfaction, pleasure, and love for her hair by running her fingers through her short pink hair.

**Analysis:** Ebrar Karakurt's identity as a national athlete is identified with Elidor when she takes the bag containing Elidor products. In order to strengthen these expressions and the image of the volleyball player and indirectly emphasize the intended message again, bright and purple lightning is used. The national volleyball player's character, personality, and image are reflected in her body language. In this way, Ebrar Karakurt whose comfort and self-confidence is reflected in her body language expresses that she is ready to break down gender stereotypes.

## 6. A Semiotic Analysis of the Picture of Elidor – “Dedim Olabilir NFT Mural”



**Signifier:** Human figure (In the centre)

**Signified (Denotation):** A happy and laughing girl in a school uniform carrying her school materials in a backpack on her back

**Signified (Connotation):** A young girl depicted happy in her school uniform and carrying a school bag is portrayed as someone whose dreams and goals are not blocked with social barriers. Carrying her dreams for the future in her bag, the young girl reflects the happiness on her face in her body language through the expression she displays by making a cross with her hands as if dancing. This image reflects women's independence along with the potential they have against the pressure they face in education and professional life.

**Signifier:** Human Figure (On the left)

**Signified (Denotation):** A happy girl in a spacesuit portrayed as if flying over the buildings

**Signified (Connotation):** The child depicted in a spacesuit emphasizes that the dreams of that age, which are suppressed and deemed 'impossible' by society, can still come true against all odds. In this respect, the situation she is in and the excitement she feels are reflected in her body language, and she shows everyone her approval with both her facial expression and raising her thumb up. Furthermore, the figure, which stands as a symbol breaking down the gender stereotypes in society, demonstrates that women can work in every field and that it is possible for them to pursue their dreams.



<p><b>Signifier:</b> Human Figure (On the Right)</p> <p><b>Signified (Denotation):</b> A young girl wearing a team jersey</p> <p><b>Signified (Connotation):</b> Those who are exposed to the social pressure stemming from the question 'how could there be a girl with short hair?' are encouraged and the opinion that it is possible and normal to break free from the gender stereotypes in the patriarchal society by supporting all the decisions made by young people is portrayed. Through her facial expression and gestures, the young girl's body language underlines the campaign's slogan 'dedim olabilir' [I said why not].</p>
<p><b>Signifier:</b> Hair colour</p> <p><b>Signified (Denotation):</b> Pink</p> <p><b>Signified (Connotation):</b> All children are portrayed having pink hair not only because the hair colour of the role model of the campaign, Ebrar Karakurt, is pink but also to be able to say 'dedim olabilir' when faced with the pressure stemming from the question 'how could there be a girl with pink hair', just as Dr. Elanur Yılmaz, who is the source of inspiration for the NFT mural, faced when she drew it as a child and was opposed by those around her. In this regard, it is emphasized that individuals can live as they want and as they feel in terms of gender roles and that it is not actually a problem; on the contrary, it is a right. Besides, pink hair is used as a symbol of youth, energy, and fun.</p>
<p><b>Signifier:</b> Depiction of Trees</p> <p><b>Signified (Denotation):</b> Tree</p> <p><b>Signified (Connotation):</b> The green and strong trees rising amidst tall and dense buildings indicate not only breaking free from social pressure and looking confidently towards future but also dreaming of doing so.</p>
<p><b>Signifier:</b> Depiction of Buildings</p> <p><b>Signified (Denotation):</b> Building</p> <p><b>Signified (Connotation):</b> Representing city life as a reflection of modernism on social life, the buildings, which are portrayed tall and dense, indicate the oppressive and static expectations imposed on individuals by society.</p>
<p><b>Signifier:</b> Animal Figure</p> <p><b>Signified (Denotation):</b> Bird</p> <p><b>Signified (Connotation):</b> The birds soaring in the sky symbolize freedom, independence, and exceeding the limits. The depiction of birds soaring in the sky represents women's desire to break free from the limitations traditionally imposed on them and their aspiration for liberation. In addition, the portrayal of birds flying signifies that women are progressing freely towards their goals.</p>

**Signifier:** Hot Air Balloon Figure

**Signified (Denotation):** Flying Hot Air Balloons

**Signified (Connotation):** In spite of the fact that balloons are figures associated with childhood, joy, and innocence, the flying hot air balloon figure in this picture is associated with freedom, imagination, and adventure. Besides indicating young girls' search for liberation, imagination, and exploration, the image of flying hot air balloon represents concepts such as progressing towards goals and exceeding the limits. The flying hot air balloons above the girls also indicate the desire to break away from gender stereotypes, refusing traditional expectations, and pursuing individual potential.

**Signifier:** The Sun

**Signified (Denotation):** Rising Sun

**Signified (Connotation):** Considered as a symbol of life and vitality in many cultures, the sun represents hope, light, and new beginnings in this picture. The sun rising behind the girls indicates a social transformation and development. Moreover, it also implies that women have started to discover their potential by breaking away from gender stereotypes and want to construct a new future. At the same time, it reflects a process in which women gain self-confidence, question traditional gender roles, and become more able to express themselves.

**Analysis:** The smiling faces of all the children in the picture present a positive and optimistic representation of the young generation. This indicates that the young generation looks energetically and positively towards the future. In this context, the image of smiling young girls with pink hair signifies the self-confidence that can be gained by overcoming social pressure and the peaceful and joyful future it can create for individuals. On the other hand, the image of pink hair reflects the difference between the traditional role models created by social expectations and how individuals feel as well. The depiction of three different girls in different forms in the picture demonstrates different gender roles with different statuses in society and emphasizes that every individual's life is unique and special. While the tall buildings surrounding the young girls represent the limitations of city life and patriarchal society, they also indicate that women's roles in this environment are also suppressed. However, the large and vibrant green trees emerging between the buildings highlight women's natural existence and their desire to fulfil their potential. The trees in the picture represent women's efforts to exist freely by breaking free from gender stereotypes, and move forward in life.

While the image of the sun rising behind the young girls represents new beginnings, hope, and transformation, it also conveys the strong feeling stemming from discovering their power and potential by breaking free from the gender roles. The birds flying in the sky portrays women's effort to break free from the limiting gender roles imposed by the patriarchal society. The young girls' hair is portrayed pink not only because the hair colour of the role model of the campaign, Ebrar Karakurt, is pink but also to refer to the question 'how could there be a girl with pink hair' that was addressed to Dr. Elanur Yilmaz when she drew it as a child and was opposed by those around her. Accordingly, the young girls with pink hair indicate a rebellion against every pressure imposed on women in patriarchal culture by embodying a reference to the colour traditionally associated with girls and to the gender stereotypes. Apart from the colour pink, the spacesuit and school bag are portrayed in the colour purple. The colour purple is conveyed as the symbol of feminism in the picture. In this sense, the portrayal of the bag, which represents education, and of the spacesuit, which represents professional life, in purple indicates that women should break away from social stereotypes by improving themselves in every field. The girl in the centre in a school uniform is also carrying a bag. These symbols not only represent the power of knowledge for women but also reflect their desire to express themselves, gain independence, and realize their potential in education and professional life. The young girl depicted flying in a spacesuit is an expression of challenging patriarchal gender roles. It emphasizes that women can also be successful in the fields of science and exploration and break away from gender limitations. The short-haired young girl wearing a team jersey bears a resemblance to Ebrar Karakurt and is depicted with a body language that conveys 'dedim olabilir' [I said why not]. In this way, a link has been established between the NFT mural and the campaign's advertising film. This image, which challenges traditional gender stereotypes, shows that hair style is not related to gender roles by breaking down the 'long haired' stereotype, traditionally attributed to women. Representing concepts such as power, skills, and competition, the team jersey symbolizes women's desire to exhibit their skills and achieve success in sports as well.

## CONCLUSION

Social marketing and social responsibility campaigns are effective activities that create a win-win result for all parties involved in the process.

The consumer believes that their purchase will benefit the world, the non-profit organization gains income through corporate partnerships, and the business has numerous advantages in terms of adding value to its brand. Furthermore, campaigns have an impact on consumers' brand preferences, their ways of perceiving companies as well as their buying behaviour.

Social responsibility activities, which contribute positively to businesses in every aspect, have gained a different dimension with the emergence of digitalisation and new media platforms in parallel with technological advancements. Unlike the campaigns carried out on traditional media, the individuals comprising the target audience take a much more active and guiding role during the process of conducting the campaign on new media. Communication with the target audience through new media is interactive, regardless of time and very fast-paced from time to time, and individuals' opinions can directly influence the campaign process through this communication. The business and the target audience create value together in this process, which allows the individual who is in the position of a viewer in traditional media to be positioned as a direct source (sender) in new media, and this makes the target audience one of the active influencers of the campaign. Thus, the individual directly involved in the process can develop brand loyalty by seeing themselves as a part of the campaign and feeling a sense of belonging towards the business.

In this study, the advertising film "Dedim Olabilir" prepared within the scope of the social responsibility project "Kendi Yolumuzda" by the brand Elidor and the "NFT mural" created in collaboration with KienArt as a consequence of social media interactions have been analysed within the context of gender phenomenon. The advertising film and the NFT artwork, which constitute the sample of the research have been examined within the framework of criticism of patriarchal society and gender stereotypes. In this regard, the project has been considered as a whole and a tag has been prepared for the project. The social purpose, scope, and significance of the advertisement and the NFT artwork has also been identified. The advertising film and the NFT artwork have been examined through semiotic analysis developed by Roland Barthes and the underlying meanings have been tried to be revealed. As the main objective of the research, in order to describe the meaning universe that enables the reception of social messages, the signs identified within the frames of the advertising film and the NFT picture have been analysed in terms of denotation and connotation. In addition, the semantic structures of these signs have been identified to shed light on the hidden data that facilitate the perception of the intended social messages by the target audience. In this respect, it has been revealed that

various forms and styles of figures, colours, images, lighting, gestures, and facial expressions have been used in the frames of the advertising film and the NFT picture.

When the colour patterns of the advertising film and the NFT picture analysed within the scope of the research are considered, it is observed that the colours purple, pink, and blue are frequently highlighted. It has been determined that the colour purple, which is considered as one of the symbols of the feminist movement and liberty of women in terms of gender phenomenon, has been the most used colour in the NFT artwork as well as in many frames of the advertising film. The colour pink, which is attributed to women by the patriarchal and traditional social order along with the colour blue, which is thought to represent men, also emphasizes gender stereotypes. The colour purple, which is the representation of breaking away from gender stereotypes and of liberation of women by breaking free from male-dominant pressure, is highlighted particularly in the sequences where the colours pink and blue get blurry and merge into each other.

Upon the analysis of the symbolic level of the picture and the advertisement frames, it has been found out that figures such as flying hot air balloon, the sun, wolf, bird, astronaut, school bag, volleyball, tree, and building have been used in various ways in relation to gender stereotypes. In the sample of the research, it has been observed that there are elements reflecting criticism and rejection of the gender stereotypes imposed by the patriarchal society. It has been revealed that these elements are used in the context of gender created within male-dominancy and emphasize concepts concerning women such as freedom, nobility, power, pride, independence, rebirth, and marginality.

Looking at how the advertisement frames and the NFT picture present the elements, it is seen that they address women's roles in society. Accordingly, Ebrar Karakurt's body language, facial expressions, and statements in the advertisement frames, which have metaphorical meanings, represent the breaking down of the stereotypes expected of women as a result of social pressure. Furthermore, the elements used in the NFT picture also reflect that women's dreams can still be realized despite all difficulties.

Based on the analysis and findings, it has been found out that Elidor aims to convey to its target audience its attitude towards gender stereotypes through the advertising film "Dedim Olabilir" and the NFT mural prepared within the scope of the social responsibility project using distinct colours, sharp meaningful expressions, metaphorical figures, and signs with underlying messages. Apart from this, it has been revealed that Elidor, which adapts

its brand identity to its target audience and reflects an opinion criticising the role and place of woman in the patriarchal order, aims to transfer to the brand the image of Ebrar Karakurt, the advertising face of the campaign.

The purpose of Elidor's "Dedim Olabilir" social campaign, which has been analysed within the scope of this study, and the social advertisement in this campaign is to change the perspective towards woman within the patriarchal order. The desired behaviour to be created on the target audience through this campaign and advertisement is to be in struggle for encouraging the acceptance and dissemination of the idea that women can also be strong figures independent of the traditional roles imposed on them by the patriarchal order. Therefore, the messages concerning the fallacy of stereotypes related to gender roles are conveyed to the target audience within the scope of the campaign. Underlining the necessity to change the masculine perspective on this matter for a healthy society, the campaign aims to avoid the gender-biased perception created by this perspective; raise awareness on the actions and discourses resulting from this perception through signs; and highlight the power of women.

In summary, as research on social responsibility campaigns has shown, these campaigns not only satisfy the profit motives of companies but also influence consumer perception and buying behaviour, acting as a means to fulfil consumers' sense of social responsibility and serve the objectives of the non-profit organizations involved. When all these advantages are considered, it can be concluded that social responsibility advertisements will be on the agenda for a long time in terms of quality and quantity to draw attention to any demand that aims to improve the quality of life in society; and they will be socially beneficial in many aspects.

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## The Role of Public Service Announcements in Raising Awareness For Alzheimer

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### INTRODUCTION

Today, in the dimension of health communication, public service announcements play an important role in raising awareness of people on certain issues. In the digitalizing world, public service announcements prepared in the dimension of health communication can be encountered not only outside of the houses, but also at home via television, computers and telephones. In these public service announcements, people are asked to stay away from various harmful habits in terms of health, and it is sought to raise public awareness about various diseases. One of these diseases is Alzheimer's disease. Various public service announcement are prepared for Alzheimer's disease, which causes forgetfulness in individuals, and efforts are made to draw people's attention to Alzheimer's disease through these public service announcements.

There are several academic studies on the subject of Alzheimer's and communication. In these studies:

- Small and Gutman (2002): use of communication strategies in Alzheimer caregiving;
- Kirkman (2006): the media coverage of Alzheimer's disease;
- Gould and Reed (2009): Alzheimer's Association Quality Care Campaign and professional training initiatives;
- Kang et al. (2010): coverage of Alzheimer's disease in television news and information talk shows;

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- Gooblar and Carpenter (2013): print advertisements for Alzheimer's disease drugs;
- Werner and Kermel Schiffman (2018): Alzheimer's disease awareness campaign;
- Werner et al. (2019): newspaper coverage of Alzheimer's disease;
- Cuadrado et al. (2021): communicating about Alzheimer's disease.

In addition, various academic studies were made under the titles of Alzheimer's and social media (Friedman vd., 2016; Tang et al. 2017; Wilkerson et al. 2018; Bachmann, 2020; Stout et al. 2020).

In the study, it was aimed to determine what kind of messages were given in the public service announcements prepared to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease, and to form clear perceptions of the disease in people's minds. For this purpose, the indicators in the public service announcements related to the subject were examined in the study and based on the findings, the following questions were sought to be answered:

- Which indicators were used in the public service announcements prepared to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease?

- Which subject(s) about Alzheimer's were emphasized in the public service announcements prepared to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease?

The study is important in terms of reflecting the role of public service announcements in raising awareness about Alzheimer's. In this respect, it was aimed that the study will be a resource that researchers studying in the field of visual communication and health communication can benefit from.

## **1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

With the increase in the average life expectancy, the incidence of Alzheimer's disease has also increased (Keleş and Özalevli, 2018: 41). As a matter of fact, it is known that age is the most important risk factor in Alzheimer's disease. There is a relationship between advancing age and the risk of developing the disease (Nazlıer Keser, 2019: 122). The disease is effective in a significant part of the world population (Özpak et al. 2017: 47). No medical treatment was developed for Alzheimer's disease (Onat Kaya and Çelik, 2018: 626). On the other hand, early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is important to prevent rapid progression of the disease (Aslan, 2022: 214). In the process of dealing with Alzheimer's patient, it is important to accept the disease, obtain information about the disease and get help (Soner and

Aykut, 2017: 382). In addition, Alzheimer's patients need careful attention. But this maintenance brings with it a very arduous process.

The care of Alzheimer's patients is one of the social problems that need to be solved. In the solution process of this social problem, responsibility falls on the family and society. In addition, institutional structures are expected to take responsibility for the care problem of Alzheimer's disease (Şener and Tekin, 2020: 145). On the other hand, it can be said that the preparation of campaigns for Alzheimer's disease will have an important function in raising awareness of people about Alzheimer's disease. In this context, various public service announcements are prepared by various organizations in order to draw attention to Alzheimer's disease and raise public awareness.

The public service announcements can have visual, written, verbal or non-verbal content and text structures that appeal to the subconscious of individuals. Besides, the public service announcements aim to form effective discourses in the social lives of individuals (Akova, 2017: 16). Through these discourses, it can be aimed to direct individuals to desired behaviors or to draw attention to a certain issue. In the study, the role of public service announcements in raising awareness about Alzheimer's disease was sought to be examined.

## **2. METHOD**

In the study, 92 studies were found by searching the word "Alzheimer" from the website called Ads of The World, which featured advertisements from different countries of the world (Adsoftheworld, 2023). In the study, using purposeful sampling, eight public service announcements from eight different countries (USA, Germany, Brazil, France, Canada, Chile, Turkey, Greece) to raise awareness about Alzheimer's were determined as the sample of the study. While determining the sample of the study, public service announcements that can directly raise awareness about Alzheimer's were selected. In addition, attention was paid to the institution for which the public service announcement was prepared, the date and the advertising agency of the public service announcement. On the other hand, public service announcements of different countries on the subject were examined.

In the study, a total of eight public service announcements, which were determined as samples related to Alzheimer's disease, were examined through Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic concepts. Saussure's semiotics understanding was used because of the main inferences in the indicators in the public service announcements in the study and trying to focus directly on the main message. In Saussure's semiotics understanding, it is revealed that

the sign is handled as the signifier and the signified. The signifier explains the meaning of the sign, which can be formed directly in people's minds in general. The signified focuses on the subjective meaning of the sign, which can be shaped within the culture. In the study, public service announcements about Alzheimer's disease were examined in both the signifier and the signified size.

### 3. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this part of the study, eight public service announcements aimed at raising awareness about Alzheimer's disease were analyzed semiotically.

#### 3.1. First Public Service Announcement

The first public service announcement in the study was prepared by the Saatchi & Saatchi advertising agency on behalf of Association France Alzheimer in France and published in 2009 (Adsoftheworld, 2009). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, it is revealed that one corner of a house is included in the public service announcement. In the corner of the house are an armchair, a table lamp, a book, a table and a frame. There are pieces of wood on the perimeter of the public service announcement.

*Visual 1. First Public Service Announcement<sup>2</sup>*



*(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2009)*

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, it is emphasized that a person with Alzheimer's forgets his/her memories. The fact that the image in the frame is covered with pieces of

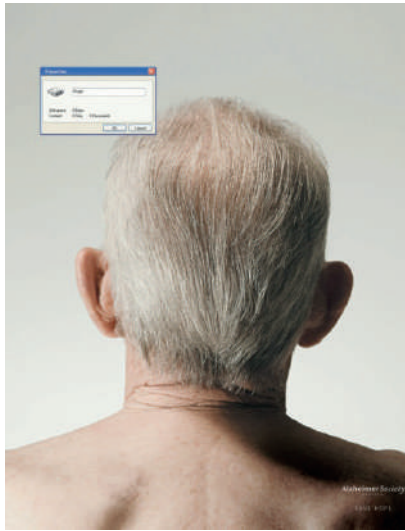
2 There is "In France, one million people can't get hold of their memories" text in the public service announcement.

wood gives the message that the individual with Alzheimer's disease does not remember his/her past. In the public service announcement, it is stated that Alzheimer's disease prevents the person from remembering the past as the pieces of wood placed on the frame prevent the photograph in the frame from being seen.

### 3.2. Second Public Service Announcement

The second public service announcement in the study was prepared by the Cossette advertising agency on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society in Canada and published in 2010 (Adsoftheworld, 2010). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, an old man is featured in the public service announcement with his back turned. There is memory information in the computer on the top of the head of the old man in public service announcement. In the public service announcement, it is stated that there is no file in the memory information.

#### *Visual 2. Second Public Service Announcement<sup>3</sup>*



*(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2010)*

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, a connection is established between the memory of the person with Alzheimer's disease and the computer memory, by including the capacity information of an elderly person in the computer together in the

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3 There is "Save hope" text in the public service announcement.



public service announcement. In this context, the message that Alzheimer's disease can make the individual forget the information in his/her mind is given, similar to the way that the memory of the computer can be erased with a click of a button in the public service announcement.

### 3.3. Third Public Service Announcement

The third public service announcement in the study was prepared by the McCann advertising agency on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society in Turkey and published in 2012 (Adsoftheworld, 2012). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, an old woman in the corner of a house knits a big thing with a hand on its end, smiling.

*Visual 3. Third Public Service Announcement<sup>4</sup>*



*(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2012)*

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, it is emphasized that the old woman knits incorrectly, and the Alzheimer's disease of the individual is emphasized in the public service announcement. In the public service announcement, the need to intervene in Alzheimer's before it's too late is highlighted by the old woman's long knitting wrong.

4 There is "Before it gets any further..." text in the public service announcement.

### 3.4. Fourth Public Service Announcement

The fourth public service announcement in the study was prepared by Grupo Gallegos advertising agency on behalf of Alzheimer’s Association in the USA and published in 2014 (Adsoftheworld, 2014). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, there is a photograph of a child hanging on a wall, divided into pieces like a rubik’s cube.

*Visual 4. Fourth Public Service Announcement<sup>5</sup>*



*(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2014)*

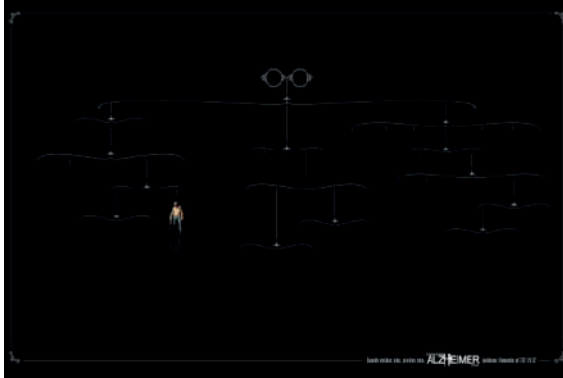
When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, a photograph of the grandchild of a person with Alzheimer’s disease in the public service announcement is divided into pieces like a rubik’s cube. In the public service announcement, it is sought to give a message about how hard the person with Alzheimer’s disease may have in recognizing their relatives, through the fragmentation of the child’s photograph.

### 3.5. Fifth Public Service Announcement

The fifth public service announcement in the study was prepared by Unitas advertising agency on behalf of Alzheimer’s Association in Chile and published in 2016 (Adsoftheworld, 2016a). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, there is a family tree on a black background in the public service announcement. While only one person is included in the family tree, the other people are not included in the public service announcement.

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5 There is “Grandson” by Alzheimer’s” text in the public service announcement.

*Visual 5. Fifth Public Service Announcement<sup>6</sup>*

(Source: *Adsoftheworld*, 2016a)

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, it is conveyed in the public service announcement that a person with Alzheimer’s disease may not be able to remember his/her family, by including a pedigree image on a black background with only himself/herself. As a matter of fact, in the public service announcement, the message that the person with Alzheimer’s disease doesn’t remember his/her family is given by not including family members other than the person with Alzheimer’s disease in the pedigree.

### 3.6. Sixth Public Service Announcement

The sixth public service announcement in the study was prepared by the Publicis advertising agency on behalf of Instituto Alzheimer Brasil in Brazil and published in 2016 (*Adsoftheworld*, 2016b). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, there is a photograph of a couple with their relatives in front of a building in the public service announcement. In the public service announcement, only the groom is in the photo by turning in front of him, while the bride and other people are in the photo facing their backs.

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6 There is “When you forget everything, you lose everything. Help us by calling” text in the public service announcement.

### Visual 6. Sixth Public Service Announcement<sup>7</sup>



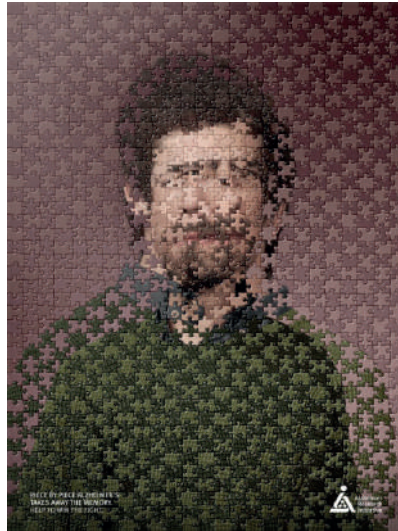
(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2016b)

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, the groom in the photograph is reflected as the past of the person with Alzheimer's disease. In the public service announcement, the message that the person with Alzheimer's disease doesn't remember the people in his/her past is given through the bride and other relatives looking behind the groom while looking in front of the groom.

### 3.7. Seventh Public Service Announcement

The seventh public service announcement in the study was prepared by the BBDO advertising agency on behalf of the Alzheimer's Forschung Initiative in Germany and published in 2018 (Adsoftheworld, 2018). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, there is a person in a blurry form in puzzle in the public service announcement.

7 There is "It's not easy when your memory turns against you" and "If a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, reach us for support" text in the public service announcement.

*Visual 7. Seventh Public Service Announcement<sup>8</sup>*

*(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2018)*

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, it is reflected how a person can be forgotten in the memory of a person with Alzheimer's disease, by presenting a person in a blurry form in the puzzle in the public service announcement. By using puzzles in the public service announcement, the message is given that the individual with Alzheimer's can forget the person in front of him/her piece by piece, just like the pieces of the puzzle.

### **3.8. Eighth Public Service Announcement**

The eighth public service announcement in the study was prepared by the Outtolunch advertising agency on behalf of Alzheimer's Athens in Greece and published in 2019 (Adsoftheworld, 2019). When the public service announcement in the study is examined through the signifier, there are three matryoshka dolls with the images of a young girl, an adult woman and an old woman, respectively. In the public service announcement, the matryoshka doll with the young person was cracked, and the matryoshka doll with the adult was broken.

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8 There is "Piece by piece Alzheimer's takes away the memory. Help to win the fight" text in the public service announcement.

*Visual 8. Eighth Public Service Announcement<sup>9</sup>*



*(Source: Adsoftheworld, 2019)*

When the public service announcement in the study is analyzed in the signified, the forgetting of the past of the Alzheimer's patient in the public service announcement is reflected through the images in the dolls and the cracking of one doll and the fracture of the other. In the public service announcement, the doll with the image of a young girl represents the youth of the person with Alzheimer's disease, and the doll with the image of an adult woman represents the adulthood of the person with Alzheimer's disease. In the public service announcement, a message is given about the problem of remembering the past of an individual with Alzheimer's disease through the cracking of the doll with the image of a young girl and the breaking of the doll with the image of an adult woman.

## RESULT

It can be said that many people can be made aware of these diseases in public service announcements prepared for various diseases, and in this way, many people can act more sensitively to people who are exposed to these diseases. It can be argued that raising awareness in public service announcements about Alzheimer's disease can play an important role in

9 There is "If you or someone close to you have memory problems, give us a call" text in the public service announcement.

making people more attentive to their behaviors towards Alzheimer's patients.

It was determined that the public service announcements examined in the study tend to forget the past and relatives of individuals with Alzheimer's disease. The forgetting behaviors of individuals with Alzheimer's disease are sought to be explained through the frame with wooden pieces on it, the wrongly made knitting, the shattered photograph like a rubik's cube, the family tree with no relatives, the turning of the people around, the person blurred by puzzle pieces, and the cracked and broken matryoshka dolls. In addition, in a public service announcement, the forgetfulness of Alzheimer's patients was likened to the deletion of the computer's memory. In this context, it was sought to raise awareness about Alzheimer's by including eight different expressions in the public service announcements of the 8 countries examined in the study.

It can be said that by emphasizing the questions experienced by Alzheimer's patients through different indicators in the public service announcements, it can be said that the ground is prepared for the formation of certain perceptions in the minds of people. In the public service announcement analyzed in the study, it can be stated that forming certain perceptions in the minds of people about memory loss of Alzheimer's patients is important in terms of raising awareness about the disease. On the other hand, it can be suggested to emphasize the problems experienced by Alzheimer's patients in their daily lives in the public service announcements prepared to raise awareness about Alzheimer's. It can be reflected that the forgetfulness of Alzheimer's patients can cause various accidents, and that these accidents can harm both Alzheimer's patients and the people around them. Attention can be drawn to the importance of Alzheimer's disease, especially by using indications that the forgetfulness of Alzheimer's patients can cause accidents that may lead to loss of life. In this way, it can be said that people can be made aware of being more sensitive to Alzheimer's patients through public service announcements.



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# Media and Communication in the Digital Age: Changes and Dynamics

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