

APPLYING THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS METHOD IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR RESEARCH

TÜKETİCİ DAVRANIŞLARI ARAŞTIRMALARINDA SÖYLEM ANALİZİ YÖNTEMİ KULLANIMI

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Abstract

Discourse analysis is a method for understanding social life through linguistic data analysis, including face-to-face conversation, nonverbal interaction, images, symbols, and documents. It is a qualitative analysis method used in many fields of social sciences, including anthropology, sociology, international relations, communication studies, and political science in academic research. This study aims to convey how discourse analysis can be applied in consumer behavior research. First of all, the conceptual framework of the method is given. Then systematical application process of the method is defined. Finally, it discussed how it could be applied in consumer behavior research.

Keywords: Qualitative Research, Discourse Analysis, Consumer Behavior

Jel Codes: D01, D11, D12, M31

Özet

Söylem analizi en geniş anlamıyla; yüz yüze konuşma, sözsüz etkileşim, görüntüler, semboller ve belgeler dahil olmak üzere dilsel verilerin analizi yoluyla anlaşılan sosyal hayatın incelenmesidir. Akademik araştırmalarda antropoloji, sosyoloji, uluslararası ilişkiler, iletişim çalışmaları ve siyaset bilimi dahil olmak üzere sosyal bilimlerin pek çok alanında başvurulan bir nitel analiz yöntemidir. Bu çalışmada, söylem analizinin tüketici davranışları alanında ne şekilde kullanılabileceğinin aktarılması amaçlanmaktadır. Öncelikle yöntemin kavramsal çerçevesi çizilmiş, ardından sistematik olarak nasıl uygulanabileceği aktarılmış ve nihayetinde tüketici davranışları alanında nasıl kullanılabileceği tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nitel Araştırma, Söylem Analizi, Tüketici Davranışları

Jel Kodları: D01, D11, D12, M31

INTRODUCTION

The discipline of consumer behavior works in collaboration with other fields of social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, and cultural disciplines. That is because consumption includes much more than the purchasing process and functional benefit expectation. Consumption is a comprehensive concept related to the individual's association with others, objects, technology, and life, depending on how he interprets the world. In addition, it is said that consumption plays an essential role in the construction of society through processes such as determining the relations between society and the individual and social class, creating identity, and providing social communication and rituals (Askegaard & Linnet, 2013). From this point of view, the discipline of consumer behavior considers consumers as subjects in search of meaning, interacting with other individuals and objects, rather than passive and obedient elements limited by social structures.

Although qualitative research methods are not new to marketing and consumer behavior, there is still much theoretical knowledge that these methods can reveal. From this point of view,

consumer behavior research can also benefit from qualitative analysis methods with an interdisciplinary approach to produce more qualified and sufficient information. In this context, one of the methods that researchers can apply is discourse analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Discourse Analysis as a Concept

Before moving on to discourse analysis, defining the concept of discourse would be appropriate. Discourse can be broadly defined as:

- It is the highest unit of linguistic description. It is above phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, and texts.
- It is an example of using language written to speak.
- It refers to communication established in a specific situation context (such as the language of law, medicine, etc.).
- It is human interaction established by any means, verbal or nonverbal.
- It is verbal interaction only.
- It is a communicative event (Bloor and Bloor, 2007, cited by Tenario, 2011).

Discourses do not have a meaning of their own, and they need to be considered in their historical and social contexts by researchers in order to understand their constructivist effects. The meanings of any discourse are revealed, supported, and discussed through the production, dissemination, and consumption of texts in the social structure in which it emerges (Hardy, 2001: 28). The most effective analysis technique applied at this point is discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis is frequently applied in linguistic analysis to analyze activities and topics in different linguistic disciplines, such as sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics, with different discourse stages (Brown & Yule, 1991). In addition, discourse analysis is one of the primary methods of questioning social roles and relations, communication, identity, and power relations (Johnstone, 2002).

Although language and its effects on human actions have been studied since the 1800s, the foundations of modern discourse analysis began in Europe in the 1960s with the philosophical renewal of the social and human sciences, later known as structuralism and post-structuralism, or more generally as the Linguistic Turn. It can be said that it was discarded as a result. However, the method spread to the USA in the 1970s with studies on how political concepts and news play a role in constructing social problems (Pedersen, 2009).

This method focuses on the role of language in structuring social action, so the data of discourse analysis are linguistic texts (Sitz, 2008). It is possible to say that discourse analysis, one of the outputs of post-modernism, has developed in the axis of symbology and social psychology (Baş & Akturan, 2013). From this point of view, it can be said that there are two fundamental assumptions of discourse analysis:

- First, social reality is not discovered but actively produced through meaningful interactions.
- Second, meaning and social reality emerge from interrelated bodies of text called discourse, which bring new ideas, objects, and practices to the world (Crawford, 2004).

Table 1 Types of discourse analysis frequently used in the literature, **Reference:** Hodges et al., 2008.

Type	Data Source	Analysis
Formal Linguistic Discourse Analysis	Written and spoken text samples.	It is the micro-analysis of how the text is used linguistically, semantically, and grammatically.
Empirical Discourse Analysis	Data on the use of text in social settings, with examples of written or spoken language and text.	Micro and macro analysis of how language and/or texts construct social practices.
Critical Discourse Analysis	Written or spoken language and text examples and data on the use of the text in social environments and information on the people and institutions that produce them.	Macro analysis of how discourse constructs the thoughts and discourses of institutions or individuals.

The most critical issue distinguishing discourse analysis from other qualitative analysis methods is that it reveals how reality is produced instead of understanding or interpreting social reality as it is (Hardy, 2001). In other words, discourse analysis enables the subject to be comprehended and perceived from a broader perspective rather than providing definitive solutions to a problem (Baş & Akturan, 2013).

2. Application Steps in Discourse Analysis

Since discourse analysis is a qualitative research method, it does not differ significantly from the general qualitative research process during its implementation. However, Table 2 has been created to convey the process practically, and the steps have been defined.

Table 2 Application Steps in Discourse Analysis, References: Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006; Wiggins, 2009; Baş & Akturan, 2013; Baltacı, 2022.

Application Step	Actions
Determining the Research Question	A research question is determined on a subject following the research method. For example, the research question can be defined over consumer complaints, corporate website statements, opinion leader discourses, user comments on social media, etc.
Specifying the Population&Sample and Identifying the Data Sources	The minimum amount of data needed and the source of this data are determined to complete the research healthily and produce correct results. The point to be noted here is that discourse analysis deals with language, not people. Therefore, identification should not be made through individuals.
Designing the Coding Scheme	Based on the research question, the codes to be applied to the data are determined based on the literature.
Data Collection	Records such as audio, text, and video, which are the subject of social interaction, are collected regarding the research question. These data can be found in masses in some media such as social media. In addition, the researcher can also design interviews, focus group interviews, etc., to carry out the process with other qualitative data collection methods.
Coding, Categorizing, and Theming of Data	The sentences in the data set are divided into parts according to their meanings, and their relations are examined. Finally, the data are coded according to the meanings they contain within the framework of the research question. Codes corresponding to similar questions are combined to form categories, and themes are created by combining at least two categories.
Evaluation of Validity	In general, three types of evaluation methods can be mentioned: ➤ Face Validity: It evaluates whether the applied measurement tool

	<p>serves the purpose of measurement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Criterion Validity: It can be expressed as the level of compliance with codes and different measurement tools. ➤ Construct Validity: It is the level of compatibility of the measurement tool with the theory it was created and other constructs within that theory.
Evaluation of Reliability	<p>The reliability issue can be handled under two headings, internal and external.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Internal Reliability: Whether different researchers can reach the same results with the same data set. ➤ External Reliability: It is about whether doing the same research at different times can produce similar results. <p>Therefore, it would be appropriate to eliminate the gaps by repeating the analysis at different times by the same or different researchers.</p>
Analysis and Reporting of Findings	<p>As a result of the analysis, sentences, paragraphs, etc., related to each other must be clearly stated.</p>
Writing the Discussion and Results	<p>The highlights of the findings should be put forward in general and discussed on the axis of the literature. A roadmap for future research and practitioners should be presented.</p>

It should also be noted that in discourse analysis, it is helpful to consider other details, such as pauses in speech, body language, word use, and grammar (Taylor, 2014).

3. Discourse Analysis in Consumer Behavior Research

It is said that discourse analysis is an appropriate method that can be applied in the process of making sense of the phenomenological dimensions of the consumption phenomenon, with the system that connects the individual to the market and the institutions in the market and becomes a consumer (Miller & Rose, 1997) because this interpretive orientation can help marketing researchers better understand consumer behavior, which is complex, ambiguous and socio-cultural.

The discourse analysis process in consumer behavior consists of three stages;

- Analysis of the text: At this stage, elements such as vocabulary, text structure, grammar, and correlation are examined.
- Analysis of discursive practice: In the second stage, the meaning-building processes created by the communication between the parties are examined. How the text is produced, distributed, strengthened, and coherent is evaluated.
- Analysis of social practice: Complex structures such as economic, political, cultural, and ideological elements and metaphors in the discourse are discussed (Fairclough, 1992; Cited by de Rezende & Batinga, 2020).

From this point of view, it can be said that discourse analysis is a method that can be used to understand and make sense of the narratives of consumers or institutions.

The researcher should define an area of discursiveness related to the subject to be analyzed. Then, it should determine the exclusion criteria to define the area outside of this area. Thus, the content in discourse but not included in the research topic is prevented from affecting the analysis. For example, while the train alone defines an object, it can also refer to a social area in a broad sense. Whatever meaning the researcher is interested in here, he should not include it in the analysis by excluding the other meaning. Two concepts emerge here:

- Hegemony (Supremacy): Clearly demarcating the boundaries between discourses, absence of inconsistency.

- Antagonism: It is an open conflict between different discourses at a certain discourse level (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

Discourse analysis aims to reveal the embedded discourses in the language used to maintain existing social relations. Today, with the developments in communication technologies, the amount and variety of data subject to discourse analysis have increased, and different methods may need to be followed for their analysis. In addition, the active use of social media, both institutionally and personally, has also been effective.

For example, media organizations constantly monitor the traffic of their pages through web analytics for news sites. Based on this data, models for different consumer groups can be created for the style of viewing the site, and profiles can be created. Based on this information, content and design features can be managed for the site. Thus, the institution obtains factual information about who should write for whom, in what language, and on what subject. The success achieved in this regard cannot be considered only as the number of clicks for the institution's site. That also makes successful pages preferable for other businesses that want to advertise on the Internet (Bouvier & Machin, 2018).

On the other hand, although it is said that social media hosts many fragmented discourse communities, it still needs to be fully clarified what kind of ideologies are under these communities (Bouvier, 2019). Since the primary purpose of this channel is to increase consumption, the shares, discourses, comments, uploads, etc., that consumers have made on social media can be used for commercial purposes (KhosraviNik, 2017). By processing this data, the sites present content suitable for the person's tastes and interests and try to increase their stay in the system.

Another essential benefit of social media sites is that they have classified the data within a particular format. For example, much data is classified as a person's career on LinkedIn and personal interests on Facebook. Another critical data source in social media is the positive and negative reactions to the shares and comments made on such channels. It should be noted that these reactions also occur in the face of a discourse.

Although the most frequently used discourse analysis types in the literature are given in Table 1, it can be said that multimodal discourse analysis can also be used as an effective method in the field of consumer behavior. Therefore, it would be appropriate to mention this type of analysis. Multimodal discourse analysis is a current approach that expands the analysis scope by combining the content conveyed in words with different data, such as music, gestures, mimics, symbols, and visuals (O'Toole, 2010; O'Halloran, 2011). In this way, different structures related to each other can be handled together, and it can be ensured that they produce more information than they can produce alone. In addition, multimodal discourse analysis is a method that can be used to deal with interactive data that can complement each other on the internet (Kress, 2009; Djonov et al., 2015). The most critical issue to be considered in this method is the correct design of the priority order of the collected data of different natures and how these data will be associated with each other (Bateman, 2008; O'Halloran, 2011). The analysis process can become quite complex if researchers cannot design the process correctly from the beginning.

METHOD

The research population is the articles published in Turkish in the field of consumer behavior in Turkey and using discourse analysis as a method. As a result of the examination made on the internet, it was determined that six articles met the conditions, and all of them were obtained.

The title, keywords, abstract, publication year, and author title of the obtained articles were transferred to MS Office Word. Subsequently, these Word files were uploaded to the MAXQDA 2020 program, and word clouds were created about the contents.

FINDINGS

One of the most striking issues in the study is the absence of senior academics, such as associate professors or professors among the researchers who applied the method. Except for one study, all studies are single-authored. There are two authors in the exception mentioned above study. The distribution of researchers according to their titles is given in the table.

Title	Amount
Graduate Student	2
Research Assistant	2
Lecturer	1
Asst. Prof.	2

When the years of the publications are examined, it is seen that the oldest publication was made in 2010, but no other study was carried out until 2018. It is understood that studies using discourse analysis in consumer behavior have mainly been carried out in the last five years. The number of articles written by year is shown in the table.

Year	#
2021	1
2020	2
2019	1
2018	1
2010	1

When the titles are examined, expressions such as advertisement, showing off, relationship, and gender draw attention. From this perspective, research is generally made on advertisements and conspicuous consumption. The word cloud created from the research titles is shared in the image.



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discourse analysis can examine the speeches of politicians, scientists, opinion leaders, company owners, and managers, which can have substantial results in the markets and interest consumers. In this context, discourse analysis can be used in consumer vulnerability studies. Consumer vulnerability is an issue that arises due to market interactions and puts the consumer at a disadvantage (Baker et al., 2005). The main reason for the emergence of this situation is the problematic power distribution caused by the information asymmetry between consumers and market actors.

On the other hand, advertisements, slogans, songs, social media content, and any other type of message delivered to consumers through the media can be analyzed using content analysis. Contrary to these, this method can be used to evaluate the symbolic consumption habits of consumers. For example, discourse analysis can produce meaningful results in consumer behavior researches for products that the individual uses while expressing himself, such as the preference for products with a brand logo, tattoo designs, or objects to which the individual attributes spiritual meaning. In addition, the discourses consumers share on specific issues or events in social media also offer a rich field of research.

On the other hand, discourse analysis considers the consumer as an individual and thus transforms him into a conscious and autonomous subject, unlike the quantitative method of explaining the behavior of consumers with models and data sets compressed into certain measurement intervals. For this reason, it can be expected that research conducted with discourse analysis will produce more detailed results on consumer behavior. In addition, there is no obligation to use discourse analysis alone. Due to the flexible nature of qualitative research, discourse analysis can be used together with different qualitative and quantitative methods. Thus, it will be possible to produce different kinds of information.

As a result of the analyses, it is appropriate to assert that discourse analysis has not received sufficient attention in the Turkish literature regarding consumer behavior discipline. The few studies that have been done are concentrated on issues such as conspicuous consumption and advertising. In future research, research to be carried out on the discourses of different

consumer groups on different subjects can contribute to the Turkish consumer behavior literature.

REFERENCES

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