

From Heroic Masculinity to Feminist Dads: Advertising Fatherhood in Türkiye

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Representations of masculinities and fatherhood have long been central to advertising narratives. Over time, these depictions have shifted from traditional portrayals to more progressive roles, influenced by growing feminist critiques and their impact on media. In the context of postfeminism, “menvertising” and “dadvertising” have become significant in reinforcing or challenging patriarchal notions of masculinity and fatherhood, with much of the research focusing on Western contexts. This study examines the complex discursive landscape of fatherhood representation in Turkish advertising, arguing that traditional portrayals of fathers as heroic figures with political connotations coexist and compete with more progressive models of fatherhood, such as feminist parenting. A feminist critical discourse analysis of 2024 Father’s Day advertisements online reveals that Turkish fatherhood occupies a contested third space, navigating between neoconservative, politically influenced national values and emerging progressive ideals of care, feminist parenting, and involved fatherhood. Crucially, these advertisements predominantly lack diverse and intersectional representations.

Keywords: dadvertising, fatherhood, feminism, masculinities, Türkiye

Since the 1980s, brands have increasingly aimed to engage male consumers by challenging traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity (Pompper, 2010, p. 682). More recently, particularly following the 2010s, brands have widely adopted “dadvertising,” which incorporates critical perspectives on traditional fatherhood into commercial narratives on a global scale (Leader, 2019, p. 77). Notable global advertising campaigns during this period include Gillette’s “The Best a Man Can Be” (Guardian News, 2019), Axe’s “Find Your Magic” (The Wall Street Journal, 2016), and Audi’s Super Bowl commercial “Daughter” (Meaningful Impact, 2017). These campaigns have ignited substantial discourse on contemporary male identities and the shifting roles of men in society, seeking to dismantle entrenched taboos and promote a more inclusive understanding of masculinity (Pando-Canteli & Rodriguez, 2021, p. 496). In response, academics have analyzed the evolving representations of men in advertising by employing the concepts of dadvertising and menvertising to characterize this commercial language and explore its cultural and ideological implications (Leader, 2019; Mueller, Morton, Johnson, Sharma, & Morris, 2022; Pando-Canteli & Rodriguez, 2021). These shifts paralleled the evolution of advertising language, particularly in its portrayal of women in more empowered and positive roles. This period, often characterized as postfeminist (Gill & Scharff, 2011;

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McRobbie, 2004), witnessed the convergence of neoliberal market discourse and feminist ideals of empowerment, as evidenced by campaigns such as Always's "Like a Girl" (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017) and Dove Real Beauty (Murray, 2013). Collectively, these developments highlight a critical juncture where evolving gender norms and market-driven narratives intersect, fostering a more nuanced and inclusive cultural discourse on both masculinity and femininity, albeit one that remains deeply influenced by underlying market interests.

This study seeks to offer a culturally specific perspective on the portrayal of fatherhood in advertisements in Türkiye, examining how it functions as a commercial discourse shaped by contemporary cultural and political dynamics. Turkish politics has experienced a conservative revival since 2002 under the pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has employed patriarchal discourses characterized by anti-feminist and anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric (Zihnioğlu & Kourou, 2024). This rhetoric positions women primarily within the familial sphere, promoting education for women only if it enhances their ability to fulfill domestic duties (Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011, p. 567). Additionally, it stigmatizes abortion and undermines women's bodily autonomy within an era increasingly shaped by "patriarchal and authoritarian neoconservative values" (Mutluer, 2019, p. 104). Despite the prevailing ideological challenges, the past decade has witnessed a notable increase in women's activism and empowerment, which has also found reflection in marketing and commercial discourses. Brands targeting Turkish female consumers have increasingly employed "femvertisements" (Kırlı & Çakır, 2021); advertising campaigns that aim to challenge gender stereotypes and promote women's empowerment (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 796). Although scholarly research has increasingly explored the portrayal of women in advertisements beyond traditional gender roles, the academic investigation of dadvertising in Türkiye remains relatively understudied in international scholarship.

Despite the increasing prevalence of advertisements globally and in Türkiye that challenge hegemonic masculinity and traditional fatherhood, the depth, quality, and consistency of this commercial critique remain subject to scrutiny, particularly in terms of intersectional analyses. Drawing upon these perspectives and discussions of masculinity and culture, this study initially explores the conceptual framework through which advertisements in postfeminist times address masculinities, with a particular focus on fatherhood. Subsequently, a thematic discursive analysis of Father's Day advertisements in Türkiye is conducted to evaluate the critical potential of dadvertising in this context. It is argued that representations of fatherhood in advertisements underscore the complex discursive dynamics of dadvertising, which oscillate between portrayals of feminist dads and those aligned with heroic and nationalist ideals. This phenomenon paradoxically incorporates both progressive gender discourses and authoritarian cultural inclinations.

Gender and Advertising in Postfeminist Times

The feminist examination of masculinities gained prominence in the 1980s, notably with Connell's (1987) concept of "hegemonic masculinity," which underscores the unequal distribution of power among men. Drawing on Gramsci (1992), Connell (2005) argued that not all men equally benefit from patriarchy, with certain groups—such as White, heterosexual, middle-class men—enjoying what she termed the "patriarchal dividend" (p. 79). Messerschmidt (2019) later expanded this concept to incorporate intersecting

factors like race, class, and sexuality (p. 88), aligning with Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality, which highlights how overlapping categories exacerbate inequality. These discussions have shaped feminist thought, influencing public policy, activism, and academic debates, including advertising studies. Over the last two decades, advertising has reflected transformations in masculinities and evolving gender relations within commercial culture.

Historically, advertising has been viewed as a commercial discourse that reproduces, normalizes, and legitimizes patriarchal gender divisions, sexist stereotypes, and women's subordination (Goffman, 1988). Since its substantial growth beginning in the post-World War II period in the United States and other advanced capitalist societies, often referred to as the "Mad Men Era" of the 1960s, advertising has been regarded as a patriarchal industry and a cultural institution that systematically legitimizes gender inequalities through its depictions (Boulton, 2013, p. 253). Since the 1990s, however, advertising imagery and representations have evolved, increasingly integrating feminist critiques into their discourse (Lazar, 2014, p. 206). The initial feminist curiosity about sexism in advertising began in the late 1970s, when scholars began to view media representations as significant social issues, arguing that media not only reflects but also legitimizes patriarchal power relations (Gill, 2011, p. 9). During the 1980s, the increasing visibility of Black feminism highlighted representation as a critical field of power, particularly as African Americans were systematically excluded from advertising (Gill, 2011, pp. 28–29). With the intersectional turn in the 1990s and the growing influence of intersectional feminist and LGBTIQ+ debates, marketing discourses began to more effectively target these consumer groups by diversifying their advertising language and brand promises (Maclaran, 2015, p. 1733). Subsequently, brands expanded their narratives to encompass a wider range of marginalized groups, considering factors such as gender, sexuality, race, and other forms of identity (Li, 2024).

In this regard, the growing commodification of feminism as a brand proposition, along with the mainstreaming of feminist claims and ideals through increasing depictions in popular culture, digital media, and advertising, has met with skepticism from feminist scholars, who have critiqued this period as "postfeminism" (Gill, 2016b; McRobbie, 2004). According to the critiques, postfeminist culture is defined as a complex phenomenon where feminist ideals, such as women's empowerment, occupy an important space in media representations and particularly neoliberal discourse (Gill, 2011, p. 254; 2016a, p. 613). However, these representations also include subtle forms of sexism, impose beauty ideals, and encourage young girls to engage in self-surveillance about these ideals. There is also a lack of diversity in women's voices, insufficient intersectionality, and inadequate addressing of women's everyday problems (Gill & Scharff, 2011, p. 4). As a result, some authors criticized postfeminist media portrayals as they contribute to the widespread misunderstanding that feminism is taken for granted and its issues have been completely resolved, thus reproducing sexism and anti-feminism in implicit forms (Gill, Kelan, & Scharff, 2016, p. 229). In postfeminist times, advertising served as a significant ideological apparatus by commodifying the feminist project as a marketing discourse and stripping it of its political context (Guo et al., 2022). The neoliberalization of women's empowerment through advertising was subsequently extended to the commercialization of male representation through critical forms after the 2010s (Leader, 2019, p. 74), with concepts such as *menvertising* and *dadvertising* emerging as key frameworks for discussion.

Dadvertising in Türkiye and Beyond

In the postfeminist cultural landscape, advertising has increasingly explored manhood and masculinities, following earlier trends of branding feminist concerns. Historically, advertising often depicted men in stereotypical, patriarchal roles, exemplified by the iconic "Marlboro Man," a symbol of hegemonic masculinity (White, Oliffe, & Bottorff, 2012, p. 536). Advertisements normalized dominant male traits like strength, rationality, and breadwinning, while excluding men from domestic roles (Campana, Van den Bossche, & Miller, 2020, p. 475; Lazar, 2014, p. 206). Since the 1990s, however, commercial discourses have shifted toward inclusive and diverse representations, challenging traditional masculinity through "menvertising" (Campana et al., 2020, p. 477; Pando-Canteli & Rodriguez, 2021). In these portrayals, men are increasingly shown in nontraditional roles, such as taking care of themselves, focusing on male beauty, and engaging in family affairs, including domestic labor and childcare (Pando-Canteli & Rodriguez, 2021, p. 501). According to Pando-Canteli and Rodriguez (2021), menvertising is distinguished by its emphasis on diverse male representation, showcasing a range of identities beyond the traditional young, middle-class, White, heterosexual male. It challenges conventional gender norms by placing men in nontraditional and gender-neutral roles, such as caregiving or domestic settings. This approach presents men as authentic, everyday individuals rather than idealized figures, and promotes products that align with this genuine portrayal. Unlike traditional advertisements that reinforce male dominance, menvertising sends a positive message by encouraging men to embrace vulnerability and engage in roles culturally associated with women. Additionally, it neutralizes the sexualized portrayal of masculinity, focusing on respectful and nonobjectifying representations of male bodies (Pando-Canteli & Rodriguez, 2021, pp. 500–501).

In this context, Axe's "Find Your Magic" (The Wall Street Journal, 2016), Audi's "Daughter" (Meaningful Impact, 2017), and Gillette's "The Best a Man Can Be" (Guardian News, 2019) are notable examples of advertisements that portray alternative masculinities and successfully attract public attention to evolving notions of manhood. The criticism of aggressive and violent forms of masculinity in patriarchal culture has sparked public interest in the representation of fatherhood in commercial discourse. As seen in Gillette and Audi advertisements, portrayals of manhood often intersect with the representation of fatherhood, given that fatherhood is a crucial aspect of constructing masculinities. These advertisements tend to critique hegemonic masculinity by deconstructing traditional notions of fatherhood as central to power dynamics. In this regard, dadvertising has emerged as a specific form of menvertising that focuses on evolving fatherhood roles in contemporary times and critiques traditional, authoritative versions of fatherhood that perpetuate unequal gender-power dynamics (Leader, 2019, p. 76). Occupying an important segment of consumer markets, men have increasingly been depicted as affectionate fathers who successfully manage equal gender relations at home, take responsibility for housework, and challenge gender stereotypes that marginalize their female partners (Tsai, Shata, & Tian, 2021, p. 22).

Although alternative depictions of fatherhood through dadvertising can be seen as an improvement in terms of diversity and inclusion, many academic studies caution against being overly enthusiastic about these portrayals. There are still significant issues with these depictions that need to be addressed. First, criticism of fatherhood in advertising emerged later than critiques of women's gendered subordination, primarily because fatherhood remains a powerful symbol that is difficult to challenge and relinquish (Leader, 2019, p. 76). Although messages promoting gender equality that focus on women's issues generally attract

significant attention from both male and female consumers, men are often less receptive to critiques directed at manhood. As demonstrated by reactions to the Gillette “The Best a Man Can Be” campaign (Guardian News, 2019)—perceived by some male consumers as an accusation of bullying and aggressive behavior (Feng & Kim, 2024, p. 2)—offering a critical narrative on masculinities and fatherhood poses significant risks for brands from a business perspective.

Second, as Leader (2019) suggests, an intersectional analysis of dadvertising is essential to uncover the nuances of representation (p. 85). As Tsai’s (2010) analysis of the Taiwanese context demonstrates, advertising in non-Western contexts tends to predominantly portray fathers as urban, upper-middle-class, and westernized, overlooking the diverse realities of fatherhood (p. 437). In relation to their depictions that often fall short of diversity, dadvertisements can reinforce stereotypes of caring fathers who exclusively share domestic responsibilities, neglecting to acknowledge the varied roles and experiences of fathers in different cultural, socioeconomic, and familial contexts. As Leader (2019) observes, dadvertisements often underrepresent women and reinforce traditional gender roles by portraying men primarily as fathers engaged in homemaking as a “reward” rather than domestic labor (p. 85). This portrayal suggests that men’s involvement in domestic tasks is seen as a deviation from their primary role as breadwinners, rather than as an equal partnership within the household. Additionally, dadvertisements frequently depict men’s time spent with their children as an opportunity for joy and fulfillment, rather than as a responsibility or duty associated with domestic labor (Tsai, 2010, p. 433). In these advertisements, fathers may appear to “support progressive gender policies” by performing housework and freeing their daughters from conducting these tasks (Leader, 2019, p. 85). However, this portrayal can perpetuate traditional gender roles by suggesting that domestic labor is primarily women’s responsibility and that men’s involvement is a form of paternalistic benevolence rather than an equal partnership. The criticisms highlight the need for advertisements to move beyond stereotypical portrayals of the new generation of caring fathers and delve deeper into the actual caretaking experiences and motivations of fathers in diverse contexts.

Another crucial consideration is the advertising of fatherhood in non-Western contexts. It is essential to recognize that postfeminism is a concept rooted in Western discourse, and its application warrants investigation within transnational contexts, particularly through the lens of non-Western women’s experiences and their representation in advertising (Dosekun, 2015, p. 966). This is particularly evident in the case of femvertisements and dadvertisements, which require specific attention because of the unique discursive constructions of fatherhood and gender relations in these contexts. In this regard, Tsai (2010) observes that although studies primarily focus on how gender stereotypes and fatherhood are portrayed in Western advertisements, there is a significant lack of research on these topics in non-Western contexts, particularly the Asian context. Tsai’s (2010) study of Taiwanese commercials demonstrates a shift away from traditional portrayals of fatherhood, with fathers increasingly sharing childcare responsibilities. However, these depictions often fall short of representing the full scope of fatherhood, as fathers are primarily portrayed as communicators rather than active participants in their children’s education. Although Taiwanese commercials increasingly feature fathers as active participants in childcare, they often perpetuate traditional gender roles by portraying their interactions with children as primarily playful and enjoyable, neglecting the more demanding aspects of parenting (Tsai, 2010, p. 437). Additionally, Padalia and Sriram’s (2019) study of Hindi TV advertisements demonstrates that fathers are frequently depicted as engaging with their children in various activities, but their involvement is often limited to shared experiences,

mentorship, and providing financial resources, rather than participating in the day-to-day tasks of childcare and domestic labor. Similar to the findings of Leader (2019) and Tsai (2010), Padalia and Sriram's (2019) analysis highlights the importance of communication, particularly through humor, in depicting fathers as engaging with their children in advertisements.

In the Turkish context, although there is extensive research on femvertising, masculinities, and the transformations of fatherhood in national literature, the study of fatherhood in advertising remains relatively limited. Beşpınar's (2015) sociological analysis underscores a shift from the traditional archetype of the father as solely an economic provider to a more contemporary model of fatherhood, emphasizing emotional involvement and active caregiving, a change she attributes to the influence of Western global currents based on her fieldwork with middle-class fathers (p. 109). Similarly, Sayimer and Derman (2019) analyze the evolving dimensions of fatherhood from a cross-cultural perspective, drawing on fathers' blogs, and reveal a challenge to traditional models of fatherhood, noting that fathers are increasingly exhibiting more caring and affectionate behaviors (p. 133). The existing literature also emphasizes the limitations of this transformation, particularly as reflected in media representations. In their study analyzing the depictions of masculinity in Turkish advertising from the 1980s to the present, Karaosmanoğlu, Ata, and Emgin (2024) observe that, despite the increased representation of men engaged in household labor, such involvement is often portrayed as men merely playing with or experimenting with household products, rather than embracing these responsibilities as integral tasks. A focused study on advertising and the evolving roles of fatherhood was conducted by Doğan and Karaman (2023), who randomly selected and analyzed advertisements from 2020 to 2023. Their research explores how brands—such as Bosch, Bepanthol, Baby Turco, Dr. Oetker, Karaca, Goon, Aptamil, Petito, and Cif—depict fatherhood in roles that move beyond traditional masculine stereotypes, highlighting a shift in gender norms within fatherhood representations. Erol, Acar, and Yaman (2024) conducted a content analysis of 89 Father's Day advertisements aired on television and online between 2018 and 2022. Their findings indicate an increase in portrayals of caring fathers; however, fathers are still predominantly depicted in outdoor settings and in traditionally idealized roles, suggesting limited progression in the representation of fatherhood.

Despite the growing interest in this topic in recent years, existing studies fall short in exploring fatherhood and new masculinities in Türkiye through postfeminist and intersectional lenses within international scholarship. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of research examining how the country's contemporary neoconservative political landscape intersects with advertising. In this respect, this study seeks to address these gaps by analyzing online Father's Day advertisements published in Türkiye in 2024. The analysis will employ a lens of complex dynamics that shape advertising discourse, examining how these dynamics relate to the social and cultural transformations or reassertions of fatherhood, as well as how advertising discourse is situated within a broader theoretical and sociocultural context.

Note on Methodology

To analyze Turkish Father's Day advertising as a complex terrain of struggle over meanings about fatherhood, this research aims to find explanations to following research questions:

RQ1: How are gender relations constructed and portrayed in Turkish Father's Day advertisements as cultural representations?

RQ2: Do Father's Day advertisements challenge or reinforce traditional stereotypes about fatherhood?

RQ3: Does the representation of fatherhood in Turkish advertisements reflect diversity and intersectionality?

RQ4: How are the advertising discourses related to the wider discursive social and political practices?

To provide comprehensive explanations for the research questions outlined above, this study employs a critical discourse analysis informed by a feminist perspective. I use Fairclough's (1995) "Three-Dimensional Model of Discourse," which encompasses three key components (p. 98). First, I study the text by examining the aural, visual, and textual elements that comprise the advertisements under analysis. Second, I analyze how the text constitutes a discursive practice, exploring how narrative elements shape fatherhood as a discourse. Third, I address the implications of this discourse within a broader social, cultural, and political context, considering how fatherhood relates to wider discursive meaning systems. Fairclough (1995) defines "discourse" as the use of language in social practice and describes discourse analysis as the study of how texts function within sociocultural contexts (p. 7). To effectively integrate Fairclough's (1995) model with feminist sensitivity, I also draw upon Lazar's (2007) feminist critical discourse analysis. According to Lazar (2007), feminist critical discourse studies seek to reveal how gendered assumptions and power dynamics are often unconsciously produced, maintained, and challenged through discourse across various social contexts (p. 142).

A sampling procedure was conducted through a YouTube search using Turkish keywords for "Father's Day Advertisement," selecting the most viewed advertisements. The analysis focuses on the top 10 most-watched advertisements on YouTube to explore the representations of fatherhood in popular culture. Within this selection, the brands KİĞİLİ, Özdilek, and BİM each have two advertisements in this category; to ensure a comprehensive examination and to facilitate the inclusion of other brands, one advertisement from each of these brands was chosen based on its relevance to the discussion. As a result, 10 advertisements from 10 different brands were chosen for analysis, as outlined in Table 1. The view counts for the advertisements range from 10,221,336 (Özdilek) to 273,325 (Mercedes-Benz), with the data retrieved on September 13, 2024. The links to the videos were also retrieved on this date. Following a thorough examination of the advertisements, which included an analysis of the textual, verbal, and visual elements contributing to the discourse on fatherhood, four key themes were identified from the advertising narratives as discursive practices following Fairclough's model: (1) New Subjectivities in Fatherhood, (2) Fatherhood as an Absent Referent, (3) The Myth of Fatherhood, (4) Single-Task Dad: Selective Involvement in Childcare. Following the detailed analysis of advertisements as discursive practices, the sociocultural implications of these themes are discussed at length, highlighting how they reflect and shape contemporary understandings of fatherhood within the broader context of Turkish society.

Table 1. List of Advertisements.

Brand / Screen Name	Sector	Date	Themes
Bellona Mobilya (2024)	Retail—Furniture	June 14, 2024	2, 3
BİM Türkiye (2024)	Retail—Supermarket	June 13, 2024	3, 4
Castrol Türkiye (2024)	Chemicals	June 14, 2024	1
D'S Damat (2024)	Retail—Men's Fashion	June 7, 2024	4
DeFacto Official (2024)	Retail—Fast Fashion	June 6, 2024	2, 3
Kiğılı (2024)	Retail—Men's Fashion	June 11, 2024	1
LC Waikiki (2024)	Retail—Fast Fashion	June 1, 2024	2
Mercedes-Benz Türk Kamyon & Otobüs (2024)	Automotive	June 15, 2024	1
Özdilek (2024)	Retail—Home Goods	June 7, 2024	1, 3, 4
Saat ve Saat (2024)	Retail—Watch	June 3, 2024	3, 4

As part of the research findings, the first theme examines how contemporary advertising establishes new subjectivities in fatherhood, reflecting innovative forms of parenting that diverge from traditional roles. This category of advertisements is relatively diverse, critical, and intersectional in varying degrees in terms of their representation of fathers. Under the second theme of advertisements, I argue that fatherhood constitutes the “absent referent” of advertising discourse, as fatherhood is celebrated and prioritized without any portrayal of parenting labor. The third theme discusses how fatherhood is constituted as a myth through glorification and heroicization, intersecting with national and religious ideologies that shape the Turkish cultural landscape. Finally, the fourth category addresses the representation of “single task dads” in advertising discourse where fathers are engaged in childcare or domestic responsibilities through their limited involvement and partial parenting. It is useful to note that the advertisements analyzed may fit into one or more of these categories depending on how they portray fatherhood discursively as shown in Table 1.

Analyzing the Discursive Practices of Fatherhood

Exploring New Subjectivities

The analysis of 2024 Turkish Father's Day advertisements reveals that the first category of advertisements portray fathers in alternative roles, challenging traditional notions of fatherhood. These advertisements exemplify a trend toward feminist parenting, as Wu (2012) describes, a “reconfiguration of fatherhood,” emphasizing gender equality and shared parental responsibilities (p. 144). The fathers depicted actively engage in childcare, nurture their children, and express emotions, challenging traditional gender roles. By portraying fathers as equal partners in parenting, these advertisements contribute to a broader cultural shift toward more progressive and inclusive notions of fatherhood. For instance, in the Özdilek advertisement, the scene begins with a daughter asking her father, “Dad, can you take me to ballet class today?” (Özdilek, 2024, 00:00:05) while emotional music plays in the background. At that moment, the father is drinking tea in the kitchen, a significant detail, as the kitchen has traditionally been associated with women's domestic roles. The father's presence in this space symbolizes a shift in gender expectations. Demonstrating a close bond with his daughter, the father assumes a caregiving role, accompanying her to

ballet class. In the class, the father humorously tries to imitate his daughter's ballet moves, participating in an activity typically dominated by mothers and daughters. Through these two key settings—the kitchen and the ballet class—the advertisement highlights the father's involvement in spaces traditionally associated with women, subtly challenging the conventional boundaries of fatherhood.

Another example illustrating the evolving portrayal of fatherhood appears in the Kiğılı advertisement. The advertisement opens with a scene depicting a full laundry basket by the door at night, while the father and his child are seen sleeping together in bed. This visual suggests that the father is grappling with the burden of laundry, underscoring the domestic challenges he faces. The father is gently stroking his child's hair, a tender image that underscores their emotional bond. He then awakens and speaks softly to his son, who is still asleep, saying, "I don't have any grand speeches for you, little one. But let's agree on a couple of things right now" (Kiğılı, 2024, 00:00:08–00:00:15). As the father continues, he offers advice, encouraging his son to become a conscientious and compassionate individual. His voice remains in the background as the narrative transitions to a scene where the son is older, and the father helps him tie his school tie. The advertisement portrays a middle-class household, subtly signified by the bathroom items and other domestic details. In a later scene, we see the father having breakfast in the kitchen, assisting his son with getting dressed for school while the mother prepares breakfast. Although the mother's role aligns with a stereotypical gender representation—being responsible for meal preparation—the father's involvement in dressing his son challenges traditional gender roles. Instead of perpetuating the stereotype where women manage household duties and men passively expect to be served, this scene conveys a more balanced dynamic, with both parents sharing domestic responsibilities, particularly in childcare. This portrayal of shared parenting responsibilities is a significant marker of gender equality in dadvertising. As Leader (2019) observes, mothers are often absent in these advertisements, making the father's active role even more crucial (p. 85). In one scene, after the father yells at the child, he reconciles by hugging his son, thus deconstructing the image of an authoritarian father. Additionally, in dadvertising, the home is typically idealized as a peaceful haven where childcare and domestic duties are depicted as enjoyable and fulfilling, rather than stressful or burdensome (Leader, 2019, p. 77). However, unlike the usual tone of advertisements, this advertisement has a distinctly emotional and even melancholic atmosphere. There is no element of joy attributed to the relationship between the father and son; instead, the home is portrayed as a place of hard work, trauma, and melancholia. An implicit narrative suggests that the father may be deceased, as hinted by the narrator's final line, spoken in the father's voice: "Don't ask why, just live" (Kiğılı, 2024, 00:01:45–00:01:48). The advertisement is thus noteworthy for addressing the father-child relationship through the lens of loss, without glorifying or mystifying the father's absence. It presents a realistic depiction of middle-class life, moving beyond the stereotypical "joyful" father figure to portray a father who meets his child's actual emotional needs. Furthermore, the mother is depicted as an active partner in the household, sharing responsibilities with the father rather than being a passive or absent figure in the narrative.

In their alternative portrayals of fatherhood, Castrol and Mercedes-Benz advertisements challenge traditional hegemonic masculinity. Castrol, for instance, highlights various paternal experiences, including a middle-aged man who values authenticity over appearances, a safety-conscious father pushing a stroller, a responsible elder maintaining his vehicle, and a nurturing dad engaging with his daughter. By presenting these diverse depictions, the advertisement subverts stereotypical expectations of fatherhood, suggesting

that it can encompass a wider range of roles and behaviors. Similarly, Mercedes-Benz's advertisement showcases a long-distance bus driver who maintains a connection with his child through technology, reading a story to his daughter via smartphone until she falls asleep, despite being physically absent. This portrayal underscores the importance of shared parental responsibilities and challenges the notion that fatherhood is solely defined by physical presence. Additionally, the inclusion of a veiled mother in this advertisement is significant, as it counters the prevailing secularized imagery often found in Turkish advertising. By featuring a veiled woman in a gender-equal parenting scenario, Mercedes-Benz contributes to the development of new subjectivities within the discourse of fatherhood, fostering a more inclusive and intersectional understanding.

Fatherhood as an Absent Referent

In addition to the alternative portrayals of fatherhood that challenge traditional masculine norms, some advertisements employ fatherhood as an "absent referent," a linguistic concept that highlights the significance of what remains unsaid. As Boje (2001) argues, the absence of certain topics or perspectives in discourse can marginalize or oppress particular groups (p. 360). Adams (2010) applies this concept to the consumption of meat, suggesting that the psychological disassociation from the living animal is a form of absent referent. Similarly, the portrayal of animals in a feminized manner can function as an absent referent, indirectly legitimizing the oppression of women by avoiding direct engagement with their experiences (Boje, 2001, p. 360).

Within this theme, two advertisements—one from LC Waikiki and the other from DeFacto—exemplify the concept of the absent referent in the discourse of fatherhood. Despite ostensibly celebrating Father's Day, these advertisements largely omit concrete depictions of fathering experiences. In the LC Waikiki advertisement, an elderly man, well-dressed and holding a smartphone, addresses the camera, stating that his clothing is a gift from his daughter. Similarly, two middle-aged men open Father's Day presents, sharing their excitement online. Although these portrayals offer diversity by featuring an elderly man who is tech-savvy and self-sufficient, they ultimately reduce fatherhood to the act of receiving and sharing gifts. The advertisement's focus on consumption and online sharing obscures the complexities of fatherhood, particularly those of elderly fathers, allowing the brand to avoid engaging with deeper issues related to paternal roles and experiences. By presenting fatherhood as an absent referent, the advertisement depoliticizes the concept and limits it to a superficial celebration of consumerism.

The DeFacto advertisement featuring the famous Turkish actor Buğra Gülsoy further exemplifies the absent referent of fatherhood. Although the advertisement purports to celebrate Father's Day, it primarily focuses on the actor's personal experience, set in his affluent mansion. His son presents him with a DeFacto garment, and they share a heartwarming embrace. Gülsoy's image aligns with the 1990s metrosexual ideal, characterized by a preoccupation with appearance and lifestyle (Pompper, 2010, p. 684). Beyond consumption and fashion, the advertisement reveals little about the father's actual role. The absence of childcare, domestic labor, or simple play highlights the commercialization of fatherhood, reducing it to a stylish and cool figure. The advertisement's tagline, "Stylish, cheerful, and cool like my dad," (DeFacto Official, 2024, 00:00:49) reinforces traditional gender norms, suggesting that sons should emulate their fathers' masculine ideals. In this way, the absent referent of fatherhood is completely overshadowed by the

ideology of consumerism, transforming the father-son relationship into a vehicle for promoting fashion and reinforcing symbolic power.

The Myth of Fatherhood

Under the third theme of fatherhood portrayal, the discourse of fatherhood is often aligned with the depiction of fathers as “heroes” (Molander, 2019, p. 209). Advertisements play a key role in reinforcing this image of “heroic masculinity,” assigning men roles such as breadwinner, rebel, and man of action (Holt & Thompson, 2004, pp. 427–428). These representations are frequently infused with Turkish national and religious cultural dynamics, further solidifying traditional gender roles and societal expectations surrounding masculinity and fatherhood.

In this context, as mentioned earlier in reference to the Özdilek advertisement where the father accompanies his daughter to ballet class, the advertisement concludes with the family—mother, son, and daughter—presenting the father with a Father’s Day gift: a bathrobe with “Dad, My Hero” (Özdilek, 2024, 00:00:57) written on the back. The advertisement ends with the narrator stating: “Our fathers, our friends who put up with all our whims, we are glad you are here” (Özdilek, 2024, 00:01:00–00:01:05). This discourse of fatherhood glorifies the father for his status, portraying him as a figure who “tolerates” whims and responds positively to demands. The father’s involvement in household duties, which should be regarded as part of his ordinary responsibilities, is instead framed as exceptional behavior, warranting praise and reward. This reinforces a narrative where the father’s participation in domestic life is considered extraordinary rather than a shared parental obligation. The Özdilek advertisement, while portraying a father as a heroic figure, also incorporates elements of postfeminist media culture. By featuring a father actively involved in his daughter’s life, the advertisement suggests a progressive shift toward gender equality. However, the simultaneous portrayal of the father as a hero reinforces traditional patriarchal ideals. This juxtaposition reflects the advertisers’ efforts to navigate the complexities of patriarchal culture while attempting to convey progressive gender messages.

The BİM advertisement opens with the word “baba” (father) displayed on the screen, accompanied by the narrator stating, “father” and continuing with “it has been a very *baba* introduction” (BİM Türkiye, 2024, 00:00:00–00:00:03). In Turkish, the term *baba* is colloquially used to emphasize the strength or greatness of something, such as in the expression “a *baba* film,” meaning a great or significant film. This expression is deeply embedded in everyday language and reflects the patriarchal framing of fatherhood as a status symbol associated with heroism. Subsequent scenes depict fathers engaging in routine activities involving the brand’s products, with phrases such as “*baba* comfort, *baba* flavors, *baba* celebration,” and “*baba* lesson.” Through this repetitive use of *baba*, the advertisement continuously reinforces the hegemonic construction of fatherhood, conforming to a sexist advertising language that glorifies and elevates the father figure. This linguistic framing not only asserts the dominance of fatherhood but also perpetuates traditional gender roles within the broader cultural discourse.

Another example is the Bellona advertisement, which illustrates how fatherhood intersects with Türkiye’s nationalist and religious discourses through the heroization of the father figure. The advertisement features a father walking through a factory, stating, “Finally, I am in the place where I

want to be" (Bellona Mobilya, 2024, 00:00:02–00:00:07). The narrative portrays him as the owner of the factory, maintaining strong relationships with his workers. He is shown helping them when they are tired, physically assisting with labor, celebrating their birthdays, and offering comfort when they experience personal losses. In subsequent scenes, the father is seen alone in his office, looking at a photograph of himself as a child with his own father. Speaking to this image, it becomes clear that his father has passed away:

Here I am, finally where I want to be. Everything I know, I learned from you, how to keep going even when tired, how to extend a helping hand to those in need, to share, to grow through sharing, and to be a companion to every living being. You've been gone for a long time, but you're still my compass. Happy Father's Day. My wonderful father. Happy Father's Day to all our fathers who have always guided us, and happy holiday to our entire nation. (Bellona Mobilya, 2024, 00:00:05–00:00:57)

This sequence not only reinforces the idealized figure of the father as a provider and leader but also ties his personal and professional achievements to the legacy of his own father, thus connecting fatherhood to broader cultural narratives of duty, honor, and continuity within Türkiye's nationalist and religious frameworks. In this context, the Bellona advertisement can be interpreted as a "national allegory" in the sense defined by Jameson (1986), symbolically reflecting the underlying social, political, and economic structures of the nation through the father figure in two primary ways (p. 69). First, the father figure is presented as a "compass," a symbol of guidance for both his son and the working class under his paternal authority. This idealized father figure embodies the principles of neoliberalism by eliminating visible class conflicts, depicting an ideal harmony between the business owner and workers. Such a portrayal obscures the realities of "authoritarian neoliberalism" in Türkiye, which is marked by a decline in working-class movements over the past three decades, largely because of the expansion of precarious employment and privatization (Birelma, Işıklı, & Sert, 2023, p. 66). By presenting the father figure as a benevolent leader who seamlessly integrates with his workers, the advertisement reinforces the official state ideology concerning the working class, thus embedding a political dimension within the narrative.

Second, the Bellona advertisement's simultaneous reference to Father's Day and the Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha), which coincided on June 16, 2024, highlights the ideological convergence of neoliberalism, state ideology, and religion. The concept of "Devlet Baba" (Father State), a patriarchal trope in Turkish culture, reinforces the state's role as a provider (Ekal, 2017, p. 331). The advertisement expands the notion of fatherhood beyond familial relationships, allegorically portraying the boy as a father figure to the factory workers. This allegorical representation, however, obscures the actual dynamics of fatherhood within the family, reinforcing the absent referent. The advertisement's emphasis on obedience and conformity, rather than individual agency, aligns with the patriarchal cultural expectation that sons should follow their fathers unquestioningly. This suppression of individualism reinforces the hierarchical nature of father-son relationships, a crucial component in the construction of the traditional Turkish family structure, which is significantly influenced by religious ideology (Ozdemir-Sarigil & Sarigil, 2021, p. 30).

Single-Task Dad: Selective Involvement in Childcare

As the final theme of this discussion, Türkiye's Father's Day advertisements often depict fathers performing isolated tasks related to domestic labor and childcare, rather than assuming broader responsibilities as integral aspects of their fatherhood identity. For example, the Özdilek advertisement portrays the "heroic" father responding positively to his children's requests; such as fixing household items, building a treehouse, taking his daughter to ballet class, and playing football with her. While this portrayal suggests a degree of progressiveness in terms of gender equality by showing the father engaging in various activities, it still frames him as capable of handling only single tasks and being available to assist only when specifically "needed." This depiction reinforces a patriarchal discourse by celebrating the father as a hero for fulfilling these tasks rather than normalizing these responsibilities as part of his everyday duties. By highlighting these acts as exceptional rather than routine, the advertisement perpetuates a narrow view of fatherhood that underscores traditional gender roles and the notion of the father as a benevolent figure performing acts of service rather than engaging in consistent, shared domestic responsibilities.

Other advertisements depicting single-task father narratives include scenarios such as a father teaching his child how to ride a bicycle (BİM), playing with toys (BİM, Özdilek, DS Damat), picking up his daughter from school (Saat ve Saat), and hugging a newborn baby (BİM). These representations contribute to the image of the father as an engaged and responsive parent who meets specific demands from his children. However, they depict his role in parenting as partial rather than encompassing broader, ongoing responsibilities. Additionally, in the Özdilek and Saat ve Saat advertisements—where the father waits patiently to pick up his daughter from school because she wants to continue playing with her friends—the father is portrayed as temporarily suspending his paternal authority. His tolerance and patience in responding to family members' demands and desires illustrate only a partial shift in traditional paternal authority. Overall, Father's Day advertisements reveal a complex discursive landscape characterized by both hegemonic and alternative versions of fatherhood. These advertisements navigate traditional masculinities alongside more involved and caregiving forms of fatherhood, reflecting a nuanced negotiation of paternal roles within the commercial sphere.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This study explored the construction of fatherhood in contemporary Turkish Father's Day advertisements using feminist-informed critical discourse analysis. Employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the analysis shows how advertising both shapes and reflects broader sociocultural practices, situating these portrayals within Türkiye's cultural and political contexts. The findings align with Beşpınar (2015) and Sayimer and Derman (2019), highlighting shifts among younger Turkish fathers influenced by global values. However, consistent with Karaosmanoğlu and colleagues (2024), male involvement in household tasks remains minimal, as seen in this study's themes of "fatherhood as absent referent" (Theme 2) and "single-task dads" (Theme 4). Similar to international findings (Leader, 2019; Padalia & Sriram, 2019; Tsai, 2010), Turkish advertisements often limit fathers' roles in childcare rather than comprehensive caregiving. This limited progress stems from the enduring myth of fatherhood (Theme 3), which reinforces traditional roles. Unlike Western depictions reflecting evolving norms, Turkish advertisements frequently portray younger fathers as revitalizing traditional fatherhood with nationalist and

religious undertones, reflecting a tension between preserving tradition and embracing change. Fatherhood in Turkish advertising emerges as a contested and complex power dynamic rather than a linear progression.

The complex power-discourse dynamic in Turkish advertising further illustrates the limitations in achieving pluralistic and intersectional representations of fatherhood. In their methodology on menvertising, Pando-Canteli and Rodriguez (2021) argue that expanding beyond portrayals of White, middle-class, heterosexual men is a hallmark of inclusive advertising. However, in Türkiye, representations of fathers rarely extend beyond young, middle-class men, with portrayals of sexual orientation absent. The exclusion of LGBTIQ+ representation reflects a significant barrier in Turkish advertising, driven by the neoconservative political agenda to marginalize the LGBTIQ+ (Zihnioğlu & Kourou, 2024). Although new fatherhood subjectivities emerge, as explored in Theme 1, they challenge gender norms in narrowly defined ways. The Mercedes-Benz advertisement is notable in this context, as it incorporates intersectionality by featuring a veiled mother; however, this inclusion may also reflect the AKP's neoconservative agenda, which has increased the visibility of conservative social groups in the media and public life. Thus, the sociocultural practice of advertising in Türkiye highlights a complex representational landscape, where attempts at progress are tempered by the hegemonic influence of neoconservatism, which constrains the scope of diverse portrayals.

Despite limitations in intersectional representation and depictions of engaged fatherhood, this study highlights potential challenges to the dominant patriarchal and conservative agenda. As evidenced in Theme 1, elements of feminist fatherhood emerge in commercial discourses, even within authoritarian political and culturally conservative contexts. In this regard, the analysis presented in this study provides critical theoretical insights into media representations, commercial culture, and cultural imaginations of fatherhood, particularly through the concepts of brand activism, liminality, and third space, with a specific focus on non-Western contexts. By examining Turkish advertisements, this study highlights how fatherhood is represented as a contested and multifaceted phenomenon, reflecting the interplay between progressive and traditional discourses. The findings reveal that representations of fatherhood in advertising are deeply tied to processes of commodification and commercialization. Progressive ideals, such as feminist-inspired fatherhood, are often appropriated by brands seeking to align themselves with social change. This discourse becomes commodified, transforming emancipatory narratives into marketable aesthetics, as seen in global examples like the "Swedish Dads" campaign, where progressive fatherhood intersects with nation branding and macropolitical agendas (Molander, Kleppe, & Ostberg, 2018). However, in Türkiye, these representations operate within a unique cultural and political framework. Unlike the Swedish case, where fatherhood has been mobilized as part of brand activism, Türkiye's advertising landscape reflects the constraints imposed by a dominant conservative bloc, which limits the reach of emancipatory discourses.

Additionally, postfeminist media culture, characterized by commercialized narratives on women's empowerment and the criticism of manhood, converges with this liminal space in non-Western contexts like Türkiye. Advertising in these contexts often grapples with the complexities of representing fatherhood amid global shifts in gender politics and local cultural conservatism. In this regard, advertisements employing a more intersectional approach have a greater potential to facilitate a third space—a site of negotiation and liminality where conflicting cultural imaginations of fatherhood converge. Drawing on Bhabha's (1994) concept of liminality, I contend that advertisements in Türkiye provide a mediated space where traditional

conservative and globally inspired progressive models of fatherhood coexist and interact. This liminal space is particularly significant in Türkiye's polarized cultural context, shaped by its long-standing tension between Westernization and the conservative-nationalist ideology epitomized by the AKP government.

Advertisements, though shaped by polarities, also serve as democratic spaces, engaging diverse audiences—from conservative to progressive fathers. The findings highlight the need to view media representations as dynamic, as suggested by Hall's (1997) "circuit of culture" framework (p. 1). Representations are coconstructed through production, consumption, and cultural shifts, and new fatherhood models reflect this ongoing interaction. Advertising in Türkiye, shaped by cultural and ideological divides, has the potential to present fatherhood as a liminal identity, where roles are negotiated and hybridized. Future research should explore advertising as a "third space," particularly in non-Western contexts like Türkiye, to understand how media representations mediate cultural identities and foster new discourses between local and global dynamics. Moreover, ethnographic fieldwork could offer valuable insights into how fathers relate to these media representations.

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