

## The Encounter of Cinema and Advertising on Digital Platforms: A Netnographic Analysis of YouTube Videos

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### Abstract

The relationship between cinema and advertising has increasingly evolved into a hybrid field of production in which aesthetic narration, emotional engagement, and persuasive practices intersect within modern visual culture. This study examines how the relationship between cinema and advertising is constructed on digital platforms and how YouTube users interpret and make sense of such advertisements through a netnographic approach. The research aims to show that viewers do not perceive advertisements produced with cinematic aesthetics as conventional promotional content but rather position them as short films, emotional narratives, and cultural representations. The study sample comprises five advertising videos published on YouTube between 2021 and 2025 that generated high levels of interaction: *Istanbul: Love of the Continents*, *Coca-Cola Masterpiece*, *#BırakmayızSeni*, *Karneni Göster Kitabını Al*, and *Türkiye's Wings Turkish Airlines*. User comments posted on these videos between September and December 2025 were examined, and audience

discourses were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that the advertisements are interpreted along the axes of cinematic storytelling, emotional intensity, national identity, collective memory, and artistic production. In particular, it is noteworthy that users frequently avoid labeling these videos as advertisements, instead describing them as film, short film, or a cinematic experience. Overall, the study demonstrates that YouTube's comment culture provides a participatory meaning-making space that legitimizes, amplifies, and reproduces the cinematic transformation of advertising, revealing how advertising on digital platforms evolves into an aesthetic and cultural narrative form.

**Keywords:** Cinema And Advertising, Digital Platforms, YouTube, Netnographic Analysis, Participatory Comment Culture.

**JEL Codes:** M3, M31, M37

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## 1. Introduction

The relationship between cinema and advertising has evolved since the early periods of visual culture history through mutual interaction and formal permeability; over time, it has transformed from a purely economic collaboration into an aesthetic, narrative, and cultural intersection. Cinema's capacity to reach mass audiences, its ability to generate emotional impact, and its proficiency in visual storytelling have consistently served as a strong reference point for the advertising industry. For this reason, advertising has sought to establish a more intense and lasting bond with audiences by borrowing cinema's narrative structures, editing rhythms, and visual aesthetic codes. Conversely, advertising has positioned itself within the cinematic field as a significant industrial actor that influences cinema's production practices, financial structures, and modes of circulation. This bidirectional interaction has created a continuous zone of negotiation between cinema's artistic autonomy and advertising's persuasive nature (Kılınçarslan, 2018). Within the traditional media order, advertising was largely perceived as a promotional practice situated outside the film itself and as an interruption of the viewing experience. Advertisements shown before or during films in movie theaters were framed as compulsory pauses external to the narrative, leading to a distanced relationship between advertising and spectatorship. However, with the widespread adoption of digital platforms, this distinction has largely disappeared. On platforms such as YouTube, advertising no longer circulates outside viewing experience but becomes an integral part of it. Advertisements produced with cinematic aesthetics have increasingly transformed into content that viewers willingly watch, share, and repeatedly consume. While this transformation expands the functional boundaries of advertising, it also fundamentally redefines the relationship between audiences and advertising (Gölgeli & Geçen, 2021).

Simultaneously with this aesthetic transformation, digital platforms reposition viewers from passive recipients into active producers of meaning. Thanks to the participatory structure of Web 2.0, users do not merely consume content; through comments, likes, and shares, they directly contribute to its circulation and interpretation (Han, 2012). In this context, YouTube comments constitute a significant cultural data field that makes visible how advertising films are perceived, the emotional and cultural frameworks in which they are interpreted, and how audiences position this content. The process of the cinematization of advertising is shaped not only through production aesthetics but also through audience discourses and participatory comment culture. In this process, the viewer becomes not merely a receiver but a co-producer of meaning (Jenkins, 2006). Advertising films produced with cinematic aesthetics are frequently described in audience comments as short films, nar-

rative cinema, or artistic productions. In addition to many advertising applications carried out in connection with cinema, films also establish their own narratives through the brand and product. These films are called *advermovies* (Bolat, 2022). Such descriptions indicate that viewers are renegotiating the persuasive nature of advertising. Audiences evaluate these advertisements not solely as product or brand messages but within broader frameworks of meaning such as national identity, collective memory, emotional attachment, and cultural representation. Particularly, advertisements that incorporate national narratives, historical references, and emotional intensity generate strong discourses of belonging and shared memory in user comments. This demonstrates that advertising, through cinematic storytelling, has transformed into a field of cultural representation. This study aims to examine, through a netnographic approach, how audiences interpret the relationship between cinema and advertising on digital platforms and within which discursive frameworks YouTube users position advertising films that draw on cinematic aesthetics. The study argues that advertising on digital platforms is reproduced not merely as a marketing tool but as an aesthetic and cultural narrative form, and that this reproduction is legitimized and multiplied through audience comments. In this respect, the research seeks to move beyond production-centered approaches to the cinema–advertising relationship and to address it from an audience-oriented and participatory perspective.

## 2. Historical and Aesthetic Convergence between Cinema and Advertising

The relationship between cinema and advertising cannot be explained solely through limited practices such as short promotional spots inserted between films; rather, it is historically layered and aesthetically permeable. Since its emergence, cinema has developed as a field that simultaneously embodies narrative construction and the logic of industrial circulation. This dual structure has enabled the continuity of cinema's relationship with advertising and its reproduction across different levels. The use of space, narrative structure, genre preferences, stylistic codes, and audience experience stand out as the primary domains through which advertising has penetrated the cinematic universe. Today, the widespread use of concepts such as brand storytelling, product placement, trailer aesthetics, and *advermovies* demonstrates that this relationship is not a temporary marketing trend but a coherence formed through the long-term interaction of media, economy, and aesthetics (Bolat, 2022; Kılınçarslan, 2015). From a historical perspective, the movie theater and the cinematic experience create a distinctive contact zone that generates a high level of audience attention for advertising. Arslan's study, centered

on the Turkish context, reveals that movie theaters as advertising media are not limited to commercials projected on the screen; rather, they constitute a multi-layered advertising ecosystem through sponsorship practices, promotional activities, and communicative forms established in foyer and lobby spaces. This approach indicates the inadequacy of conceptualizing the relationship between cinema and advertising as a one-directional display practice. While cinema functions on the one hand as a channel for transmitting advertising messages, on the other hand, it becomes an industrial structure sustained through advertising revenues and brand collaborations (Arslan, 2011).

One of the most prominent stages of this industrial convergence at the narrative level is product placement practices. Aydın and Orta emphasize that brand placement plays a central role in the use of cinema as an advertising medium in Turkish films. Unlike traditional advertising, product placement is embedded within the film's narrative and aims to make the advertising message a natural component of the fictional world. In this respect, product placement creates a less interrupted form of contact between advertising and narrative, reducing the likelihood of audience resistance (Aydın & Orta, 2010). However, this historical transformation also brings significant aesthetic debates for the cinematic text. Advertising elements cease to be independent content presented before or during the film and instead become part of the *mise-en-scène*, character relationships, the repertoire of everyday objects, and the viewing experience itself. While this may support a sense of cinematic realism, when advertising becomes overly visible, it can also undermine the narrative's credibility. The film examples examined by Aydın and Orta demonstrate that the boundary between the natural use of brand placement and its perception as artificial is highly fragile (Aydın & Orta, 2010). This convergence can also be situated within broader international theoretical debates on the culture industry and commodification. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer argue (2007), cultural production under capitalism increasingly operates through standardized forms that blur the boundaries between art and commodity. From this perspective, cinema's historical entanglement with advertising can be interpreted not merely as a functional collaboration but as part of a wider transformation in which aesthetic forms become embedded within circuits of consumption. Similarly, Guy Debord's (1996) notion of the *Society of the Spectacle* suggests that visual culture increasingly organizes social relations through images, positioning both cinema and advertising as central mechanisms in the production of mediated experience.

In this study, product placement is not treated as an isolated marketing technique but as a representative case that makes the broader convergence between

cinema and advertising analytically visible. Within the scope of the research problem, which focuses on the transformation of narrative forms and audience engagement in digitally circulated cinematic texts, product placement serves as a concrete mechanism through which commercial logic becomes embedded within narrative structures. Therefore, its inclusion in the literature review aims to provide a conceptual bridge between aesthetic transformation and consumption-oriented storytelling practices, rather than to offer a purely descriptive account of advertising strategies. Two key elements become decisive in the relationship that product placement establishes with cinematic aesthetics: strategies of visibility and their harmony with the narrative. Er notes that product placement offers an attractive model for advertisers, given opportunities such as box-office success, access to large audiences, and the recirculation of films across different platforms. However, what is decisive is not merely whether a brand appears in a film, but how this presence is realized within an aesthetic configuration. When a brand is positioned in a manner that does not interrupt the narrative flow and remains compatible with the dramatic structure, it is perceived as more acceptable by audiences (Er, 2013). In this context, product placement should be approached not as a purely technical marketing strategy but as an aesthetic problem area. As placement practices become integrated into the *mise-en-scène* and dramatic action, they retain the potential to preserve cinematic integrity; by contrast, didactic or exaggerated uses may weaken the film's narrative autonomy and allow advertising aesthetics to become dominant. This indicates that the relationship between cinema and advertising is grounded not in a fixed form but in an aesthetic balance that is continuously re-established and negotiated within each filmic context (Er, 2013; Bolat, 2022). The convergence between cinema and advertising should not be evaluated solely in terms of the film text's internal structure. How films are marketed also constitutes a crucial domain in which cinematic and advertising aesthetics intersect intensively. Kılınçarslan's study, which examines trailers as marketing elements in cinema, demonstrates that trailers have moved beyond being simple promotional tools and have evolved into short cinematic texts that generate narrative value in their own right. Through rhythmic editing, musical accompaniment, dramatic emphasis, and visual intensity, trailers create emotional anticipation in viewers and facilitate the formation of a preliminary bond with the film. In this respect, the trailer can be regarded as a specific narrative space in which advertising aesthetics are integrated with cinematic narrative forms (Kılınçarslan, 2015). Within international film theory, this integration of commercial elements into narrative structures has also been discussed in relation to realism and representation. Jean Baudrillard's (2008) concept of

simulation is particularly relevant here, as it points to a condition in which distinctions between reality and representation become unstable. Product placement, when seamlessly embedded, contributes to a hyperreal environment in which branded objects appear as natural components of everyday life, thereby reinforcing consumption practices through narrative immersion rather than overt persuasion.

The widespread adoption of trailer aesthetics has significant implications for cinematic narration. Rather than reflecting the film's overall narrative rhythm, trailers often foreground climactic moments and emotionally intense scenes highlighted by marketing strategies. This shapes the audience's expectations of the film through the trailer. Over time, trailer aesthetics, particularly in mainstream cinema, may influence production processes by encouraging the design of certain scenes in accordance with trailer logic. Consequently, the narrative logic of advertising goes beyond merely announcing the film and becomes an element that feeds back into the film's formal design. This feedback relationship illustrates how the aesthetic boundaries between cinema and advertising have become increasingly permeable (Kılınçarslan, 2015). At a more advanced stage of this interaction, advertising no longer merely borrows formal codes from cinema but directly appropriates cinematic narrative form. The feature-length advertising approach discussed by Bolat under the concept of *advermovie* can be considered a qualitative threshold in the convergence between cinema and advertising. In this narrative form, the film becomes a coherent story world constructed around a specific product or brand. The *advermovie* should not be understood simply as storytelling; rather, cinematic narrative tools such as character construction, dramatic structure, spatial atmosphere, and emotional arc are reorganized to align with advertising objectives. This structure produces a bidirectional permeability between the aestheticization of advertising and the commercialization of cinema (Bolat, 2022). This permeability also yields specific consequences for audience experience. As the cinematic narrative qualities strengthen, the advertising text encounters less resistance from viewers and may be perceived as an integral part of the narrative. Advertising opportunities in micro-movies usually include product placement, where the product is simply featured in the film; and custom-made '*advermovies*', when the product becomes a part of the story (Zhao, 2014). Similarly, as advertising narratives approach cinematic forms, the likelihood of establishing an affective bond between the brand and the audience increases. This transformation enables advertising to move beyond being merely a persuasive message and to become an aesthetic and emotional experiential space. This shift can also be interpreted through the lens of branded content and narrative persuasion theories. As Russell Belk (2016) suggests,

consumption increasingly operates through symbolic and experiential dimensions, where brands derive meaning from their integration into cultural narratives. The *advermovie*, in this sense, exemplifies how storytelling becomes a strategic tool for embedding brands within affective and symbolic structures rather than presenting them as external commodities. The symbiotic relationship between cinema and advertising is therefore significant in demonstrating how narrative and consumption practices have become increasingly intertwined within modern visual culture (Bolat, 2022).

Digital platforms provide an environment that renders this convergence more visible and measurable. The analysis conducted by Gölğeli and Geçen of *The Journey*, a film produced by Turkish Airlines, demonstrates that the *advermovie* narrative operates alongside the logic of viral circulation and interaction in new media environments. Such cinematic advertising narratives reach wide audiences and gain cultural circulation through the affordances of digital platforms, namely shareability, interpretability, and recirculability. Consequently, advertising with cinematic narration becomes not merely an aesthetic preference but a strategic narrative form strengthened by the possibilities offered by the digital media ecosystem (Gölğeli & Geçen, 2025). On platforms such as YouTube, the viewer's position is likewise redefined through this transformation. The viewer moves beyond being a spectator who merely encounters content to become an active participant who comments, shares content, and, at times, produces critical discourse. This indicates that the convergence between cinema and advertising is not a process occurring solely between content producers and advertisers; rather, it becomes a relationship that is interpreted and negotiated within audience communities. In this way, cinematic advertising narratives circulate as social texts that are continually reproduced through cultural commentary and debate (Gölğeli & Geçen, 2025). At this point, aesthetic convergence is directly linked to audience reception. The recent study by İncedursun and Sadedil on product placement shows that audiences do not categorically reject such advertising practices; however, compatibility with the narrative and character structure emerges as a decisive condition. The findings reveal that insofar as the advertising element aligns with the internal logic of the cinematic world, it becomes less visible and does not disrupt the viewing experience. By contrast, advertising elements that are detached from the narrative or overly emphasized are perceived by viewers as external interventions and interrupt the experience (İncedursun & Sadedil, 2025). In light of these assessments, as advertising integration into cinema increases, the issue of aesthetic management becomes a central area of debate. The context, intensity, and narrative strategies through which advertising elements are employed

constitute the primary factors determining the acceptability of the relationship between cinema and advertising. Historically, this relationship has not assumed a fixed form; on the contrary, it has been reconstituted within the context of each new narrative and each new platform. This makes it possible to conceptualize the convergence between cinema and advertising not as a static commercial partnership but as a dynamic aesthetic-political field shaped at the intersection of narrative, emotion, attention, and consumption practices in modern visual culture.

### 3. Digital Platforms, Comment Culture, and Participatory Meaning Production

With the emergence of Web 2.0, digital platforms have adopted interactive internet architecture and have experienced a marked departure from traditional mass communication models. Web 2.0 is a participatory form of the web that enables users to create, share, and respond to content produced by others; through this structure, users move beyond passive spectatorship to become content producers and distributors (Sanofi et al., 2024). In digital environments, the most visible and collective manifestation of this transformation is users' direct participation in meaning-making processes, not only through user-generated content but also through comments on that content. Comments are not merely individual expressions; they also reveal processes of discussion, information exchange, evaluation, and collective judgment within online communities. Our media landscape has undergone a seismic shift as digital technology has fostered the rise of "participatory culture," in which knowledge is originated, created, distributed, and evaluated in radically new ways (Delwiche & Jacobs, 2012). Platforms such as YouTube are widespread spaces where user-generated video content and related forms of interaction coexist. Early studies have shown that Web 2.0 environments facilitate young people's engagement with media production and provide spaces for personal content creation, connection, collaboration, and the dissemination of users' cultural narratives. There is an explosion of youth subscriptions to original content-media-sharing Web sites such as YouTube. These Web sites combine media production and distribution with social networking features, making them an ideal place to create, connect, collaborate, and circulate. By encouraging youth to become media creators and social networkers, new media platforms such as YouTube offer a participatory culture in which youth can develop, interact, and learn (Chau, 2010). In this context, YouTube is evaluated as a platform that combines media production and social networking features, and it is considered a typical example of the processes of co-production, sharing, and network-based interaction that define participatory culture (Burgess & Green, 2018). Due

to its structure, which allows videos to be uploaded easily and enables a wide variety of users to comment on content, the platform has enabled interaction between content producers and viewers at a level previously not possible. In this new state of affairs, cultural participation and renewed public involvement seemingly work in symbiosis with for-profit models, especially as the most famous user-generated content websites, with the notable exception of Wikipedia, aim to host as much content as possible and to make online user participation a central everyday life practice in order to generate profits (Langlois, 2012).

Studies in the academic literature that address YouTube within the framework of participatory culture demonstrate that audiences do not merely consume media products as close-up viewers; rather, by writing comments, providing feedback, and engaging in dialogue with other users, they collectively construct the meaning of media texts (Chau, 2010). This situation confirms the central claim of participatory culture theory: in participatory culture, the boundary between content producer and audience erodes, and a reciprocal, transformative interaction emerges between these two roles. YouTube viewers not only watch videos but also, through their comments, generate themes and modes of evaluation that attract the community's attention; these comments shape other viewers' perceptions and become part of collective meaning-making processes within the community (Waldron, 2013). Discussions of digital media and participatory culture are also associated with concepts such as collective intelligence and media convergence enabled by Web 2.0 technologies. Within this framework, media theorists argue that technology and social networks expand users' interactive knowledge production, content selection, and reproduction practices, thereby allowing user communities to contribute directly to media content (Van Dijck & Nieborg, 2009, as cited in Mueller, 2014). Platforms such as YouTube have thus become spaces where audience comments generate new layers of meaning and opportunities for cultural interaction. This perspective emphasizes that viewer comments on digital platforms are not merely superficial reactions to texts but play a significant role in producing community norms, values, and shared meanings. Comments not only facilitate information exchange among users but also shape common meanings and interpretive strategies related to shared content. This process is also linked to social interaction theories; through comment spaces, users exchange ideas and transfer cultures of social debate into online environments (Alalem, 2023). This transformation indicates that the distinction between audience experience and media production is becoming increasingly blurred. On digital platforms such as YouTube, the role of the viewer is redefined through participation in meaning-making processes

and the opportunity to voice opinions regarding media content. Comments not only enable viewers to evaluate the messages within content but also establish a shared discursive production and a network of cultural interaction involving content creators and other viewers. This reveals that media production is reshaped collectively not only by professional actors but also by audience communities, confirming that digital platforms constitute significant sites of study for participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2013).

Netnography is a qualitative research approach developed to understand online cultural interactions emerging in digital environments. Based on the theoretical framework proposed by Kozinets (2015), this method offers the opportunity to examine communication patterns, forms of participation, and meaning-making practices within the contexts of online communities. The netnographic approach is not limited to analyzing digitally produced texts through content analysis; rather, it aims to jointly evaluate the internal dynamics of communities, their modes of interaction, and the discursive structures that form within platforms. In this respect, netnography stands out as a holistic method in digital culture studies that makes user practices and collective meaning production visible (Coşkun Onan & Göktepeliler, 2025). Netnographic studies of YouTube demonstrate that both individual and collective meaning-making processes can be traced through users' comments on video content. These studies reveal that comments are not merely personal evaluations; instead, they provide social contexts that disclose the values, identities, discussion topics, and evaluative criteria of user communities. This can be considered a fundamental characteristic of participatory culture. The platform moves away from being a one-directional space of consumption and becomes a multi-layered environment for discourse production, increasing users' public visibility (Highfield, 2016; Toprak, 2023).

One study that foregrounds the netnographic method examined YouTube user comments to reveal how these comments are interpreted. Drawing jointly on the theoretical frameworks of Diffusion of Innovations and Uses and Gratifications, this research analyzed user perceptions, expectations, and experiences through comments on specific product promotion videos. The findings indicate that YouTube comments serve a function beyond emotional reactions and actively participate in processes of social meaning production. In this context, comment spaces emerge as significant interactional grounds where user experiences are shared, and collective evaluations are produced (Özer & Akdağ, 2024). The concept of participatory culture refers to a process in which users, rather than consuming media content passively, add their own perspectives, interpretations, and evaluations to media texts. On digital platforms such as YouTube, viewers are not limited to liking content; through comments, they engage

in discussions, communicate directly with content creators, and contribute to the formation of norms that gain validity within the community. This process transforms the viewer's position within the media field, turning them into an active component of cultural production, and enables comments to circulate within both global and local media discourses (Jenkins, 2006). Another netnographic study focusing on YouTube communities examined the relationship between content creators and audience groups through comment culture. An analysis of more than 1,500 user comments from a makeup channel revealed distinct participant profiles within the community. It showed that these profiles developed distinct commenting practices depending on content type. This finding demonstrates that comment culture is not merely the sum of individual reactions but has a complex structure shaped by intra-community interactions, shared values, and collectively produced meanings (Mutlu & Bazarıcı, 2016).

The algorithmic structure of digital platforms also plays a decisive role in shaping comment culture. Algorithms influence the visibility, circulation, and level of engagement of user comments, allowing certain comments to become embedded within broader networks of meaning. Platform-based ranking, recommendation systems, and mechanisms such as likes and replies can elevate some viewpoints while relegating others to the background (Aytaş & Yavuz, 2024). This reveals that participatory culture does not always offer an unrestricted space for expression; rather, it is shaped by platform governance policies and technical regulations. In this framework, comments on YouTube should be evaluated not merely as expressions of individual opinions but as a field of cultural production where community norms, traditional media discourses, and the logic of digital platforms intersect (Paray Güney, 2025). YouTube user comments constitute a multi-layered field of meaning production in which social values, identity representations, ideological positions, and cultural expectations are articulated, going beyond simple content evaluations. Through comments, users express their personal relationship with the content while simultaneously opening up the social meanings of that content to negotiation. This indicates that comment spaces function not only as venues for sharing individual opinions but also as public arenas where collective debates and shared interpretive frameworks are formed. By interacting directly with content creators, users reinterpret narratives and, through dialogue with other viewers, produce shared norms and values. This reciprocal interaction process is considered one of the core dynamics of digital platform culture (Inwood & Zappavigna, 2023). Within this context, comment culture on digital platforms can be positioned as a space where participatory meaning-making becomes visible, community relations are concretized, and cul-

tural interactions are traceable. Netnography provides researchers with both a flexible methodological framework and a strong theoretical grounding for examining such interactions. Studies of YouTube comments demonstrate that platform users do not remain passive viewers; rather, they become active subjects who continuously construct meaning through cultural representations, value production, and community norms. In this respect, digital platforms can be understood as multidimensional and dynamic fields of cultural production that transcend the limits of classical media analyses through comment culture. In the context of this study, these theoretical frameworks are not used as general background references but as analytical lenses guiding the interpretation of audience comments. The Uses and Gratifications approach provides a basis for understanding how viewers derive emotional, aesthetic, and social value from cinematic advertising narratives, while the Diffusion of Innovations perspective helps explain how these narratives are adopted, normalized, and circulated within digital communities through user interaction and comment culture.

## 4. Method

### 4.1. Research Methodology

This study employs a netnographic research method to examine how cinematic narration and advertising practices intersect on digital platforms and how this intersection is interpreted through audience comments. Netnography is a qualitative research approach that analyzes the cultural practices, interaction patterns, and meaning-making processes of online communities within their natural digital contexts. Developed by Robert Kozinets, this method adapts classical ethnographic research techniques to online environments and is widely used to analyze cultural data produced in digital spaces such as social media platforms, forums, blogs, and video-sharing sites (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets, 2015). The study seeks to reveal how cinematic aesthetics and advertising narratives converge on the YouTube platform and how this convergence is negotiated through audience comments. Accordingly, the research focuses on audience reactions, commenting practices, and collective meaning-making processes related to advertising films that exhibit cinematic narrative characteristics. The netnographic approach enables analysis not only of the textual structure of such content but also of how it is received and reinterpreted within audience communities.

Since the netnographic research method is applied, identifying online communities and interaction spaces is a crucial stage of the study. In the initial phase, research questions were formulated to understand how the relationship between cinema and advertising is constructed through audience discourses on

digital platforms, and the analysis's scope was delineated accordingly. User comments on advertising videos hosted on YouTube were collected and analyzed within their natural digital contexts, in accordance with research ethics. The study addresses the following research questions:

**RQ 1)** How do YouTube users generally define and position these advertisements?

**RQ 2)** What are the dominant emotions and viewing motivations highlighted in the comments?

**RQ 3)** According to which criteria do viewers evaluate the cinematic and aesthetic elements of the advertisements?

**RQ 4)** How is the use of artificial intelligence discussed in audience comments in the case of Coca-Cola Masterpiece?

**RQ 5)** How are national identity, history, and collective memory constructed in audience comments?

**RQ 6)** How do notions of social benefit, public good, and orientation toward everyday action appear in audience comments?

Following the formulation of these questions, the next stage involved identifying content domains capable of providing relevant answers. To access the relevant YouTube content, key concepts were determined, including cinematic advertising, advertising film, short-film-style advertising, brand film, YouTube advertising, cinematic aesthetics, and digital advertising narratives. Using these keywords, advertising films produced with cinematic narrative features and the user comment communities formed around them were identified on the YouTube platform. User comments associated with the selected videos were examined within the framework of the netnographic approach, without disrupting viewers' natural interaction environments, and were incorporated into the analysis process. In this context, the population of the study consists of advertising films published on YouTube that are produced with cinematic narrative aesthetics. The sample was determined using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of information-rich and highly interactive content that is directly related to the theoretical framework of the study.

Accordingly, five advertising films produced using cinematic language, reaching large audiences and generating intensive comment interaction on YouTube, were selected as the sample:

- *Istanbul: Love of the Continents (İstanbul. Kıtaların Aşkı, 2021)*
- *Coca-Cola Masterpiece (2024)*
- *Türkiye'nin Kanatları (Wings of Turkey - Turkish Airlines, 2024)*
- *#BırakmayızSeni (2025)*

- *Karneni Göster Kitabını Al (Show Your Report Card Get Your Book, 2025)*

The selection of these videos was based on the following criteria: the presence of cinematic narrative elements (such as characters, dramatic structure, music, and visual aesthetics), the manner in which the brand is integrated into the narrative, high numbers of views and comments, and the existence of discussions in audience comments concerning the relationship between advertising and cinema. In this way, the sample enables a comparative examination of cinematic advertising narratives produced by brands from different sectors and the audience responses generated by these narratives.

## 4.2. Data Collection Process

The research was conducted between September and December 2025. In the data collection process, archival data were used predominantly, in accordance with the principles of the netnographic method. Archival data are based on the examination of content previously recorded on the platform, without the researcher directly interacting with members of online communities (Kozinets, 2002). Within this scope, audience comments, numbers of likes, reply chains, and interaction patterns among comments associated with the five selected YouTube videos were examined.

The total number of user comments available for the selected advertisements is as follows: *Coca-Cola® Masterpiece* (n = 1,231), *Karneni Göster Kitabını Al* (n = 88), *#BırakmayızSeni* (n = 804), *Türkiye'nin Kapatları* (n = 1,309), and *İstanbul: Love of the Continents* (n = 4,131). Given the large volume of data, a purposive and criterion-based sampling strategy was employed to construct the analytical dataset. From this corpus, a total of (n = 520) comments were selected for in-depth analysis. The selection process prioritized comments that generated interaction (e.g., high number of likes or replies) and contained evaluative or interpretive expressions related to cinematic narrative, advertising discourse, and audience perception. In addition, efforts were made to include comments reflecting diverse viewpoints in order to avoid overrepresentation of highly popular opinions. The unit of analysis in this study is individual user comments. For each video, comments that received the highest number of likes, generated the most replies, and included explicit evaluations of the relationship between advertising and cinema were included in the analysis. In selecting comments, attention was paid not only to individual emotional reactions but particularly to viewers' reflections on narrative structure, the brand, cinematic aesthetics, and the nature of advertising itself. Comments that were clearly produced by fake or automated accounts, as well as messages that were not directly related to the content, were excluded from the analysis. This

approach was adopted to enhance data reliability in netnographic research and to make authentic community interactions more visible.

In the netnographic data collection process, three main types of data are typically considered: archival, elicited, and field notes. In this study, archival data served as the primary source, and the researcher systematically examined textual data from YouTube comment sections. In addition, the researcher's observational notes, intended to understand the contextual dimensions of the comments better, were incorporated into the analysis. The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. During the analysis process, recurring meaning patterns, discursive tendencies, and shared themes in audience comments were identified. Prominent thematic categories included cinematic perception, advertising awareness, emotional impact, brand perception, authenticity, and commercial discomfort. Comments were coded according to these themes, enabling an examination of how audience communities interpret and negotiate cinematic advertising narratives. The analytical framework of the study is partially informed by Uses and Gratifications Theory and Diffusion of Innovations Theory. These frameworks guided the identification of thematic categories by focusing on how users express motivations (such as emotional engagement, aesthetic appreciation, and social belonging) and how certain interpretations become dominant, reproduced, and normalized within the comment culture.

## 5. Findings

This section presents findings from a netnographic analysis of emotions, evaluations, and meaning-making practices in user comments on the five selected YouTube advertising videos. The findings are organized in a question-driven structure, aligned with the research questions. From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be interpreted through the lens of Uses and Gratifications and Diffusion of Innovations. Audience comments reflect not only individual gratifications such as emotional satisfaction, aesthetic pleasure, and identity construction, but also collective processes in which certain interpretations gain visibility, are reinforced through interaction, and gradually become dominant within the digital community.

### **Research Question 1) How do YouTube users generally identify and position these advertisements?**

YouTube user reviews indicate that viewers do not perceive the reviewed advertising videos as ordinary promotional content. In the comments, advertisements are often described as cinematic productions, narratives with a short-film aesthetic, or cultural

representations that create an intense emotional experience. This positioning shows that the key element increasing the ad's viewability is not the direct sales call; it points to a common perception that there is narrative, visual aesthetics, and atmosphere. Here are some representative interpretations of how viewers articulate this positioning:

*"Why the hell did this feel like a movie?" (Coca-Cola Masterpiece)*

*"Genuinely an ad I would not skip" (Coca-Cola Masterpiece)*

*"I watched a movie, not a commercial, as if my eyes were filled with tears" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)*

*"Actually a short film, not just a commercial" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)*

*"This video is simply a cinematic masterpiece" (Istanbul: Love of the Continents)*

*"Breathtaking beauty, this is more of a visual feast than an advertisement" (Istanbul: Love of the Continents)*

These interpretations clearly reveal that the advertisement has been redefined as a genre and that the distinction between advertisement and film has blurred in the minds of the audience. It also shows that the audience's definition of the advertisement is based on aesthetic intensity and narrative structure. Advertising is not a persuasion text or product promotion in the classical sense; it is positioned as a viewing experience that demands the audience's emotional engagement. Especially in the Coca-Cola Masterpiece and Turkey's Wings videos, the success of the advertisement is not tied to the visibility of the sales message but to the power of storytelling, rhythmic flow, and the ability to create a cinematic atmosphere. In the *Istanbul: Love of the Continents* video, this positioning is taken even further; The quality of being an advertisement is almost completely faded. Comments treat the video as an urban narrative or a visual portrait, without direct references to the brand or promotional purpose. This suggests that cinematic aesthetic intensity can push the functional call of advertising into the background, transforming content into an autonomous audiovisual text.

### **Research Question 2) What are the dominant emotions and viewing motivations that stand out in the comments?**

The comments reviewed indicate that advertising videos have a strong effect on viewers. The motivation to watch is more than obtaining information about the product or service; emotions, impressions, pride, and aesthetic pleasure shape it. Among the recurring emotions in the interpretations, admiration, pride, longing, hope, sadness, and a sense of collective

belonging stand out. This suggests that advertising operates as an emotional experience space rather than a rational call to action for the audience. Some representative interpretations in which viewers directly express their emotions are as follows:

*"I had tears in my eyes, goosebumps" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)*

*"I cry every time I watch it, there are no words to describe this feeling" (#BırakmayızSeni)*

*"Watching this made me feel proud in a way I can't explain" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)*

*"I've watched this video over and over again, and I'm getting more emotional every time" (#BırakmayızSeni)*

*"Even through a screen Istanbul takes your breath away" (Istanbul: Love of the Continents)*

*"This ad gives me hope and makes me want to dream" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)*

These comments show that intense emotional reactions define the ad-watching experience, and that the viewer's relationship with the video becomes a desire to watch it again. The findings reveal that the audience primarily experiences advertisements as an emotional encounter. Especially in the videos #BırakmayızSeni and *Türkiye'nin Kanatları*, the comments go beyond individual affect and produce a collective feeling. Emotions such as pride, longing, and gratitude are not just individual reactions; they are shared and reproduced in the comment area. Thus, the audience ceases to be a solo spectator and becomes a part of a community that shares emotion.

*Istanbul: Love of the Continents* video, the dominant emotion is mostly shaped by admiration and desire. The desire to visit the city, the beauty, and spatial fascination show that the advertisement motivates the audience to dream. In this context, the motivation to watch is established between emotional influence and an expectation for the future. In interpretations of the Coca-Cola Masterpiece, the feeling of admiration is directed towards creative labor and artistic performance. Viewers explain their reasons for watching the advertisement through aesthetic pleasure, surprise, and respect for creativity. This situation shows that the motivation for watching the advertisement is not the product; rather, it is associated with the perceived artistry of the production process. For YouTube users, the motivation to watch ads largely depends on its capacity to generate affect. The advertisement is watched, shared, and experienced over and over again, to the extent that it appeals to the audience's daily emotional repertoire. This finding suggests that the success of advertising on digital platforms is increasingly defined by emotional intensity and narrative impact.

### Research Question 3) By what criteria do viewers evaluate the cinematic and aesthetic elements of advertisements?

YouTube user reviews show that the aesthetic value of ads is valued more on cinematic integrity and emotional impact than on technical perfection. Viewers treat cinematography, editing, music, and narrative rhythm not as singular elements, but as a narrative system that works together. The aesthetic success of the advertisement is not limited to superficial criteria such as pleasing to the eye, presenting impressive images, or exhibiting technological innovation, but is interpreted through the sense of direction, atmosphere production, and emotional continuity of the narrative. Some representative interpretations in which the audience clearly expresses their aesthetic evaluations are as follows:

*"Amazing execution, great storytelling" (Coca-Cola Masterpiece)*

*"Great vision and direction" (Coca-Cola Masterpiece)*

*"A wonderful Istanbul feast has emerged in the hands of masters" (Istanbul: Love of the Continents)*

*"The harmony of music with video is incredible" (Istanbul: Love of the Continents)*

*"Its fiction, story and emotion are very strong" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)*

*"How much has been told in a short film" (#BırakmayızSeni)*

These interpretations reveal that the audience evaluates the advertisement as an aesthetic whole and considers the audio-visual elements to serve the narrative as a basic criterion. The findings show that the audience evaluates the aesthetics of advertising with criteria specific to the language of cinema. Cinematographic quality, use of music, and editing gain meaning in the eyes of the audience only to the extent that they contribute to the integrity of the narrative. The emphasis on vision, direction, and storytelling that stand out in Coca-Cola Masterpiece interpretations reveals that the aesthetic success of the advertisement is associated with creative direction and narrative purpose. Here, the advertisement is perceived as a deliberately constructed visual story rather than a technical show. *Istanbul: Love of the Continents* video, aesthetic evaluation is made through the representation of space and the creation of atmosphere. Viewers value the fact that the city is not only presented with beautiful images but also represented in a narrative that carries history, soul, and emotion. In this context, aesthetics is associated with the capacity to establish an urban memory and emotional connection beyond visual allure. In the videos of *Türkiye'nin Kanatları* and *#BırakmayızSeni*, the aesthetic criterion directly coincides with emotional intensity. For viewers, a good aesthetic is one

that establishes a narrative that makes them cry or feel proud and draws them into the story. Providing strong emotional impact in a short time is one of the main reasons these advertisements are considered aesthetically successful.

### Research Question 4) How is the use of artificial intelligence discussed in the audience comments in the case of Coca-Cola Masterpiece?

Comments on the Coca-Cola Masterpiece video discuss the use of artificial intelligence in terms of creative labor, ethical responsibility, and artistic intent rather than a technical innovation. Audiences position AI either as a tool to supplement human creativity or as a cost-cutting strategy that substitutes for creative labor. This dual framework does not limit the aesthetic evaluation of the advertisement to the visible text alone; it also makes perceptions of the production process a direct part of the discussion. Here are some statements that represent two opposing approaches that stand out in the comments:

*"It wasn't made by AI. It was made by humans using AI. So I can feel the feelings of the person who made this ad."*

*"The AI was simply a tool in the repertoire of artists alongside conventional methods."*

*"How did we go from this to AI generated slop?"*

*"The newest commercials have no substance, blatantly pushing AI to replace artists."*

*"This ad has purpose and direction; the AI just helped the process."*

*"Coca-Cola ought to be ashamed of themselves for replacing artists with AI."*

These interpretations suggest that the audience is not viewing AI as a positive or negative technology in itself, but rather as a technology that is integrated into the creative process. The findings reveal that the viewer's evaluation of the use of artificial intelligence is directly related to the aesthetic experience. Artificial intelligence is seen as an acceptable and even commendable tool when used in conjunction with human will and artistic vision that guide the creative process. In this approach, the success of advertising is defined through the concepts of perceptible labor, narrative aspect and artistic purpose. Viewers therefore position the Masterpiece ad as a benchmark, comparing it to later AI-heavy ads. On the other hand, in interpretations where artificial intelligence is perceived as a substitute for creative labor, aesthetic failure is considered alongside an ethical problem. In this context, it is emphasized that advertising is soulless, aimless, and profit-oriented; the use of artificial intelligence is presented as the reason for the loss of artistic quality. Thus, criticism of technology is closely linked to the brand's values and production policies.

From a netnographic perspective, the example of the Coca-Cola Masterpiece transforms the YouTube commentary space into a kind of cultural negotiation. Through advertising, viewers discuss the role of artificial intelligence in contemporary creative industries, the protection of artist labor, and aesthetic responsibility. This situation means that advertising is no longer just a communication tool; It shows that it has become a text that starts a public debate on technological transformation and cultural values.

**Research Question 5) How are national identity, history and collective memory established in audience interpretations?**

The reviewed interpretations show that advertising is strongly associated with national identity, historical continuity and collective memory, especially in the #BırakmayızSeni and Türkiye'nin Kanatları -Turkish Airlines videos. In these videos, the viewer does not see the advertisement as an up-to-date promotional content; It positions it as a narrative that establishes a connection between the past and the present, reminds national values and creates a common emotional space. Beyond individual reactions, the field of interpretation transforms into a collective discourse space based on remembrance, remembrance and the production of belonging. Here are some representative comments that clearly reflect this theme:

"Remembering the anniversary of the death of an immortal is an honor unique to us in the world" (#BırakmayızSeni)

"We did not leave you; we will not leave you, Atam. You are forever in our hearts" (#BırakmayızSeni)

"This nation loved Atatürk, my brother, there is nothing to do" (#BırakmayızSeni)

"We were proud even if it was in the advertisement" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)

"Turkish Airlines commercials are like a movie; our eyes fill with tears every time" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)

"Only such a noble nation can advertise like this" (Türkiye'nin Kanatları - Turkish Airlines)

These comments reveal that the advertisement is read by the audience as a symbolic carrier of national identity and show that the advertising narratives are integrated with national identity and collective memory in the eyes of the audience. In #BırakmayızSeni video, the comments produce a discourse of commemoration and gratitude centered around the figure of Atatürk. Viewers express the emotions they experience while watching the advertisement not as a personal reaction, but as part of a historical responsibility and collective memory. In this respect, the interpretation area functions as a digital commemoration space and the advertisement turns into a symbolic practice of remembrance rather than a corporate content. In the video Türkiye'nin Kanatları

collective memory is built on the narrative of national success, continuity and pride. Turkish Airlines is not only a company; It is positioned as an institution that represents the country, carries the flag and connects the historical heritage to the present. The expression of the audience that we are proud even if it is in the advertisement shows that the quality of being an advertisement is pushed into the background and the content is evaluated with the power to produce national belonging. In both videos, the comments show that the viewer does not want to advertise as a consumption-oriented communication; It reveals that it reads as a cultural text that reinforces national identity, reproduces common values and establishes an emotional bond between the past and the present. This shows that, on digital platforms where cinematic narrative and advertising merge, brands can elicit strong emotional resonance through representations of national memory and identity.

**Research Question 6) How do social benefits, public interest, and orientation towards daily action appear in audience comments?**

Among the advertisements examined, the Karneni Göster Kitabını Al video yields a limited but meaningful set of comments centered on the themes of direct social good and public good. In this video, audience reactions are shaped by the campaign's social function and aspects that touch daily life, rather than by aesthetic or emotional intensity. Comments show that the advertisement prompts the audience to take concrete action, and that the practical implications of the content come to the fore. Here are some user reviews that represent this trend:

"I sent news to my grandchildren, so that they would get it" (Karneni Göster Kitabını Al)

"Thank you very much, it is really a very meaningful campaign" (Karneni Göster Kitabını Al)

"It's a perfect advertisement" (Karneni Göster Kitabını Al)

"When I first saw this ad, I was scared, then I was excited" (Karneni Göster Kitabını Al)

"Big bank, thank you İşbank" (Karneni Göster Kitabını Al)

The findings reveal that the Karneni Göster Kitabını Al video produces a different form of reception than other ad examples. The audience does not consider this ad as a cinematic narrative or an emotional experience, but as an application that directly generates social benefit. While aesthetic praise or narrative analysis is limited in the comments, the concrete impact of the campaign on daily life comes to the fore. The expression "I released news to my grandchildren" indicates that the relationship that the advertisement establishes with the audience does not remain at the level of consumption or symbolic belonging; It shows that it has gained a function

that directs daily behavior. In this respect, advertising turns into a call to action rather than a content watched by the audience. The acceptance of social benefit-oriented advertising is directly related to the brand's perception of corporate responsibility. From a netnographic perspective, this video provides a meaningful example despite the low volume of comments. The limited number of comments suggests that the content's capacity to generate cultural negotiation is narrower compared to other videos. However, current interpretations reveal that advertising is positioned as a functional, reliable and benefit-based public communication in the eyes of the audience. This finding shows that ad reception on digital platforms cannot be reduced to a singular aesthetic or emotional framework; It shows that audience motivations can differ on the axes of affect, identity, ethics or practical benefit depending on the type of content.

## 6. Conclusion

The relationship between cinema and advertising possesses a historically deep-rooted and aesthetically permeable structure that cannot be explained solely by the insertion of promotional content between films. Since its emergence, cinema has been shaped simultaneously as a narrative art form and an industrial field of circulation; this dual structure has provided the ground for advertising to borrow cinematic narrative forms and, over time, to reposition itself within these forms. Especially with the widespread adoption of digital platforms, advertising has moved beyond classical persuasive discourse. It has transformed into a narrative form that engages audiences through storytelling, visual atmosphere, emotional intensity, and cinematic aesthetics. By examining audience comments on YouTube advertising films produced with cinematic narrative aesthetics using a netnographic approach, this study reveals how advertising is defined, experienced, and meaningfully interpreted on digital platforms. The findings indicate that advertising is increasingly distancing itself from being perceived merely as a promotional text in the narrow sense; instead, it is being reconfigured through cinematic language, emotional narration, and cultural representation. The five videos analyzed offer strong examples that concretize the advertising–cinema relationship not only at the level of formal similarity but also through audience perceptions and commenting practices.

The initial findings demonstrate that YouTube users tend to define and position these advertisements not primarily as advertising, but rather as short films, cinematic narratives, or audiovisual experiences. Particularly in cases such as *Coca-Cola Masterpiece* and *Türkiye'nin Kanatları*, viewers evaluate the persuasive power of advertising less through product or brand information and more through its capacity

for storytelling, atmosphere creation, and emotional intensity. In *Istanbul: Love of the Continents*: the advertising dimension is almost entirely relegated to the background, with the content perceived as a city portrait and an aesthetic object for viewing. This suggests that on digital platforms, the legitimacy of advertising is increasingly tied to its capacity to produce aesthetic experience. The dominant emotions and viewing motivations highlighted in audience comments clearly demonstrate that advertising is experienced as an affective encounter. Emotions such as admiration, pride, longing, melancholy, and hope do not remain merely individual reactions; through sharing in comment spaces, they generate a collective affective environment. Especially in the cases of *#BırakmayızSeni* and *Türkiye'nin Kanatları*, comment sections go beyond individual viewing experiences and transform into spaces of shared emotional expression and the production of belonging. In this context, YouTube comments function as an important cultural space that renders visible and amplifies the relationship audiences establish with advertising. Evaluations of the cinematic and aesthetic elements of the advertisement reveal that audiences assess advertising aesthetics using criteria specific to cinematic language. In the comments, aesthetic value is defined not primarily through technical perfection or visual spectacle, but through narrative coherence, a sense of direction, harmony between music and editing, and the power of emotional transmission. For viewers, a successful advertisement delivers intense emotional impact quickly and constructs a narrative that draws the audience into its story world. This suggests that the aesthetics of advertising on digital platforms increasingly overlap with those of cinema.

Discussions surrounding the use of artificial intelligence in the case of *Coca-Cola Masterpiece* demonstrate that audiences evaluate advertising not only through its visible text but also through production processes and ethical considerations. In the comments, artificial intelligence is accepted when positioned as a tool that supports human creativity. In contrast, it is met with criticism when perceived as replacing creative labor or as a cost-reduction strategy. This finding indicates that, in contemporary advertising reception, aesthetic value is considered alongside production regimes and labor politics. In this respect, advertising becomes not merely a marketing product, but also a carrier of public debates concerning technological transformation and cultural values.

Themes of national identity, history, and collective memory become particularly prominent in the *#BırakmayızSeni* and *Türkiye'nin Kanatları* videos. In these cases, viewers position the advertisements not as contemporary promotional content but as narratives that establish a connection between past and present, recall shared values, and reinforce national

belonging. The comment sections transform into digital spaces of commemoration and remembrance; advertising is embraced less as a corporate message and more as a symbolic cultural text. This demonstrates that cinematic advertising narratives can function as powerful instruments in the construction of collective memory and identity. By contrast, the socially oriented *Karneni Göster Kitabını Al* video reveals that advertising reception is not confined to a singular aesthetic or emotional framework. In this example, audience comments focus on the campaign's tangible impact in everyday life, its capacity to generate practical benefit, and its ability to prompt action. While aesthetic discussions recede into the background, the campaign's social function and its direct effects come to the forefront. This finding indicates that the reception of advertising on digital platforms varies by content type and the value it offers. Advertising may thus be positioned at different times as an aesthetic viewing experience, an emotionally charged space of collectivity, an arena for ethical debate, or a call that produces social benefit. The netnographic analysis makes this multi-layered meaning production visible, demonstrating that the relationship between advertising and cinema on digital platforms is not merely a formal convergence, but a dynamic cultural process constructed through audience practices and comment culture.

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