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Research Article

**Compliance Strategies in Emerging Digital Markets:
A Comparative Qualitative Analysis of Platform Regulatory Strategies**

Meral Dülger Taşkın^a

Abstract

Introduction: As rapid platform innovation collides with legal frameworks, digital market regulation in emerging economies creates strategic tension. Accordingly, for digital platforms, this endeavor explores the way in which country of origin influences regulatory response, architecture conditions regulatory exposure, and how these two attributes interact within a single institutional environment.

Method: Through exploratory qualitative multi-case design, the study compares the compliance strategies of Trendyol, a foreign-backed hybrid platform and Sahibinden.com, a domestic broker operating without foreign investment. Each firm's regulatory trajectory is analyzed and reconstructed using the documentary record of the Turkish Competition Authority.

Results or Findings: The results indicate that although the regime drives both firms toward eventual accommodation, their responses differ. Firm origin shapes the range of non-market tools available, with Trendyol drawing on a broader set of statutory mechanisms than Sahibinden.com. Platform architecture shapes where compliance cost is absorbed. Trendyol shifts its concessions into peripheral activity through structural separation, whereas Sahibinden.com internalizes them within its core data asset.

Discussion or Conclusion: This article develops a model of segmented compliance in which regulatory adaptation is distributed across distinct layers of platform organization. The model shows that the regulatory regime fixes the outer bounds of response, firm origin shapes the depth of the repertoire deployed within those bounds, and platform architecture determines the organizational location at which compliance costs are absorbed. The model contributes to the institution-based view, non-market strategy, and research on multi-sided markets.

Keywords: digital platforms, regulatory compliance, non-market strategy, platform architecture, emerging markets

JEL Codes: K21, L51, L81, L86, M16

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Araştırma Makalesi

**Gelişmekte Olan Dijital Pazarlarda Yasal Uyum Stratejileri: Platformların
Düzenlemelere Yönelik Stratejilerinin Karşılaştırmalı Nitel Bir Analizi**

Meral Dülger Taşkın^a

Öz

Giriş: Dijital platformların hızlı yenilik döngülerinin yasal çerçevelerle çatışması gelişen ekonomilerdeki dijital pazar düzenlemeleri stratejik gerilimlere yol açmaktadır. Bu çalışma, bir platformun menşe ülkesinin düzenleyici kurumlara verilen yanıtı nasıl şekillendirdiğini, platform mimarisinin düzenlemelere maruziyeti nasıl koşullandırıldığını ve bu iki niteliğin tek bir kurumsal çerçevede nasıl etkileşime girdiğini incelemektedir.

Yöntem: Keşfedici, nitel, çoklu vaka tasarımının kullanıldığı bu çalışmada, yabancı sermaye destekli bir hibrit platform olan Trendyol ile yabancı yatırımı bulunmayan yerli aracılık platformu Sahibinden.com'un yasal uyum stratejileri karşılaştırılmaktadır. Analiz kapsamında, her iki firmanın düzenleme süreci Rekabet Kurumu'nun kamuya açık karar kayıtlarına dayanarak yeniden kurgulanmıştır.

Sonuçlar ya da Bulgular: Bulgular, mevcut düzenleme rejiminin her iki firmayı da sonuç olarak bir uzlaşya yönelttiğini, ancak firmaların yanıtları bakımından ayrıştıklarını göstermektedir. Firmanın menşe ülkesi, kullanılabilecek pazar dışı araçların kullanılabilirlik kapsamını şekillendirmekte; Trendyol, Sahibinden.com'a kıyasla daha geniş bir yasal mekanizma yelpazesinden yararlanmaktadır. Platform mimarisi ise yasal uyum maliyetlerinin nasıl üstlenileceğini belirlemektedir. Trendyol, yapısal ayrıştırma yoluyla uzlaşmalarını çevre faaliyetlere kaydırırken, Sahibinden.com ise bu maliyetleri kendi temel veri varlığı çerçevesinde içselleştirmektedir.

Tartışma ya da Yapılan Çıkarımlar: Bu makale, düzenleyici uyumun platformun katmanları arasında dağıldığı bölümlenmiş bir uyum modeli geliştirmektedir. Buna göre, düzenleyici rejimin tepkinin dış sınırlarını çizdiği; firma kökeninin, bu sınırlar içindeki yöntem derinliğini şekillendirdiği; platform mimarisinin ise uyum maliyetlerinin organizasyonel olarak nerede üstlenileceğini belirlediği ortaya konulmuştur. Model, kurum temelli yaklaşım, piyasa dışı strateji ve çok taraflı pazarlar araştırmalarına katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dijital platformlar, yasal uyum, piyasa dışı strateji, platform mimarisi, gelişmekte olan pazarlar

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Introduction

Digital platforms govern multi-sided ecosystems by embedding private rule systems, algorithmic logic, and data architectures within overriding public legal regimes (Koo, 2024). This dual governance structure creates tension between platforms and regulators where the platforms' core architectural designs and value-capture mechanisms diverge from statutory regulatory mandates. As platform innovation outpaces statutory evolution, and platform authority is borrowed rather than sovereign, this friction represents a fundamental incompatibility between platform architecture and state regulatory objectives. Navigating this structural alignment challenge presents a strategic obstacle, particularly within the volatile institutional environments of emerging markets.

The regulatory task in such settings is a calibration between restricting anti-competitive conduct and preserving incentives for domestic innovation. That trade-off is aggravated where large domestic platforms compete with internationally backed rivals (Lee & Saha, 2025). In these contexts, regulatory frameworks evolve rapidly and along non-linear paths, while institutional support for compliance remains underdeveloped, and firms are substantially different in terms of the resources they can organize (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Peng et al., 2008). Accordingly, emerging markets offer a productive setting for examining the institution-based view of strategy, which holds that the formal and informal rules of the institutional environment are foundational for the strategic choices available to firms (Peng et al., 2008, 2009). These conditions make emerging markets a productive setting for examining that proposition.

Compliance scholarship has nevertheless developed largely within mature Western institutional environments leaving the emerging markets comparatively under examined. European Union and United States regulatory regimes furnish the empirical foundation for most of the dominant theoretical models (Eskhita et al., 2025; Kornelakis & Hublart, 2022). This concentration limits the generalizability of existing theory to emerging markets, where institutional trajectories, resource constraints, and platform architectures differ substantially from Western settings and norms (Yeşilbağ, 2022). Long standing scholarly argument holds that strategy theory should be developed from emerging-market settings rather than imported from Western contexts (Hoskisson et al., 2000; Wright et al., 2005).

Three limitations in the related literature particularly stand out. First, non-market strategy comprises actions directed at political, legal, and social arenas rather than at the product market, undertaken to secure competitive advantage (Baron, 1995; Mellahi et al., 2016). Yet, little is known about how a platform's country of origin influences its strategic response to host-country regulatory pressure, particularly the non-market capabilities available to internationalized platforms versus domestic incumbents (García Canal & Guillén, 2026; Khan et al., 2026). Second, platform architecture refers to the configuration of a platform's technical design and governance rules (Tiwana et al., 2010). The multi-sided markets literature conceptualizes platforms as intermediaries coordinating exchange between distinct user groups (Rochet & Tirole, 2003). One architectural distinction separates broker platforms, that only intermediate, from hybrid provider platforms, that also retail on their own account. The literature nevertheless lacks a systematic account of how that distinction shapes the regulatory exposures firms face (García Canal & Guillén, 2026). Third, the two gaps identified above have not been addressed jointly, so how firm origin and platform architecture interact to shape compliance behavior within a single regulatory environment remains for further inquiry.

Correspondingly, with e-commerce volume rising to TL 4.57 trillion in 2025, up 52.2 percent year on year, Türkiye offers a compelling context for analysis (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Trade, 2026, p. 18). Its digital economy is governed by the Law on the Protection of Competition (No. 4054) and the Electronic Commerce Law (No. 6563), which was substantially amended in 2022. Alongside parallel provisions with the European Union Digital Markets Act, the regime imposes highly specific domestic mandates concerning intermediary liability, transaction thresholds, and structural prohibitions (Kocabaş & Malinauskaite, 2025; Sanlı, 2024). The Competition Authority (TCA) and the Ministry of Trade oversee different aspects of the regime, and this duality intensifies the compliance burden on platforms operating in the market.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining two Turkish digital platforms that differ on both attributes through an exploratory comparative qualitative design to trace how firm origin and platform architecture shape their compliance behavior. Trendyol is a domestically established but foreign controlled digital platform following Alibaba's acquisition of the majority stake (Reuters, 2021). It is architecturally hybrid as it intermediates third-party sellers and consumers while also retailing under its own brands. Sahibinden.com is a domestically owned broker platform (Turkish Trade Registry Gazette, 2026) that operates as a pure intermediary across horizontal classified categories such as real estate, vehicles and general goods without selling on its own account. Since both firms are subject to the same dual regulatory regime, the comparison holds the institutional environment constant and allows variation in firm origin and platform architecture to be observed. The regulatory trajectories of Trendyol and Sahibinden.com are reconstructed from the documentary record of the TCA, drawing on its decisions issued to each platform between 2018 and 2025.

Accordingly, three research questions guide the study. The first examines how firm origin shapes the range and form of compliance strategies digital platforms adopt under the same regulatory regime. The second examines how platform architecture shapes the regulatory pressures platforms face and the compliance strategies they use in response. The third examines how firm origin and platform architecture together explain differences in platform compliance within the same institutional environment.

In addressing these questions, the study makes three contributions. First, it opens the compliance response to structural inspection. Institutional theory characterizes a firm's answer to a regulatory demand as a posture arranged along a continuum from acquiescence to defiance (Oliver, 1991). This vocabulary carries no term for the location of where the demand is absorbed within the organization. The evidence here shows that platform architecture determines that location, since a hybrid provider can meet a mandate by redrawing the boundary of firm scope whereas a broker must meet it at the data interface that constitutes its core asset. Second, the study joins the non-market strategy and multi-sided markets literatures, which rarely address one another, by showing that firm origin governs the depth of the repertoire available and architecture governs the incidence of compliance cost. Third, it develops theory from an emerging-market setting rather than testing Western-derived theory within one. The three are drawn together in a model of segmented compliance developed in the discussion.

The next section develops the theoretical background and presents the conceptual framework followed by research methodology. The fourth section reports the findings for each platform accompanied by the cross-case synthesis. The fifth section develops the segmented-compliance model while the final section offers conclusions.

Theoretical Background

Institutional Environments and Platform-Regulator Exposure in Emerging Digital Markets

In responding to regulation, firms confront a problem of institutional fit, reconciling established routines with regulative demands that are embedded in normative and cultural-cognitive expectations (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014; Suchman, 1995). Firms are not passive recipients of institutional requirements. Oliver (1991) identifies a continuum of strategic responses to institutional processes, ranging from acquiescence and compromise through avoidance to defiance and manipulation. Which response a firm adopts depends on the character of the pressure and the firm's own position.

For digital platforms, innovations such as algorithmic pricing, data-driven scaling, and architectural reconfiguration routinely outpace regulatory rulemaking. This gap creates a case of platform-regulator tension, when a platform's competitive practices fall under regulatory requirements that the platform was not designed to satisfy. This tension therefore surfaces as an incompatibility between the model through which a platform creates value and the public rules that bind it. Regulatory violation is different, since a violation is a legal finding about a specific act and is resolved once that act stops, while strategic tension rests in the operating model that generated the act and persists until that model changes.

The institution-based view of strategy (Peng et al., 2008) treats firm behavior as an outcome of industry conditions as well as formal and informal rules of the institutional environment (North, 1990; Scott, 2014). In emerging markets, the evolution of regulatory frameworks is rapid and uneven while the institutional structure that supports meeting compliance obligations is thin. Further, whereas firm-specific resources are the primary drivers of performance in developed economies, country-level institutional differences have a more notable impact in emerging markets (Khanna & Palepu, 2010). Compliance therefore operates as a strategic problem rather than an administrative one and the costs of falling short directly reflect on the firm.

The institution-based view is occasionally interpreted as treating rules as fixed, which understates the reciprocity between platforms and regulators. The industrial-institutional co-evolution framework captures this dynamic (Cantwell et al., 2010; Gong & Hassink, 2019; Lewin et al., 1999). Regulators revise mandates in response to observed platform behavior and platforms adjust routines and architectures in response to enforcement. In emerging digital markets this reciprocity intensifies as the regulator's learning curve and the platform's innovation cycle move forward simultaneously.

Jurisdictions confronting identical platform behavior reach divergent outcomes, which indicates that a competition regime carries ideational commitments and does not function as a neutral technical mechanism (Kornelakis & Hublart, 2022). Yeşilbağ (2022) documents that Turkish platforms consolidated monopoly positions through data extraction, network externalities, and expansion into adjacent areas while dependent on technical infrastructure held by global technology firms. Türkiye therefore constitutes a distinct analytical setting, as the combination of domestic status and external dependence becomes an object of analysis.

Firm Origin and the Non-Market Repertoire

Non-market strategy literature treats firms as actors who manage their political, social, and regulatory environments through deliberate action alongside their market activities (Baron, 1995; Boddewyn & Brewer, 1994; Hillman & Hitt, 1999). Integrative reviews establish the

framework as central to explaining regulatory engagement that goes beyond compliance (Doh et al., 2012; Mellahi et al., 2016).

Internationalized firms accumulate institutional knowledge, political connections and procedural sophistication across jurisdictions and redeploy these resources when facing unfamiliar host country mandates (Henisz, 2003; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Sun et al., 2021). Firm origin therefore becomes a determinant of non-market capability, and compliance depth varies with the structural position of the firm rather than with the scope of the mandate.

Platform multinationals internationalize rapidly by scaling digital infrastructure instead of physical assets (Nambisan et al., 2019; Parente et al., 2018). Hence, survival under demanding regimes depends on non-market strategies such as lobbying, institutional entrepreneurship, regulatory negotiation, and user mobilization (Doh et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2021). Country of origin consequently shapes the instruments available to a platform as well as the credibility to use them (García Canal & Guillén, 2026; Khan et al., 2026; Khan et al., 2023). Through its Alibaba affiliation, Trendyol holds cross-border capital, dedicated regulatory capacity, and structurally separable business units. Configurations of this kind widen the non-market repertoire available to a platform. This also attracts regulatory scrutiny, since operating a marketplace while retailing on it creates a conflict of interest that regulators have increasingly addressed through ex-ante rules on self-preferencing (Kocabaş & Malinauskaite, 2025).

Sun et al. (2025) show that platforms retain non-market instruments unavailable to conventional firms, as they operate the infrastructure their users depend on and shape the flow of information across it. For platforms, structural position is constituted by operational control as much as by resource endowment. One dimension of that operational control is the geographic reach of the network. Stallkamp and Schotter (2021) distinguish within-country from cross-country network externalities. A broker matching users inside a single market generates the former, whereas a marketplace whose network extends across borders generates the latter, and the two carry different exposures to host-country mandates.

Domestic incumbents do not possess comparable cross-border resources, and they face narrower compliance options. Mandates targeting core data assets or pricing autonomy may translate more directly into structural constraints (García Canal & Guillén, 2026; Khan et al., 2026). Sahibinden.com fits this profile, since it operates without foreign-backed capital or separable business units. Platforms in that position have fewer structural options for distributing regulatory pressure, so mandates tend to reach core assets directly.

Firm origin is recognized here as a composite rather than as a matter of nationality alone. Cross-border ownership supplies a bundle of non-market assets, comprising financial slack, dedicated legal capacity, engineering depth, and experience accumulated across jurisdictions, and origin operates through that bundle rather than alongside it (Henisz, 2003; Sun et al., 2021). Scale, capital, and technical infrastructure are accordingly constituent mechanisms of the construct rather than rival explanations standing outside it. These assets work together in platform markets, since cross-border capital is what permits a platform to reach the size at which the remainder become affordable. Compliance depth is therefore expected to vary systematically with origin so understood. Architecture nonetheless governs how a given mandate is absorbed, so origin does not account for the response on its own.

Platform Architecture and the Broker–Provider Regulatory Divide

Digital platforms operate as multi-sided markets that mediate value-creating exchanges between distinct user groups (Rochet & Tirole, 2003, 2006). Their growth rests on network effects, since each group's value increases as participation on the other side rises (Evans, 2003; Katz & Shapiro, 1994). The strength of these effects pushes digital markets toward concentration and winner-takes-all outcomes, creating structural barriers to entry (Cennamo & Santaló, 2013; Eisenmann et al., 2006; Evans & Schmalensee, 2016). Correspondingly, the resulting dominance attracts regulatory attention. The form that attention assumes, nevertheless, depends on how the platform is structured.

A central distinction is between broker, or marketplace, platforms and provider, or reseller, platforms (Hagiu, 2007; Hagiu & Wright, 2015). In terms of control rights, a broker platform matches users and leaves control of the transaction with them whereas the provider platforms hold residual control over what is exchanged and frequently retail alongside third-party sellers (Hagiu & Wright, 2015). Many large platforms operate as hybrids, since they sell on their own account while continuing to match third-party sellers. Such dual role places the platform in competition with the firms it hosts. Architectural configuration determines which assets the platform controls, which counterparties it competes with, and therefore where it is exposed to regulatory scrutiny (García Canal & Guillén, 2026).

Architecture and industry are separable properties even though they are frequently observed together. Platform architecture is defined here by control rights and by the configuration of firm boundaries, namely whether the platform holds residual control over what is exchanged and whether it retails on its own account. Conversely, industry structure refers to the product market that a competition authority defines when it assesses conduct. The two vary independently. Pure brokers operate in general merchandise commerce, where marketplaces match buyers and sellers without retailing on their own account (Hagiu & Wright, 2015). Hybrid architecture likewise appears in classifieds, where listing platforms add proprietary inspection, financing, or transaction services alongside the listings they host. Architecture therefore describes what a platform controls rather than what it sells.

Modular architecture is defined by the degree to which a platform's components can be separated and recombined (Tiwana et al., 2010). Gawer (2021) identifies three interdependent platform boundaries, namely firm scope, the configuration of sides, and the digital interfaces governing data exchange, so that a decision at one propagates to the others. For instance, a remedy aimed at proprietary retail addresses firm scope, whereas one aimed at data portability addresses the interface. These boundary decisions have no counterpart in a linear firm, which is one reason multisided platforms are treated as a distinct organizational form (McIntyre et al., 2021). Modularity is a property of design rather than of market segment, so two platforms trading in unrelated markets may have the same architecture while two competitors in a particular market may not. Architecture in this paper refers to these three boundary decisions, and the vocabulary of horizontal and vertical markets is reserved for the product market definitions that competition authorities apply.

The core asset of a broker platform is accumulated user activity, which locates its regulatory exposure in data control and in the pricing of access rather than in the treatment of rival sellers (Crémer et al., 2019). By contrast, as provider and hybrid platforms retail alongside the sellers they host, regulators consequently examine self-preferencing, ranking practices, and the use of third-party seller data to support proprietary brands (Khan, 2017; Kocabaş & Malinauskaite, 2025). Platforms examined under the same statutory provision face different

allegations and receive different remedies, since market position determines whether scrutiny arrives whereas architecture determines what it targets. The Turkish market brings these conditions together, since platforms of contrasting architecture operate under a single regulatory regime, which allows the influence of architecture to be observed while the institutional environment is held constant.

Extending Gawer's (2021) boundary framework, platform architecture conditions a firm's decoupling capacity, namely the technical and structural ability to separate a regulated activity from the core business asset during enforcement. Hybrid provider architectures exhibit high scope modularity, since proprietary retail operates as an adjacent module attached to the multi-sided marketplace. A mandate directed at self-preferencing or at dual-role conflict can therefore be absorbed by redrawing the boundary of firm scope, whether through unbundling or through relocation of the proprietary unit, while the core intermediation engine remains intact (Tiwana et al., 2010). Broker architecture, conversely, couples the value proposition tightly to the digital interface. Because a broker's core asset consists of aggregated user data together with the network lock-in that data sustains, an intervention such as mandated data portability or interface access reaches that asset directly. No peripheral scope boundary is available for relocation, so the broker cannot structurally isolate the regulated activity, and the cost of compliance settles on the core asset itself.

Conceptual Framework and Research Questions

Taken together, the institutional view, non-market strategy and multi-sided market literatures suggest that strategic response to regulation is conditioned by firm origin and platform architecture, operating within a common institutional environment.

Figure 1 arranges these attributes along two dimensions. Firm origin distinguishes platforms with foreign backing from domestic incumbents, and platform architecture distinguishes hybrid providers that retail on their own account from brokers that do not. Trendyol and Sahibinden.com are selected because they occupy diagonally opposite positions in this space, differing in both dimensions at once. This typology serves a sensemaking and exploratory purpose rather than a predictive one, since it compares firms relative to one another without specifying the compliance strategy each position produces.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework: Firm Origin, Platform Architecture, and Regulatory Exposure

Platform Architecture \ Firm Origin	Foreign-backed (cross-border funding)	Domestic (no foreign investment)
	Trendyol Global hybrid provider (focal case)	Domestic hybrid provider (conceptual reference)
Hybrid provider		
Broker	Foreign-backed broker (conceptual reference)	Sahibinden.com Domestic broker (focal case)

Note. Created by the author. Cells are defined by control rights and firm scope rather than by the product markets in which each firm trades. The two cells in bold writing constitute a polar comparative pairing and denote the focal cases examined in this study. The other two cells denote conceptual reference positions within the typology and are not examined empirically.

The study therefore asks how firm origin shapes the depth and form of compliance strategy, how platform architecture shapes both regulatory exposure as well as the response deployed, and how the two attributes jointly account for divergence within a shared institutional environment.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Theoretical Posture

An exploratory qualitative comparative multi-case design was adopted for this study. Since the research questions concern how origin and architecture shape compliance behavior rather than how frequently particular responses occur, a small number of information-rich cases analyzed through interpretive coding is suitable (Buyukbalci & Dulger, 2023; Yin, 2014). The explored phenomena cannot be separated from their setting, as the tension between platform conduct and an interventionist regime arises from the Turkish institutional environment itself. A case design retains that environment as a part of the analysis.

Comparison across cases permits patterns observed in one firm to be tested against the other, which supports analytic generalization to theory rather than to a population (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2014). Compliance scholarship is anchored in mature Western institutional environments and offers limited insight for emerging-market contexts (Peng et al., 2008; Wright et al., 2005). The study therefore follows a gaps and holes design, which begins from tentative theory and refines it by addressing empirical gaps through pattern matching (Ridder, 2016, 2017). The framework in Figure 1 supplies the direction for that exploration.

Case selection follows a theoretical sampling logic where cases are chosen for their capacity to illuminate the relationships under study rather than for their representativeness (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Trendyol and Sahibinden.com are polar types on both dimensions of the framework, and such a contrast renders the underlying patterns more visible than a comparison of similar firms would (Pettigrew, 1990; Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Three further underlying considerations justify the selection. Both firms hold leading positions in their respective segments, so each has accumulated a substantive record of regulatory engagement to support a trajectory analysis. Both firms have faced proceedings under Article 6 on abuse of dominance, which supplies a common point of comparison. For episodes resting on other provisions, the difference in legal standard is noted rather than treated as variation in response for analysis. Both operate under the dual regime of Law No. 4054 and Law No. 6563, so the institutional environment is held constant across the comparison while origin and architecture vary. The assignment of each firm to a cell in the conceptual framework rests on architectural criteria alone, namely whether the platform holds residual control over transactions and retails on its own account, and not on the product-market definitions applied by the TCA in the decisions examined.

A comparability objection arises at this point, because the TCA examined the two firms for different practices and under partly different provisions. This is resolved once the source of that difference is considered. As argued above in relation to the broker and provider divide, architecture governs what a regulator finds available to examine, so a hybrid provider that retails alongside the sellers it hosts attracts self-preferencing and dual-role inquiries whereas a broker whose position rests on aggregated user data attracts portability and access inquiries (Crémer et al., 2019; Gawer, 2021; Hagiu & Wright, 2015). Variation in the allegation therefore expresses the mechanism under study rather than confounding it. Comparability rests instead on an institutional baseline held constant in three respects. The TCA examined both firms under Law No. 4054 across the period, and the core proceedings for each rest on Article 6 concerning

abuse of dominance. The same statutory closure options, namely settlement and commitments under Article 43, stood open to both from late 2021 onward. Divergence in the mechanisms used accordingly reflects selection by the firm rather than differential availability.

For the study, the firms analyzed are the cases, and the embedded unit is the regulatory engagement, understood as a single sequence running from the opening of a formal file to its resolution (Yin, 2014). A decision is treated as documentary evidence of an engagement rather than as the unit itself, since one engagement may extend across several decisions. The Otobid proceeding illustrates this pattern, having moved from an interim measure to a commitment decision.

An engagement entered the corpus where four conditions were satisfied. The conduct under examination formed an established element of the firms' operating model rather than an isolated act. The TCA opened a formal file under a specified provision of Law No. 4054. The proceedings assessed that conduct on its merits under the cited provision. The resolution bore on the operating model rather than leaving it intact, whether the firm modified the practice, defended it formally, or closed the matter through negotiated commitments. A corrective act that remedied a particular instance without touching the underlying practice was not included, since it fails the fourth condition. Engagements failing any of the four conditions fall outside the corpus. A settlement in which the firm admitted the infringement and abandoned the practice satisfies the fourth condition, since the operating model changed in the absence of an imposed behavioral remedy. The third condition excludes merger control decisions under Article 7, which authorize transactions rather than assess conduct. Correspondingly, Tables 1 and 2 list decisions in date order, and follow-on decisions appear alongside the engagement they continue, so that each firm's trajectory can be examined as a sequence rather than as a set of separate encounters.

Table 1

Regulatory Frame of the Decision Episodes

Episode	Decision	Provision	Market affected	Conduct investigated	Regulatory objective
E1. Labor market	Trendyol, 2021 (21-67/922-447)	Art. 4	Labor market for employees	No-poaching agreements with other firms	Protection of competition in labor markets
E2. Self-preferencing	Trendyol, 2023 (23-33/633-213)	Art. 6	Online marketplace services	Algorithmic self-preferencing of private-label brands and use of third-party seller data	Neutrality of intermediation and separation of seller data
E2. Self-preferencing	Trendyol, 2024 (24-29/689-M)	Art. 6	Online marketplace services	Reassessment after private-label sales moved off the marketplace under the 2022 e-commerce amendment	Continuing necessity of the 2023 remedies
E3. Automatic pricing	Trendyol, 2024 (24-40/950-409)	Art. 4	Online marketplace services	Automatic-pricing mechanism	Prevention of algorithmic price coordination
E4. Excessive pricing	Sahibinden.com, 2018 (18-36/584-285)	Art. 6	Online platform services for	Excessive pricing to corporate agents and dealers, 2014 to 2017	Exploitative abuse by a dominant undertaking

Episode	Decision	Provision	Market affected	Conduct investigated	Regulatory objective
			vehicle and real estate listings		
E5. Data portability	Sahibinden.com, 2023 (23-39/754-263)	Art. 6	Online platform services for vehicle and real estate listings	Obstructing data portability and imposing exclusivity, impeding multi-homing	Contestability through multi-homing and data mobility
E5. Data portability	Sahibinden.com, 2025 (25-23/574-365)	Art. 6	Online platform services for vehicle and real estate listings	Compliance with the 2023 portability remedy	Effectiveness of an existing remedy
E6. Otobid separation	Sahibinden.com, 2025 (25-02/47-29)	Art. 9	Online vehicle listing and vehicle purchasing services	Interim measure during the Otobid investigation	Prevention of irreparable harm pending investigation
E6. Otobid separation	Sahibinden.com, 2025 (25-49/1208-683)	Art. 43	Online vehicle listing and vehicle purchasing services	Commitment decision closing the Otobid investigation	Separation of data between adjacent services

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

Table 2

Firm Response and Outcome Across the Decision Episodes

Episode	Decision	Remedy type	Firm response	Degree of contestation	Outcome
E1. Labor market	Trendyol, 2021 (21-67/922-447)	Fine, reduced	Admitted the violation and elected settlement	None	Settled with 25 percent reduction, no behavioral obligations
E2. Self-preferencing	Trendyol, 2023 (23-33/633-213)	Fine and behavioral remedies	Complied with the interim measure, proposed commitments, engaged through the investigation	Partial commitments proposed and rejected in part	Fine of TL 61,342,847.73, algorithm-neutrality, data-separation and code-retention remedies
E2. Self-preferencing	Trendyol, 2024 (24-29/689-M)	Reassessment of existing remedies	Relocated private-label sales and petitioned for mootness, requested an extension	Procedural only	Algorithmic remedies held moot, data remedies maintained
E3. Automatic pricing	Trendyol, 2024 (24-40/950-409)	Commitment	Proposed commitments	None	Commitments accepted, matter closed
E4. Excessive pricing	Sahibinden.com, 2018 (18-36/584-285)	Fine	Contested the finding through the judicial channel	Full, judicial challenge	Fine of TL 10,680,425.98, non-unanimous, no remedial price set

Episode	Decision	Remedy type	Firm response	Degree of contestation	Outcome
E5. Data portability	Sahibinden.com, 2023 (23-39/754-263)	Fine and structural remedies	Rewrote contract clauses and built portability infrastructure at no charge	Partial, self-preferencing claims contested and rejected	Fine of TL 40,150,533.15, contract rewrite and free portability infrastructure
E5. Data portability	Sahibinden.com, 2025 (25-23/574-365)	Verification of an existing remedy	Offered a file-download method, then developed an API-with-callback method	Partial, initial method defended before revision	File-download method rejected, API accepted, three-year monitoring added
E6. Otobid separation	Sahibinden.com, 2025 (25-02/47-29)	Interim measure	Complied with the imposed separation	None recorded	Display obstruction and redirection stopped, listing data barred from the vehicle service
E6. Otobid separation	Sahibinden.com, 2025 (25-49/1208-683)	Commitment	Offered commitments	None	Commitments accepted, investigation terminated

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

Here, analytical identification does not rest on the between-case contrast alone. Rather, the research design pairs polar cross-case synthesis with longitudinal within-case process tracing. Within each firm, the sequence of episodes holds origin, market segment, and regulator constant, so a change in the standing of a remedy can be attributed to a change in architecture (Langley, 1999). Decision 24-29/689-M for Trendyol shows this directly, since the separation of private-label retail from the marketplace made the algorithmic remedies moot while the data remedies survived, and TCA conditioned that outcome on the separation being maintained. The design accordingly establishes how regulatory pressure is absorbed and under what conditions, rather than what each dimension contributes on its own.

Case Backgrounds

Trendyol was founded in 2010 and is the largest e-commerce platform in Türkiye. The Alibaba Group holds majority ownership, with international and Gulf sovereign wealth funds as strategic investors, and the firm now earns a substantial share of its revenue from European and Gulf markets. Its architecture combines intermediation for third-party sellers with proprietary retail, which places it in the foreign-backed provider cell of the theoretical model in Figure 1. The boundary between those two activities shifted during the period studied, and the analysis explores that shift.

Founded in 2000, Sahibinden.com is the leading horizontal classifieds platform in Türkiye and has been found dominant in both the online real estate and vehicle listings markets. The firm has remained under domestic ownership and has operated without foreign investment. Its competitive position rests on aggregated user data and on its role as intermediary rather than on retail of its own, which makes it a broker in architectural terms and places it in the domestic broker cell of the theoretical model. The firm is classified as a broker based on its core listing business, which remained a pure intermediation service throughout the period examined. The Otobid vehicle-purchasing service is treated here as an adjacent extension rather than as a change in the architecture of the platform.

The two firms therefore differ in both dimensions concurrently. Divergence in their compliance patterns is accordingly explained by the framework through origin and architecture. Where the patterns converge despite the contrast, the institutional environment emerges as the stronger influence.

Data Sources and Triangulation

Collection proceeded in three ordered moves. The regulatory database was first queried under the names of each firm to retrieve every decision on record. The results were then screened against the four inclusion conditions stated above, which fixed the corpus of engagements. The two secondary streams were finally assembled around that corpus and read against it under the evidentiary hierarchy set out below.

The study draws on documents assembled from three distinct streams of evidence, summarized in Table 3. Triangulation across independent sources strengthens the credibility of qualitative findings, because a pattern that appears consistently across different kinds of evidence is more trustworthy than one resting on a single source (Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2014). The regulatory primary sources form the evidentiary core, since they record both the conduct found to raise concern and the remedies imposed in response, and they also document the firm side of each encounter through the written defenses, commitment proposals, and settlement choices they contain. The strategic conduct of each firm is therefore recoverable directly from the regulatory record, with the two secondary streams used for interpretation and triangulation.

Table 3

Data Sources and Use

Stream	Source and characteristics	Use in the study
Regulatory primary sources	TCA decisions on the two firms; the full texts of Law No. 4054 and Law No. 6563 including the 2022 amendment	Primary evidence: Establishes conduct in episodes, statutory basis and the remedy.
Secondary scholarship	Turkish legal commentary and academic articles on the two statutes and on the decisions of TCA	Interpretation: Clarifies the doctrinal meaning of provisions and situates decisions within the Turkish competitive landscape and e-commerce law to support accurate coding
Media and industry reporting	News and trade coverage of the decisions and the firms	Triangulation: Establishes timing and sequence of events and corroborates the coded readings against the regulatory record

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

The regulatory stream was assembled as a census and not as a sample. The TCA public decision database was searched under both the brand name and the corporate name of each firm, using the terms Trendyol, DSM Grup, Sahibinden, and Sahibinden Bilgi Teknolojileri. No date restriction was applied to the search, so the corpus opens in 2018 because that is the year of the earliest decision the database returned rather than an imposed starting date. Retrieval of the decisions ran from January to May 2026, which fixes the endpoint of each firm's trajectory, and rulings issued after that date fall outside the corpus. Applying the four inclusion conditions to the results produced the nine decisions listed in Tables 1 and 2, which document six regulatory engagements. The exclusions comprise merger control decisions under Article 7,

namely the clearance of Alibaba's acquisition of sole control over DSM Grup and the 2026 Zip Finansman clearance. Nothing else returned by the search was set aside.

The scholarly stream was assembled through a systematic search conducted on 10 May 2026. Records were retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science using keywords covering regulatory compliance, digital platforms, and firm strategy. No date restriction was applied, so the search returned the full coverage of both databases on these terms rather than a bounded window. The two sets were merged and deduplicated using Bibexpy software (Kara et al., 2026), which returned 270 unique records. Screening then proceeded in two stages. The first assessed each record against the scope, theoretical framing, and method of study, which reduced the pool to 120 sources. The second assessed those sources against the constructs of the conceptual framework, which yielded 76 records forming the substantive literature base from which theoretical development proceeded. The methods literature, the Turkish legal commentary, and the primary regulatory sources were assembled separately and lie outside this search.

Neither firm issued public statements on the decisions examined here, so their own accounts of these proceedings are not on record. Reading the available sources against one another supports a chain of evidence linking each analytical claim to the material on which it rests (Yin, 2014). The reasoned decision was treated as authoritative on matters of fact, including conduct, provision, remedy, and procedural history. Where a secondary source departed from a reasoned decision on such a matter, the decision was to govern and the secondary account to be set aside. No such departure arose in the corpus. The secondary streams instead corroborated the reading taken from the regulatory record and supplied doctrinal and contextual material the decisions do not carry. Every analytical claim accordingly is traced to the regulatory record.

The media stream was assembled by a different route. Coverage was gathered while each decision was traced, by following reporting on the proceedings already identified through the regulatory search rather than by querying a news database against a fixed list of terms. The stream is therefore decision-led rather than systematic, and no claim to completeness attaches to it. Its use is confined to establishing timing and sequence and to supplying context the decisions do not record.

Data Analysis

The documentary corpus was analyzed through three coding cycles and a temporal bracketing stage. The procedure moves from deduction to induction, in line with a design that elaborates existing theory rather than testing or generating it. Before starting any interpretation of strategy, deductive coding fixed the legal ground of each episode, and the strategic patterns were then derived from the conduct recorded in the decisions.

The first cycle established the legal ground of each episode by coding every relevant segment of the decision texts against the provision it engaged. The principal coding categories were drawn from the Law on the Protection of Competition. Articles 4 and 6 supply the substantive grounds, covering anti-competitive agreements and abuse of a dominant position, while Articles 9 and 43 cover the procedural powers to terminate infringements and to accept commitments. The relevant provisions of the Electronic Commerce Law were coded alongside them. This cycle established the legal basis of regulatory concern and the formal nature of the remedy imposed in each episode.

The second cycle turned to strategic response. Each firm engaged with the regulatory process through a series of moves, and these were coded inductively from the conduct documented in the decision texts. The first-order codes stayed close to the language of the evidence. Codes sharing strategic logic were grouped into second-order themes, and the themes were finally aggregated into overarching dimensions. This three-level structure follows the data-structure logic associated with the Gioia methodology (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2013) and appears in the findings as Tables 4 to 7. Since each table sets the evidence beside the constructs built from it, the abstraction can be weighed against the material it rests on (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The third cycle consisted of cross-case synthesis through pattern matching. The aggregate dimensions of each firm were set against one another, and the resulting pattern of divergence and similarity yielded the compliance archetypes. The comparison tested the theoretical expectation that origin and architecture relate systematically to compliance behavior. It also weighed rival explanations against the same evidence, which is what pattern matching requires if the fit of a single account is not to be assumed (Yin, 2014). The alternatives are set out in the discussion.

The Gioia methodology was developed for informant-centric interview research, where the first-order level preserves the terms in which participants describe their own conduct. There are no informants in a documentary corpus, so the transfer requires justification. The decisions nevertheless record each firm's procedural moves, since written defenses, settlement elections, commitment proposals, and appeals are reproduced directly or summarized by the TCA. These records document strategy as enacted rather than as recalled, though they were produced for a regulator and shaped accordingly. The corpus therefore records action rather than the deliberation preceding that conduct. The apparatus is adopted here as a discipline on aggregation rather than as a claim to informant voice. The Gioia template has drawn criticism for licensing interpretation rather than disciplining it (Gioia et al., 2022; Köhler et al., 2022; Mees Buss et al., 2022). This study constrains that latitude by fixing the corpus before analysis and by subjecting aggregation through the decision rules set out below. Content analysis would group the same manifest material without requiring the analyst to state why any grouping holds together, so categorizing the decision texts by their legal subject matter would yield an inventory of regulatory topics. Instead, the second-order stage requires that each grouping be stated as a strategic posture, which forces the analysis past the terms in which the TCA framed each matter.

Within each case, the episodes were then ordered chronologically and bracketed into successive phases, which allows each firm's posture to be followed across its regulatory encounters (Langley, 1999). Sahibinden.com's sequence runs from 2018 to 2025 covering three episodes, and Trendyol's from 2021 to 2024 spanning three. The details of both sequences are exhibited in Tables 1 and 2. The temporal stage establishes the order in which each posture developed rather than the internal reasoning behind it.

The analysis rests on a single coder working from the public record, without fieldwork or contact with either firm. This position frees the account from negotiated access, and it also means that each firm's position reaches the analysis only as the TCA recorded it. Three safeguards stand in place of intercoder agreement. The first was a set of explicit decision rules governing the move from first-order codes to second-order themes. A theme was formed only where a shared strategic logic recurred across more than one episode and could be stated as a posture toward the regulatory process rather than as a description of the conduct. Codes describing the legal subject matter of a decision were held at the first-order level. The second

safeguard was a further reading of the corpus, in which every assignment was tested against these rules and unstable ones were revised rather than carried forward. The third safeguard required every theme to account for all the evidence beneath it, which prevents a construct from resting on the examples that suit it best (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Dependability rather than reliability is the standard this analysis meets (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and it is the appropriate standard where a single analyst works from a corpus that is fixed and publicly available. Agreement between independent coders cannot be measured where only one coder worked, and a statistic derived from a second reading by the same analyst would capture stability rather than agreement, so no reliability coefficient is reported. coding scheme and data structure were subjected to peer debriefing and informal expert verification with competition law and non-market strategy scholars to demonstrate active qualitative dependability. The audit trail carries the dependability standard in place of both, since it places the move from evidence to construct where a reader can test it (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019).

Three difficulties arose during the procedure (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). The first concerns redaction. Parts of the decisions are withheld for commercial confidentiality, which confined the analysis to the TCA's reasoning and the non-redacted findings, and the secondary streams were read alongside the decisions to corroborate each reading before it entered the coding. The second concerns the coding itself, since an early pass grouped the first-order codes by the legal subject matter of each decision and yielded categories describing regulatory topics rather than strategic logic. Applying the decision rules exposed the problem, and the coding was reworked so that each theme captured a strategic posture rather than a legal topic. The revision confirmed the necessity of the second-order stage, since the discarded grouping reproduced the TCA's own framing of the disputes rather than the firms' strategic conduct. The third is the absence of corporate disclosure, which leaves every first-order code resting on conduct as the TCA recorded it, with no independent statement from either firm against which to examine it.

Quality Criteria

Quality was assessed against the four tests articulated by Yin (2014) and applied to management case research by Gibbert and Ruigrok (2010). Three of these apply directly, namely construct validity, internal validity, and external validity. The fourth asks whether another investigator following the same procedure would obtain the same result, which presumes independent coders. For the reasons set out above, dependability stands in its place.

Two procedures were followed to support construct validity. The first corroborated each coded reading across the documentary streams, subject to the hierarchy under which the reasoned decision governs matters of fact. The second sets the representative evidence beneath each construct in Tables 4 to 7, so that every abstraction can be tested against its material (Gioia et al., 2013).

Internal validity was addressed through pattern matching and explanation building (Yin, 2014). Compliance patterns in each case were read against the theoretical expectations rather than in isolation, and the most plausible rival explanations were weighed at the same stage. Temporal bracketing supports the same test, since tracing each firm across successive encounters allows an alternative reading of a single episode to be checked against the wider trajectory. The most plausible alternative accounts are reported in the discussion, where the limits of documentary evidence in excluding them are also addressed.

External validity concerns the domain to which the findings extend. Case research supports generalization to theoretical propositions rather than to populations (Yin, 2014). The polar-type design serves that end, since it allows the findings to speak to the relationships among firm origin, platform architecture, and compliance behavior. These propositions apply where more than one statute governs platform conduct and the platforms differ in architecture and origin.

A formal case study protocol standardized the collection and coding of evidence across both cases, so that it remained constant while the cases differed (Yin, 2014). The protocol, the coding scheme, the three-cycle procedure, and the temporal bracketing stage are reported in sufficient detail for the analysis to be repeated. A public documentary corpus allows a reader to return to the sources directly. A public documentary corpus allows a reader to return to the sources directly and to test the audit trail against them.

Findings

Trendyol

Trendyol's regulatory record comprises three substantive matters brought by the TCA between 2021 and 2024, namely the no-poaching settlement, the abuse-of-dominance decision on algorithmic self-preferencing with its 2024 mootness coda, and the automatic-pricing commitment. This subsection reports the coded patterns in the firm's documented responses across these matters. Tables 4 and 5 present the full data structure.

Table 4 groups six first-order codes under the dimension of procedurally bounded compliance. The first three record elections. Trendyol entered the settlement procedure in the labor-market matter, proposed commitments and later petitioned for mootness in the self-preferencing matter, and proposed commitments again in the automatic-pricing matter. Each selects a statutory route to closure without answering the substance, and that shared logic rather than their sequence makes them one theme, namely strategic use of statutory closure mechanisms. The remaining three record what the firm did not do. Trendyol neither appealed on the merits nor disputed jurisdiction nor sought annulment, complied with the interim measure throughout, and requested an implementation extension rather than refusing the surviving obligations. Accepting the finding while retaining control of the route amounts to substantive concession without contestation of authority. The two themes name a posture in which the procedure is worked and the substance is not, and that posture holds across all three matters while only the route changes.

Table 4*Coding Scheme for Trendyol's Procedurally Bounded Compliance*

Representative Evidence	First Order Codes	Second Order Themes	Aggregate Dimension
Admitted the no-poaching violation and accepted the maximum 25 percent reduction (21-67/922-447)	Settlement-mechanism use		
Proposed automatic-pricing commitments (24-40/950-409); proposed cost, advertising, exclusivity, and contract-term commitments accepted in part (23-33/633-213)	Commitment-procedure use	Strategic use of statutory closure mechanisms	
Petitioned to have the algorithmic remedies declared moot after the e-commerce amendment (24-29/689-M)	Mootness-procedure use		
Did not contest the cartel finding and did not appeal on the merits (21-67/922-447)	Non-contestation of findings		Procedurally bounded compliance
Complied with the interim measure and engaged through the investigation phase (23-33/633-213)	Cooperation through procedural phases	Substantive concession without contestation of authority	
Requested an implementation extension rather than refusing the surviving obligations (24-29/689-M)	Timeline negotiation rather than refusal		

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

Six further codes make up Trendyol's foreign-backed non-market capacity, which Table 5 sets out. Three of them rest on capability already in place. Trendyol executed three distinct statutory routes across three years, implemented algorithm-neutrality undertakings together with three-year versioned and tamper-evident code retention, and separated third-party seller data from its private-label teams. Resources of this kind stand ready before a file opens, since a specialized legal unit, an auditable retention system, and an internal data boundary cannot be assembled once a proceeding is under way, and the three codes therefore form the theme of mobilization of institutional capability. The other three reach beyond the proceeding itself. Trendyol invoked the 2022 e-commerce amendment to argue that the algorithmic remedies had become moot, relocated private-label sales to the Trendyol Milla application from 1 January 2024, and retained both the marketplace and the proprietary-retail operation in restructured form rather than divesting. Each draws on ground the proceeding did not supply, whether an adjacent statute or the firm's own scope boundary, and the second theme names that reach as leveraging adjacent regulation and architecture. Together they describe capacity a proceeding can call on but not create.

Table 5*Coding Scheme for Trendyol's Foreign-Backed Non-market Capacity*

Representative Evidence	First Order Codes	Second Order Themes	Aggregate Dimension
Executed three distinct statutory routes across three years	Specialized legal deployment		
Implemented algorithm-neutrality undertakings and three-year versioned, tamper-evident code retention (23-33/633-213)	Technical compliance capability	Mobilization of institutional capability	
Separated third-party seller data from private-label teams (23-33/633-213)	Data-governance capability		Foreign-backed non-market capacity
Invoked the 2022 e-commerce amendment to argue the algorithmic remedies were moot (24-29/689-M)	Cross-statute argumentation	Leveraging adjacent regulation and architecture	
Relocated private-label sales to the Trendyol Milla application from 1 January 2024 (24-29/689-M)	Architectural reconfiguration		
Retained both the marketplace and the proprietary-retail operation in restructured form rather than divesting (24-29/689-M)	Business preservation through separation		

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

Sahibinden.com

Sahibinden.com's regulatory record comprises three substantive TCA proceedings between 2018 and 2025, namely the excessive-pricing decision, the dominance and data-portability decision with its 2025 compliance verification, and the Otobid matter that moved from an interim measure to a commitment decision. The facts of each decision are set out in Table 1. This subsection reports the coded patterns in the firm's documented responses, and Tables 6 and 7 present the full data structure.

Sahibinden.com's record yields six codes under contested structural compliance, presented in Table 6. Three of them cover moves the firm initiated. Sahibinden.com contested the excessive-pricing findings through the judicial channel. In the data-portability matter it offered an initial file-download method the TCA found inadequate, and it declined certain proposed API revisions until a non-compliance finding followed. Each narrows or delays an obligation rather than refusing it outright, and the first theme groups them accordingly as resistance to substantive findings. The other three cover obligations imposed on the firm. In the same portability matter it built the infrastructure for corporate members to port listing data to rivals at no charge and rewrote its contracts to remove the exclusivity and non-compete terms, and in the Otobid matter it operated under an interim measure separating listing-platform data from the adjacent service. Each reached the firm's contracts or its data architecture rather than the disposition of the proceeding, so the second theme reads as externally imposed structural remediation. Both themes attach to the same matters rather than alternating across them, so resistance and structural change ran together rather than in sequence.

Table 6*Coding Scheme for Sahibinden.com's Contested Structural Compliance*

Representative Evidence	First Order Codes	Second Order Themes	Aggregate Dimension
Contested the excessive-pricing finding through the judicial channel (18-36/584-285)	Judicial contestation of findings		
Offered an initial file-download portability method found inadequate by the TCA (25-23/574-365)	Minimal first-response provision	Resistance to substantive findings	
Declined certain proposed API revisions, prompting a non-compliance finding before later revising (25-23/574-365)	Partial pushback on remedy detail		Contested structural compliance
Built, at no charge, the infrastructure for corporate members to port listing data to rivals (23-39/754-263)	Mandated data-portability provision		
Rewrote contract clauses to remove the exclusivity and non-compete terms (23-39/754-263)	Mandated contractual restructuring	Externally imposed structural remediation	
Subjected to an interim measure separating listing-platform data from the Otobid service (25-02/47-29)	Mandated data siloing		

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

The remaining six codes form the dimension of bounded operational accommodation, shown in Table 7. In the data-portability matter Sahibinden.com developed an API-with-callback method the TCA accepted as compliant and accepted monitoring and reporting obligations running for three years, and in the Otobid matter it offered commitments that terminated the investigation under Article 43. None of these moves reopens an obligation, since each works within one the TCA had already set, and the three therefore form the theme of engagement under structural constraint. The other three record what the accommodation cost. In the Otobid matter the firm removed Otobid displays and ended user redirection within its own interface, and it agreed not to use non-public listing data for the adjacent service. The record shows no relocation or restructuring of the core classifieds business through which a contested practice might have been maintained. Each concession therefore bore on the classifieds asset itself, which the theme of concession affecting the core asset records. Accommodation of this kind is bounded throughout by obligations the firm did not set.

Table 7*Coding Scheme for Sahibinden.com's Bounded Operational Accommodation*

Representative Evidence	First Order Codes	Second Order Themes	Aggregate Dimension
Developed an API-with-callback portability method accepted as compliant (25-23/574-365)	Negotiated technical compliance		
Offered commitments to terminate the Otobid investigation, accepted under Article 43 (25-49/1208-683)	Commitment-procedure use	Engagement under structural constraint	
Accepted ongoing monitoring and reporting obligations over a three-year period (25-23/574-365)	Acceptance of continued oversight		
Agreed to remove Otobid displays and end user redirection within its own interface (25-49/1208-683)	Self-imposed interface constraint		Bounded operational accommodation
Agreed not to use non-public listing data for the Otobid service (25-49/1208-683)	Surrender of the data-combination advantage	Concession affecting the core asset	
No relocation or restructuring of the core classifieds business to maintain a contested practice	Absence of architectural workaround		

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

Cross-Case Synthesis

Table 8 arranges the two trajectories side by side through the pattern-matching procedure, and the comparison yields one shared element and two divergent ones. Neither firm defied a final remedy, and both closed every matter within the statutory framework, so convergence appears in the destination rather than in the route. Trendyol moved between settlement, commitment, and mootness, and Sahibinden.com contested judicially, then built portability infrastructure, then offered commitments. The locus of concession diverges with them. Trendyol conceded on peripheral conduct and preserved its dual-role business through separation, whereas Sahibinden.com surrendered the data-combination advantage and the lock-in it sustained, which is the core asset itself. The aggregate dimensions carry an asymmetry of their own. Each firm displays a compliance posture, but Trendyol's second dimension records capacity rather than a second posture, since the record attributes to Trendyol resources that Sahibinden.com does not command.

Table 8*Cross-Case Comparison of Aggregate Dimensions*

Dimension of comparison	Trendyol	Sahibinden.com
<i>Firm origin</i>	Alibaba-affiliated, cross-border capital	Domestic, Aksoy Group, no foreign investment
<i>Platform architecture</i>	Hybrid provider, intermediation plus proprietary retail	Broker, pure intermediary in horizontal classifieds
<i>Statutory bases engaged</i>	Article 4 and Article 6 of Law No. 4054; Law No. 6563	Article 6 of Law No. 4054
<i>First aggregate dimension</i>	Procedurally bounded compliance	Contested structural compliance
<i>Second aggregate dimension</i>	Foreign-backed non-market capacity	Bounded operational accommodation
<i>Closure mechanisms used</i>	Settlement, commitment, mootness	Judicial contestation, then portability build, then commitment
<i>Locus of concession</i>	Peripheral conduct; core dual-role business preserved through separation	Core asset; data-combination advantage and lock-in surrendered

Note. Compiled by the author using Microsoft Excel software

Correspondingly, the cross-case comparison yields three patterns that are stated as propositions. Propositions in the inductive case-study tradition are the analytic output of cross-case comparison rather than hypotheses specified in advance (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Ridder, 2017). Each states a mechanism the evidence renders plausible rather than a relationship the design can establish, and each is offered for subsequent testing. First, matters close with procedural accommodation for both firms even if they differ in terms of origin and architecture. Accordingly, the following proposition is presented:

Proposition 1. Jurisdictional density combined with credible enforcement narrows the feasible range of platform responses toward accommodation. The narrowing is expected to hold across differences in firm origin and platform architecture of the kind observed here.

Second, the two firms differ in the breadth of capability each deployed. Trendyol deployed specialized legal capacity, technical compliance infrastructure, and argument across more than one statute. Sahibinden.com worked through a narrower repertoire, contesting the initial finding and then negotiating the technical details of one mandated remedy at a time. Correspondingly, the following proposition is provided:

Proposition 2. Firm origin conditions the depth of the non-market repertoire available within the feasible range, with the effect running through the financial, legal, and technical resources that cross-border ownership supplies. Where a domestic platform assembles a comparable bundle without foreign capital, the difference in repertoire depth is expected to narrow.

Third, the firms diverge in terms of their compromises. Trendyol relocated the contested activity and preserved its core dual-role business, so the concession fell on peripheral conduct.

Sahibinden.com's settlement reached the core, since portability and data siloing removed its exclusive hold on aggregated user data. Hence, the proposition below is offered:

Proposition 3. Scope modularity conditions where the cost of compliance is absorbed, so the concession is expected to fall on peripheral conduct where the contested activity is separable from the core asset and on the core asset itself where it is not.

Discussion

Procedural Accommodation

Despite differing in origin and architecture, both firms close their regulatory encounters through accommodation rather than sustained defiance. In institutional terms, this pattern is one of coercive isomorphism, in which organizations exposed to the same concentrated regulatory pressure grow alike in conduct irrespective of their internal differences (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983). The convergence likewise lends direct support to the emerging-economies claim that country-level institutions outweigh firm-specific attributes as determinants of strategic outcomes in such settings (Hoskisson et al., 2000; Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Wright et al., 2005). It thereby adheres to the institution-based view of strategy, in which institutions constitute an independent determinant of firm behavior rather than background conditions (Peng et al., 2008, 2009). Since this convergence is predicted by the classical account, it is treated here as a baseline for interpreting the divergence reported below.

This convergence reflects the regulatory architecture established by the amended Electronic Commerce Law No. 6563, which ties obligations to net annual transaction volume and escalates them across annually revalued thresholds of 10, 30, and 60 billion Turkish Liras (Çekin, 2024; Kocabaş & Malinauskaite, 2025). Firms in the upper tiers face advertising and promotion caps as well as mandatory data sharing and restrictions on proprietary financial services. Both platforms fall within the scope of this regime. The TCA and the Ministry of Trade exercise overlapping jurisdiction, which raises the cost of open non-compliance. Even Sahibinden.com, the more resistant of the two firms, ultimately accommodated. Such a pattern supports accounts of the Turkish regime as interventionist and far-reaching (Kocabaş & Malinauskaite, 2025; Sanlı, 2024), and it locates the institutional environment as a binding constraint on strategy.

Gilbert et al. (2024) extend Suchman's (1995) typology to gatekeeping platforms, contending that moral legitimacy is restored through agreement-seeking and hybrid governance rather than through compliance alone. Yates (2023) finds that platforms in contested regulatory settings frequently mobilize users as political advocates. Neither firm advanced legitimacy claims of this kind within its proceedings. Trendyol worked through procedure and Sahibinden.com through technical detail, and both remained at the pragmatic register. This absence reflects the regime rather than the firms. Public authority in Türkiye occupies the governance space in which platforms elsewhere establish themselves as private rule-makers, and neither firm had ground on which to make such a claim. Self-regulation succeeds where a credible threat of state action stands behind it (Cusumano et al., 2021), and two agencies exercising overlapping jurisdiction supply that threat. The same jurisdictional density that forecloses the legitimacy route produces the convergence stated in Proposition 1.

Within that boundary, two compliance archetypes emerge, and both fall among the more accommodative of the strategic responses Oliver (1991) identifies. Trendyol's posture approximates compromise throughout, accepting the institutional demand while negotiating its form. Sahibinden.com opens with judicial contestation and settles into compromise once the

structural mandate is met. Neither firm reached manipulation, and neither avoided the demand. Accordingly, the Turkish evidence indicates that a regime combining jurisdictional density with credible enforcement confines the available responses toward accommodation.

Firm Origin and the Depth of the Non-Market Repertoire

Within the regime's boundary, the two firms differ in the non-market capabilities that each could deploy. Research on non-market strategy treats firm origin as a determinant of that capability, since cross-border operation builds the legal and political resources a purely domestic firm has less occasion to develop (Doh et al., 2012; Mellahi et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2021).

Trendyol's conduct displays the wide repertoire associated with an internationalized firm. It moved between three distinct statutory closure mechanisms, deploying the technical infrastructure required to implement detailed algorithm-neutrality and code-retention remedies, while arguing across statutory regimes by invoking the e-commerce amendment to narrow its competition-law obligations. Capability of this kind is what Henisz (2003) terms the management of institutional idiosyncrasies, accumulated through repeated exposure to hazardous institutional environments and redeployable across them. The firm's engagement was relational rather than transactional in the sense of Hillman and Hitt (1999), since it treated the regulator as a continuing counterpart across successive matters. A repertoire of this depth requires specialized legal capacity, engineering depth, and organizational slack, and Trendyol's cross-border affiliation is the most plausible source of them.

Sahibinden.com engaged from a narrower base. The firm contested the excessive-pricing decision judicially, then negotiated technical detail one remedy at a time. The opening move is a conflict posture in the typology of international political behavior (Boddewyn & Brewer, 1994). The firm did not argue across statutes, and no adjacent statutory development bore on its matters. Position rather than strategic choice appears to account for this, since a domestic incumbent without foreign backing commands fewer non-market options. In the Otobid matter Sahibinden.com used Article 43 commitment mechanism to terminate the investigation without a finding of infringement, which reflects procedural pragmatism under a statutory opening rather than any widening of the repertoire.

An internationally backed firm might be presumed to bear a liability of foreignness in a sovereignty-sensitive regime (Zaheer, 1995), with legitimacy complexity weighing on the multinational side of the pairing (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). The evidence points the other way. Trendyol's domestic brand identity, coupled with cross-border resources, appears to have supplied local standing alongside the resource depth of a multinational, and nothing in the proceedings suggests that foreignness raised the cost of its engagement.

Sahibinden.com's domestic embeddedness, conversely, brought no comparable advantage in repertoire. The finding refines the origin argument advanced in recent work on platform multinationals under tightening regimes (García Canal & Guillén, 2026; Khan et al., 2026; Khan et al., 2023), since compliance depth follows from the alignment of legitimacy and resources that origin produces rather than from foreignness as such.

Platform Architecture and the Locus of Compliance Cost

The two firms absorbed compliance cost at different points in their businesses, Trendyol at the periphery and Sahibinden.com at the core, and platform architecture offers the most plausible account of the difference. For Trendyol, the e-commerce amendment prohibited marketplace operators from selling private labels, so the separation was compelled rather than

elected. Architecture determined what that compulsion cost. Proprietary retail operated as a separable module within the hybrid configuration, so the firm could redraw the boundary and relocate the activity while preserving both the marketplace and the retail operation in restructured form. Redrawing of this kind is the co-evolution of architecture and governance that Tiwana et al. (2010) theorize. The relocation carried non-market consequence as well, in the sense Baron (1995) gives to integrated strategy, since the TCA subsequently declared algorithmic remedies moot once the conduct they addressed had moved off the marketplace.

Sahibinden.com, as a broker, had no equivalent escape. Its core competitive asset is what the remedies targeted, namely the aggregation and combination of proprietary user data together with the lock-in that advantage produced. That lock-in was the direct product of the network effects that push classifieds markets toward concentration and winner-takes-all outcomes (Cennamo & Santaló, 2013; Eisenmann et al., 2006; Katz & Shapiro, 1994; Rochet & Tirole, 2003). The data-portability mandate can accordingly be read as an instrument aimed at network effects themselves, of the kind advocated for restoring contestability where data aggregation forecloses entry (Crémer et al., 2019). No activity here was separable from the asset the remedy reached, since the intermediation function and the core asset coincide. Boundary redrawing offered no relief, and the cost of compliance fell on the asset itself.

The Trendyol episode is a boundary decision in Gawer's (2021) sense, since the firm reset what its platform included rather than altering how it operated. The firm moved a contested activity across the boundary of firm scope while leaving the platform's sides and data interfaces intact, so the algorithmic concern was extinguished while the data-based remedies survived. Conventional competition law addresses the product market rather than the ecosystem of complementors in which platform conduct occurs (Jacobides & Lianos, 2021), and remedies inherit that framing. A remedy directed at scope can therefore be answered by a change of scope, whereas one directed at the interface cannot, and Sahibinden.com had no scope adjustment available to it.

The architectural account developed here connects to the broker and provider distinction in the multi-sided markets literature (Hagiu & Wright, 2015) and lends a regulatory dimension that the original framing did not anticipate. Architecture accordingly shapes competitive logic and regulatory vulnerability alike, since it governs whether the conduct under scrutiny can be separated structurally from the core business. The strategic response literature has treated the question of response as one of organizational posture, and the evidence here locates it instead in the design of the platform.

Alternative Explanations

Several other accounts require consideration before the mechanisms proposed here can be accepted. These assessments bound the findings rather than displacing them. Origin and architecture are identified as mechanisms operating under specified conditions rather than as the only attributes at work. The first concerns timing. Trendyol's episodes run from 2021 to 2024 while Sahibinden.com's begin in 2018, so the wider repertoire might reflect a richer procedural environment rather than any property of the firm. The settlement and commitment mechanisms were available to both firms from late 2021, and the divergence in repertoire persists within that shared window, which weakens the timing account without eliminating it.

A second explanation concerns firm-level resources rather than origin, namely scale, financial capacity, technological infrastructure, and accumulated regulatory experience. Each could secure procedural access independently of foreign backing, so none is rejected here.

Origin, as defined above, comprises foreign ownership together with the resource bundle that ownership supplies, so scale and capacity are constituents of the construct rather than rivals to it. The qualification this imposes is nonetheless real. A domestically owned platform of comparable resource depth would test the account directly, and no such firm operates in the Turkish setting.

Market segment is the principal rival to architecture, since the two firms trade in different segments and segment rather than architecture might explain where the cost of compliance fell. The remedies imposed under Law No. 4054 nonetheless tracked architectural layers rather than sectoral product rules. The remedy reaching Sahibinden.com addressed data aggregation at the interface and the remedy reaching Trendyol addressed the scope of the firm, and both layers exist in any multi-sided platform irrespective of the goods transacted (Gawer, 2021). The 2022 amendment to Law No. 6563 did impose category-specific obligations, yet it acted as an external trigger rather than a source of remedy, prompting the relocation of private-label sales after which the antitrust outcome followed the redrawn boundary. The 2024 mootness episode makes this visible, since segment was held constant within a single firm while the scope boundary moved. The qualification remains partial, because architecture and market segment are correlated across the two cases.

Divergence might finally reflect the nature of regulatory intervention rather than the conduct of the firms. The two trajectories differ in allegation, and a response shaped principally by what the TCA demanded would not testify to origin or architecture. Two features of the record bound this reading. The first is the pairing of the 2023 decisions. Both rested on Article 6, both fell in the same year, and both imposed obligations on the handling of platform data, so the intervention is held approximately constant across them. The firms nonetheless engaged from repertoires of different depth, Trendyol through commitment proposals and argument across statutory regimes and Sahibinden.com through technical negotiation conducted one remedy at a time. Architecture is identified separately, through the within-firm sequence in which the standing of the Trendyol remedies changed once the scope boundary moved while segment, origin, and regulator were held constant. The second feature is the allocation of procedural initiative, since Turkish procedure places the initiation of settlement and commitment applications with the party throughout. The scope of each investigation and the remedies sought remained with the TCA, so the account here is bounded rather than excluded.

Toward a Model of Segmented Compliance

The model advanced here, termed segmented compliance, brings three mechanisms into a single account, since the regulatory regime fixes the outer boundary of feasible response, firm origin sets the depth of the repertoire deployed within it, and platform architecture determines the organizational location at which compliance cost is absorbed. Segmented compliance describes the simultaneous operation of the three rather than the primacy of any one of them. This division of labor among environment, firm, and structure recalls the strategy tripod (Peng et al., 2009), though the third element here is a property of platform design rather than of the industry in which a firm competes.

Segmented compliance extends the institution-based view by specifying a condition under which Oliver's (1991) range of strategic responses narrows. Where the regime is dense and enforcement credible, only the accommodative responses remain available. The extension does not stop at that narrowing. Oliver's continuum records how far a firm concedes and remains silent on where the concession is absorbed. The two cases show that the second question has a determinate answer once architecture is specified. The model also joins the non-market strategy and multi-sided markets literatures, which are rarely brought together. Origin

conditions repertoire depth and architecture determines where the cost is absorbed, so the two address one compliance problem from different sides. The model is developed from a demanding emerging-market setting, which answers the call to theorize from emerging economies rather than to test Western-derived theory within them (Hoskisson et al., 2000; Wright et al., 2005).

Both episodes exhibit reciprocal adjustment over time. A change in the e-commerce statute reshaped the obligations owed under the competition statute, and Trendyol tracked that interaction and reduced its burden accordingly. Sahibinden.com's portability remedy was renegotiated from an inadequate first proposal into a working technical standard. Compliance in each case was iterative rather than settled at the moment of decision, which a co-evolutionary account captures more reliably than a static institutional one (Cantwell et al., 2010; Gong & Hassink, 2019; Lewin et al., 1999).

Han et al. (2024) apply a co-evolutionary framework to Chinese cross-border electronic commerce and find that platform firms legitimizing their sectoral role through government engagement and lobbying, exercising more agency than a state-led environment would ordinarily permit. The Turkish evidence converges on agency and diverges on mechanism, since agency in China worked through the policy-making process and here through architectural reconfiguration. Where an ex ante threshold regime fixes obligations by transaction volume, the latitude for shaping the rule is narrow and that for restructuring the business is wide.

Lee and Saha (2025) examine jurisdictions where large domestic platforms operate alongside multinational ones, identifying the trade-offs regulators face in choosing set rules over ex post enforcement. This study supplies the firm-side counterpart, specifying the mechanism through which ex ante rules bear unevenly across platform types, namely the differential capacity of hybrid and broker architectures to relocate a contested activity.

Conclusion

Under a dense regulatory regime, compliance proves to be a joint product rather than an expression of firm character. Two firms differing on both attributes reached the same terminal state while the differences that survived followed from what origin made available and architecture made possible. The pattern displaces a common treatment of compliance as a firm-level disposition, a matter of whether a company is cooperative or resistant. A firm cannot select its posture freely, and a regulator cannot assume that an identical remedy imposes an identical burden.

Institutional dominance has generally been read as a reduction in strategic freedom. The account developed here holds that, instead, it fixes the terminal state while leaving the route and the incidence of cost open, so what institutions determine and what they leave undetermined are separable questions (Peng et al., 2008).

The findings carry implications for firms and for regulators. For platforms with separable operations, a remedy can be answered by relocating the contested activity, so the business survives the intervention at the cost of reconfiguration. For domestic incumbents, the asset that generates the advantage is the asset the regulator targets, so there is nowhere to absorb the remedy short of leaving the business. For regulators, an obligation on firm scope can be met by changing scope while one on the data interface cannot, so the boundary a remedy touches determines whether it can be answered at all.

Still, findings from one regime should be read with care beyond it, since regulatory instruments travel further than the enforcement logics that give them effect (Zhan et al., 2026).

The Turkish regime borrows from the European template while resting on its own enforcement logic.

The design carries scope conditions that bound the claims advanced here. Two firms in a single jurisdiction support analytical generalization to theory rather than statistical generalization to a population, so segmented compliance stands as a candidate for testing rather than as an established regularity. Origin and architecture vary together across the pair, as do the market segments in which the two firms trade, and cross-border capital is not observed apart from the resource depth it supplies. For the reasons weighed above, the account offered here therefore reads as a plausible interpretation of the observed divergence rather than as an attribution of effect. The documentary design records conduct rather than deliberation, and each firm's position reaches the analysis as the TCA recorded it. A single coder worked the corpus, so what is absent is an independent interpretation rather than coding reliability, for which the audit trail stands in place. The trajectories themselves remain open, since several remedies are under continuing monitoring, and the terminal state reported here holds only within the observation window.

These limitations indicate the future directions the study leaves open for research. The model could be examined in other regimes combining ex ante thresholds with active ex post enforcement and tested against platforms of intermediate origin or mixed architecture. A domestic hybrid provider and a foreign-backed broker occupy the remaining cells of the framework, and evidence from either configuration would test whether the model holds where origin and architecture do not vary together. Firm-side accounts would reach what the documentary design cannot, and independent coding of the same corpus would establish whether the interpretation holds across readers. A longer observation window would establish whether segmented compliance is a stable configuration or a stage in a longer adjustment. The scope conditions of the model are regulatory rather than geographic, since what produces the pattern is a regime that forecloses sustained resistance while leaving architectural reconfiguration open. A comparison of platforms differing in architecture within a single market segment would separate architecture from the market conditions that accompany it here.

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The author declared that the ethical rules for research and publication were followed while preparing the article.

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