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# Transnational Reception Research on Turkish Tv Dizis (Series): A Meta-Synthesis

**Rahime Özgün KEHYA**[*]

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyse empirical research conducted in various countries on the reception of Turkish TV series (*dizi*s) that have gained worldwide popularity. The purpose of the study is to enhance existing knowledge by comparing and synthesizing the findings and to provide a comprehensive perspective that can be used in practice. With the new millennium, Turkey ranked second in the world in TV series exports. In 2023, the 100th anniversary of the Republic, it has become a country exporting hundreds of *dizi*s to more than a hundred countries. Turkish TV *dizi*s, whose popularity is increasing daily, are reaching viewers worldwide through various platforms and influencing them. Without isolating local and universal cultural values from each other, Turkish TV *dizi*s offer a transnational cultural acquaintance opportunity to audiences far and near. The soft power of TV *dizi*s should be considered in Turkey's culturally diversified tourist spectrum. Studies on the perception of Turkish TV *dizi*s in various continents require meta-synthesis. Although these studies mainly emphasise the transnational success of Turkish TV *dizi*s, negative criticisms are also encountered. According to the findings, even if there are geographical and religious differences, empirical research in the Google Scholar database shows a diverse reception of cultural proximity. Such a meta-synthesis is necessary to contribute to the global sustainable circulation of the *dizi*s and their positive potential reception and impact.

**Keywords:** Culture, TV Series Export, Turkish TV *Dizi*s (Series), Reception, Meta-Synthesis.

### Türk Dizilerine İlişkin Ulusötesi Alımlama Araştırmaları: Bir Meta-Sentez

**ÖZ**

Bu çalışma, dünya çapında popülerlik kazanan Türk dizilerinin alımlanması üzerine çeşitli ülkelerde yapılan ampirik araştırmaları analiz etmeyi ve bulguları karşılaştırarak ve sentezleyerek mevcut bilgiyi geliştirmeyi ve uygulamada kullanılabilecek kapsamlı bir bakış açısı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye yeni binyılla birlikte dizi ihracatında dünya ikinciliğine yükselmiştir. Cumhuriyetin yüzüncü yılı olan 2023 yılında, yüzden fazla ülkeye yüzlerce dizi ihraç eden bir ülke konumuna ulaşmıştır. Popülerliği her geçen gün artan Türk dizileri çeşitli platformlarda dünyanın dört bir yanından izleyiciyle buluşarak onları etkilemektedir. Yerel ve evrensel olan kültürel değerleri birbirinden soyutlamadan Türk dizileri uzak ve yakındaki izleyicilere ulusötesi kültürel bir tanışıklık fırsatı sunmaktadır. Türkiye'de kültürel çeşitlilik kazanmış turist yelpazesinde dizilerin yumuşak gücü hafife alınmamalıdır. Türk dizilerinin çeşitli kıtalarda algılanmasına yönelik çalışmalar meta sentez gerektirmektedir. Bu çalışmalarda çoğunlukla Türk dizilerinin ulusötesi başarısı vurgulansa da dizilerle ilgili olumsuz eleştirilerle de karşılaşılmaktadır. Bulgulara göre coğrafi ve dinsel farklılıklar olsa bile Google Akademik veri tabanında taranan ampirik araştırmalar göstermektedir ki çeşitlilik gösteren bir kültürel yakınlık alımlaması

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bulunmaktadır. Böyle bir meta-sentez, küresel sürdürülebilir dizi dolaşımı ve olumlu potansiyel alımlamalar ve etkilere katkı sunmak için gereklidir.

## INTRODUCTION

Turkish television *dizi*s were domestic products until the Millennium, but they have long ranked second in TV series exports in the last two decades (see Bhutto 2019; Öztürk & Atik 2016). Latin American TV series, once known as *telenovela*s or soap operas, have now been replaced by Turkish TV *dizi*s. Various studies have been conducted in countries where Turkish TV *dizi*s are popular, revealing their effects in terms of reception. Thus, studies on the reception of Turkish TV *dizi*s in various continents require meta-synthesis. Although these studies emphasise the transnational success of Turkish TV *dizi*s, negative criticisms about the series are also encountered. Therefore, meta-synthesis is essential for sustainable *dizi* export and positive potential impacts.

When discussing cultural exports, it is important to consider how media, cinema, tourism, academic and cultural exchange programs like Erasmus Plus contribute to sharing domestically produced culture with other countries. In addition to a comprehensive view of what culture is, how culture is promoted is also very important in film studies. While promoting culture with its many components, developing an objective, scientific representation policy that respects universal and local values is essential. Such policy requires multidimensional and wide-angle perspectives in self-critical approaches. Thus, it is helpful to look at Turkish TV *dizi*s exports from a critical, cultural perspective.

After presenting historical data on the Turkish series, the study will include various studies on how they were received in different countries, what consequences this reception had for Turkey, and some criticisms. As a result, it will reach a synthesis and reveal the importance of sustainable TV series exports. Reading empirical studies that analyse the reception of Turkish TV *dizi*s in different geographies, common themes such as transnationalism, soft power, and cultural proximity emerge. Therefore, the meta-synthesis method is employed. According to Güneş and Erdem, meta-synthesis is a method of interpreting and synthesising qualitative findings with a qualitative approach. Meta refers to going beyond the analysed studies, and synthesis refers to blending studies on a similar topic without damaging their originality. Thus, comparing and synthesising findings advances existing knowledge and provides a broad perspective that can be applied in practice (Güneş & Erdem 2022). This study aims to identify

the general transnational reception tendencies of Turkish serials that have been watched and popularised in different continents, generate discussion for future *dizi* practices, and expand themes for further research. Meta-synthesis is often favoured in the fields of health and education. However, some researchers apply this method in film studies literature (Cummings 2019) and media studies (Gonsalves, McGannon, Schinke & Pegoraro 2017). Bondas and Hall suggest that meta-synthesis studies should be limited to ten to twelve purposively selected studies (Bondas & Hall 2007). Therefore, thirteen purposively selected empirical studies were included in the sample for this meta-synthesis, ensuring they represented different geographies. For the study, articles in English and Turkish languages were searched in the "google scholar" search engine with the search words "Turkish TV series", "Turkish dizi*s" and* "reception of Turkish TV series", and only empirical-viewer studies after 2010 covering the relevant period were selected. Some studies were excluded from the sample to avoid repetition because their geographical locations or results were similar and because the recommended sample size of Bondas & Hall (2007) for meta-synthesis was taken as a reference. At the beginning of the research, at least three sources with similar findings from different countries with geographically and culturally different locations were selected to test reliability and make a generalisation.

## Considering Turkish *Dizi*s in Cultural Diplomacy-Proximity and Transnationalism

In research on the international distribution of Turkish TV *dizi*s, common concepts include cultural imperialism, cultural export, cultural diplomacy, transnationalism, soft power, globalization, and cultural proximity. Therefore, it is necessary to address these concepts before proceeding to the meta-synthesis section. In terms of the history of Turkish TV series exports, reaching a vast geography in more than twenty years allows for meta-synthesis, and the sufficient number of studies dealing with these concepts requires clarification of the concepts to serve the purpose of this research.

Cultural proximity theory is related to the audience's preference for content that they find culturally close to the attraction of foreign and domestic media in the international context. It reveals that the audience will prefer local or national productions due to factors such as the attractiveness of local stars in the media and local knowledge (Straubhaar 2007). According to La Pastina and Straubhaar, language, ethnicity, and religion are essential to cultural proximity. Additionally, cultural similarities such as clothing, ethnicity, gestures, humour, relationships,

music, and story development are significant. Regarding cultural proximity, family drama or melodramas that address the common points of family struggles and gender issues of women from different cultures and provide identification (La Pastina & Straubhaar 2005: 274). Therefore, it will not be surprising that cultural proximity varies linguistically, ethnically, geographically, gender and religiously in our meta-synthesised research. Maria Celeste Wagner and Marwan M. Kraidy extend cultural proximity and multiple proximity by proposing entangled proximities that reveal both overlapping and conflicting perceptions of Argentine viewers with Turkish television series:

> "We find that while the popularity of *dizi* argues against audiences' preferences toward culturally proximate content, a revised "proximities" framework still helps explain these global media trends: contemporary audiences are driven by desired proximities toward different social structures and cultural forms, instead of existing familiar ones. In particular, *dizi*'s success in this context appears to be largely due to a double nostalgia for both the classical Latin American telenovelas of the 1980s and the society they used to depict. In other words, whereas contemporary Argentine and Latin American series are perceived to contain explicit sexuality, graphic violence, and profane language, Turkish *dizi* are seen as "subtle," showcasing the depth and restraint in human relationships suffused with strong family values—aspects perceived to have been lost in both culturally proximate telenovelas and in Argentine society" (Wagner & Kraidy 2023: 304).

The nostalgia provided by Turkish TV series can be defined as transnational nostalgia providing transnational cultural proximity. It is necessary to relate the concept of transnationalism to the fact that the periphery is beginning to replace the one-sided Hollywood empire or the *telenovela*s of the 1980s in the provision of cultural proximity—the phrase "World Cinema" on one level replaced phrases like international cinema and Third World Cinema. Hardly limited in use to academic analysis, the term has become commonplace in the language of film festival brochures and catalogues, with film journalists and film scholars, and among hardcore cinephiles and even casually cosmopolitan filmgoers. World Cinema has thus been understood in highly diverse and even opposite ways and gradually came to gather under earlier categories such as foreign films, international art cinema, non-Hollywood films, and international auteur cinema. The authors surround 'World Cinema' with some necessary caveats, without which 'World Cinema' and Hollywood and the World would sound too much like a new iteration of the West and the Rest, even when the conceptualisation is, in principle, pro-Rest (Stam 2019: 103). In this sense, the world of World Cinema might need to create the equivalent of the existing World Cup for Unrecognised Nations, or in comparison with the world of art, an impressionist-like salon des films refuses (Stam 2019: 163).

Regarding their political valence, keywords like world, transnational and global cannot be fixed through any essential definition; they are all conjectural, modifiable, and often merge at the margins. However, each code has left, right, and centrist wings. Speaking schematically, the "World" could be said to tend centrist through its association with liberal humanism, although this varies with the art, discipline, or even the theorist in question (Stam 2019: 232). Therefore, Turkish TV series, which have risen to second place in the world in exports in the last twenty years (see Bhutto 2019), is representative of the rise of the rest of the world.[1]

The widespread use of internet technologies, the advancement of paid and free online video platforms, and the orientation of countries towards countries such as Turkey and India due to political economy requirements are factors in the multifaceted transnationalism. Therefore, one should consider transnational production, distribution, and consumption dynamics in terms of providing cultural proximity and diplomatic soft power. Empirical studies frequently highlight the soft power of Turkish TV *dizi*s in the international and transnational socio-political public relations context. According to Joseph Nye, soft power is the capability of a country to use its cultural and political values to influence others. Globalisation, significant, intangible changes in financial markets and international power dynamics, changes in world politics and advances in communication and transportation technology are paving the way for soft power, replacing the power gained through the possession of population, land, natural resources, economic size, military power, and political stability (Nye 1990). A soft power for promoting Turkey's tourism, gastronomy and culture through Turkish *dizi*s is discussed. The *dizi*s' aesthetic and content components play an important role in the creation of transcultural and transnational soft power.

**History of Turkish *Dizis* Export**

Although the worldwide visibility of Turkish television series[2] increased in the 2000s —which seemed like a new success—Turkey was among the first in the world in film production in the 1960s and 70s, and Turkish films were occasionally dubbed in other countries (see for example, Wardlow 1996). From the 1960s to the mid-1970s, Turkish cinema experienced its golden years

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[1] Here, 'the rest of the world' refers to productions outside Hollywood. Since Turkey has been second only to Hollywood in TV series exports for quite some time, it is logically the forerunner of the rise of non-Hollywood productions in film production.

[2] Examples of *dizi*s exported abroad: *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne? (What is the Fault of Fatmagül?,* 2010-2012*), Kara Para Aşk (Dirty Money Love,* 2014-2015*), Yaprak Dökümü, Dirilis: Ertugrul (Resurrection: Ertugrul,* 2014-2019*), Adını Feriha Koydum (I Named Her Feriha,* 2011-2012*), Gümüş (Noor,* 2005-2007*), İstanbullu Gelin (*Bride of Istanbul,* 2017-2019*), Vatanım Sensin (Wounded Love, 2016-2018).*

in film production and domestic viewing. However, by the mid-1970s, a decline in film production began due to socio-economic and political reasons. In the 1980s, Hollywood's dominance worldwide and the diversification of private television channels reduced film production's quantity and quality (Scognamillo 2003: 178-183). Previously produced Turkish (*Yeşilçam*) films were often shown in repeats on television, depending on the ratings. At the same time, the increasing number of TV series produced for television has accelerated a spatial transition from movie theatres to living rooms at home.

Some global audiences watch Turkish TV *dizi*s in connection with the supply of TV series because national channels broadcast Turkish productions. The relatively low costs had an impact on the supply of TV series. Marketing strategies have made sense in the series' rising worldwide success (see Yesil 2015). Turkish TV *dizi*s diversified domestically with the spread of private television channels in the 1990s. In 2001, the *Deli Yürek* series began being broadcast abroad at affordable prices in Kazakhstan. Later, various series were exported to geographies such as Asia, Europe, Africa and America at affordable prices. Turkish TV *dizi*s broadcast on traditional television for over 20 years has become watchable in many countries. They are watched by a significant audience that is geographically, culturally, ethnic, religious, and nationally diverse. Remarkably, the TV series that are popular and watched in Turkey are also successful abroad. Most studies within the scope of this meta-synthesis have conducted reception analyses of popular TV series in Turkey. The Turkish term *dizi* (series) is used in various studies and film reviews.

İzzet Pinto, CEO of Global Agency, which globally commercialises Turkish TV *dizi*s, attributes the great interest in Turkish TV *dizi*s to quality productions and cultural similarities. He thinks people are bored with South American TV series, European TV series are remote from the culture of many countries, and American TV series are very ambitious. However, Turkish TV *dizi*s are quickly embraced because they are close to the Balkans and the Middle East (Öztürk & Atik 2016). However, despite the geographical distance between South American and African countries, we must remember the complex cultural proximities involved in their adoption. Carolina Acosta-Alzuru's research reveals that Turkish TV *dizi*s' producers primarily consider the Turkish audience when making production decisions. Because in order to make a profit in international sales. First, content should be produced for the Turkish audience; they should buy it and be successful (Acosta Alzuru 2021). Therefore, the focus should be on more than just the profitability of the content produced for the Turkish audience as a popular culture product. Content, discourse, and representations should be developed by

considering critical analyses of the literature because bestselling content does not always mean harmless. Subtle scientific-artistic collaborations must be developed to discipline the audience's content taste.

**Meta-Synthesis: Reception of Turkish TV *Dizi*s in Various Geographies**

Turkish TV *dizi*s exported abroad have evoked positive and negative perceptions among transnational audiences. Positive sentiments centred on the cultural, economic and diplomatic activities and the tourist visits to Turkey. On the other hand, the sector also has some critical approaches by the researchers and audiences. The countries where Turkish TV *dizi*s are exported, such as Arab, African, Latin American and Balkan countries, have both common and distinct socio-political and cultural characteristics. Depending on the context of the series and the countries, there are similarities and differences in reception and impact.

Among the countries importing Turkish series are nations such as Greece, a country with which Turkey once had diplomatic issues. The audience's preference for Turkish TV *dizi*s in Greece and their reception must be considered cultural exports, independent or dependent on such diplomatic situations and tensions. In Larochelle's reception research, despite the negative stereotypes that previously existed on both sides, through the consumption of Turkish drama series, Greeks can re-examine existing representations of Turks and are invited to explore the differences and similarities between the two societies. Greece, which had no opportunity to produce TV series during the economic crisis, preferred the neighbour country's affordable TV series productions, allowing them to meet an "alternative modernity" that differs from the American prototype by bringing traditional family structures and gender roles to the screen and fantasy-romantic elements that transcend national borders. Both countries' lack of characterisation of Westernised cultural products, values , and habits offers commonalities and identifications (Larochelle 2021). Cultural products, especially soap operas, appeal to the Greek audience's nostalgia for lost tradition, externalised East and outdated religious values (Yörük & Vatikiotis 2013: 2379). The high interest in Turkish TV series in Greece and the positive reception, where identification and cultural proximity are understood, show the power of TV series in breaking prejudices. Soon following, one will see a similar nostalgic cultural proximity in Wagner & Kraidy's study (2023) in the context of Argentine reception, which is geographically distant compared to Greece.

Discussing Turkish TV *dizi*s diplomacy in Israel, Serbia, and Macedonia, like Greece, is possible. The *Istanbullu Gelin* (2017-2019) series,[3] starring famous actors Özcan Deniz and Aslı Enver, is popular in Israel. A news interview provides empirical data on *Telenovela* or Soap Opera diplomacy. The Turkish soap opera *Istanbullu Gelin* has become popular and has created a positive image of Turkey among Israelis (Campos 2019). According to Berg's research, the interaction between modernity and tradition in Turkey has profoundly affected the lives of Israeli viewers, influencing them to change their negative prejudices about Turkey. In fact, many of them expressed an increased desire to visit the country to experience its culture, historical sites, and locations where Turkish TV series are shot (2023: 191). Despite the current or past diplomatic tensions between the two countries, the public's interest in Turkish TV *dizi*s and Istanbul is noteworthy. Such contradiction is similar to the previous diplomatic crises with Greece and the people's welcoming reception of Turkish *dizi*s.

Similarly, Özalman and Özmen's empirical research is about the perception of Turkish TV *dizi*s by the Macedonian audience in Skopje. The interviews focused on the majority Christian demographic who do not speak Turkish and have no family ties to Turks. It has gone beyond arguments of cultural proximity. Photographic and prosthetic memories obtained from the mediated narratives of Turkish TV *dizi*s create cultural and collective proximities with the local audience (Özalpman & Özmen 2023). Serbia is another country where the audience has shown interest despite the macro-crises in history. Zohaib Chisthi's article includes an introduction so the Serbian audience can easily watch Turkish TV *dizi*s (Chisthi 2024). Research indicates the cultural proximity that occurs through TV series in countries that belong to different religions and even have prejudices and hostile experiences in their history. In other words, TV series reaching large audiences can break the image of enemies based on "differences" among the people of countries that have previously been in conflict or had diplomatic problems.

María Celeste Wagner and Marwan M. Kraidy challenge long-held theories on cultural proximity through their empirical research that *telenovela*s can compete in its stronghold, Argentina. According to all 25 semi-structured interviews, all the respondents have heard of the series. They talk about relatives or friends who are big fans, partly as a pop wave or prominent detractors, partly speaking of moral panic. The series' success in this regard may be due to several factors that challenge the widely accepted theory of cultural proximity in Turkish

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[3] Produced by O3 Media, directed by Zeynep Günay Tan and Deniz Koloş and broadcasted by Star TV.

dramas. Gender, age, class, ideology and culture mark mixed affinities that explain appreciation and disdain. They also have implications in the paradigm of viewer positionality and proximity, which they call "a resigned institution" among these global audiences (Wagner & Kraidy 2023). The research conducted in Argentina, once an exporter of *telenovela*s, reveals that the audience realises a reception according to their demographics.

Emek Çaylı Rahte's empirical study collected comments about Turkish TV series from loyal viewers and bloggers in Sweden. In addition to positive feedback such as atmosphere, representation of reality, language, music and script, dissenting/negotiating viewer evaluations on issues such as stereotypes, gender discrimination, normalization, exaggeration and censorship were identified (Rahte 2022). For this meta-synthesis study, it is important to include a socio-economically developed Western European country such as Sweden in the sample, where populations with a Turkish migration background live.

Musa Khan and Ulrike Rohn examine Turkish TV series' widespread social, psychological, cultural and economic effects through cultural encounters and capitalisation over the last two decades of exports. The results collected from samples in Pakistan and Egypt show that most respondents prefer to watch historical and contemporary TV series among foreign content due to cultural proximity. Although participants have different views on the impact on their personal behaviour and social life, most believe that Turkish TV series inspire them to visit Turkey and buy Turkish products. According to the results, most respondents prefer to watch romance and contemporary and historical drama (Khan & Rohn 2020). Such findings reflect the diversity of Turkish TV *dizi*s and the diversity of the audience in terms of Hall's decoding theory (see Hall 1994).

Mirriam Berg's study reveals that cultural proximity is an essential factor in the popularity of Turkish drama series among the Arab audience in Qatar. Dubbing, ethnic, racial and religious similarities and the representation of traditional and modern Muslim society create cultural proximity among the Arab students interviewed in the study. It also found that audiences enjoy watching a more liberal approach to social and cultural issues but do not feel comfortable seeing the same level of openness in their own societies. The portrayal of a conservative family model favouring family bonds and respect for senior family members was cited as a further feature of cultural proximity. Successfully merging global and local elements, Turkish TV series combine cultural, social and ethnic similarities with a modern lifestyle

recognisable in the Arab and Muslim cultural context. Since they are generally close to the sub-genre of melodrama, which emphasises love and family relationships, this has particularly contributed to their appeal among women. The fact that Turkish dramas feature solid and independent female lead roles is another crucial factor contributing to their appeal (Berg 2017: 3427-3428). The gender roles they perceive and imagine as missing in their own societies point to universal cultural proximity. In addition, modern and traditional hybridisation in Turkey goes hand in hand, although it is subject to debate from time to time. The perception of such hybridity in the TV series coincides with the projection of the social-cultural structure.

In one of the first field studies, Eylem Yanardağoğlu and Imad N. Karam, shared the results of their interviews with the audience in Palestine and Egypt and the producers or distributors of these Turkish TV series. Arab audiences, particularly women, are attracted to series for many reasons that affect all sectors of society and geography. They may include the perceived lack of social equality between men and women in their society and the glamour of the ostentatious, often affluent and modern Istanbul life depicted in the series. The authors find things both familiar and unfamiliar; the audience who enjoys this mix appreciates the cultural similarities. They marvelled at the landscapes and the relationship of the women with their families and thought they were different. Therefore, this series' impact is seen in cultural proximity and the difference between Turkish and Arab experiences of modernity (Yanardağoğlu & Karam 2013: 572-575). Along with the cultural proximities here, the cultural distances regarding the idealised gender equality should also be considered as glocal proximity between women with reference to La Pastina and Straubhaar (see La Pastina & Straubhaar 2005).

According to Shudipta Sharma's empirical research, Bangladeshi media needed quality domestic entertainment content, which provided a favourable market space for Turkish television serials. The author's study is both critical and confirmatory. The dominance of Turkish TV *dizi*s in Bangladesh is due to their high production values, intricate storylines, local demand, and representation of soft power. It is fuelled by Turkish serials' ability to evoke cultural synergies among Bangladeshi audiences through their meticulous portrayal of Islamic history and foregrounding common cultural paradigms (Sharma 2023). In the context of Bangladesh, like other Muslim importer countries of Turkish *dizi*s, religious-historical ties appear to create cultural proximity and soft power.

In 2016, Mehmet Hüseyin Bilgin et al. analysed the perception of TV series in four Eastern European countries in terms of their impact on tourism to Turkey and preferences for Turkish products.[4] They found a positive effect on the tourism preferences of the audience at that time. However, no effect was found on Turkish brand product preferences. In this case, they mention that it was forbidden to show the products openly in the series at that time (Bilgin, Demir & Labas 2016: 576-577). However, today, product placement is done in TV series. TV series' effect on Turkey's tourism explosion is again emerging. This situation reminds the effect of the *Asmalı Konak* (2002-20003) series on Turkey's domestic tourism. However, Muhammad Nasim Zaheroghli, who applied a questionnaire to a sample of tourists who watched Turkish TV *dizi*s and visited Turkey, found that product placements in these *dizi*s positively affect the consumer's purchase intention. As consumers' attitudes towards Turkish TV *dizi*s and their attitudes towards the product placements increase positively, their intention to purchase the product, service or brand they see in these *dizi*s also rises (Zaheroghli 2023: 159). In the first of the studies (Bilgin et al. 2016: 576-577) in this paragraph, which was seven years two, there was no relationship between Turkish product purchase motivation and TV *dizi*s viewing practice because product placement and advertisements were prohibited in TV *dizi*s at that time. The finding of a positive relationship in the following periods is related to the liberalisation of product placement.

Pınar Aslan considers Turkish TV *dizi*s in breaking down prejudices about Turkey in Chile and Latin America, their role as an information source about Turkey and creative culture industry products with the mission of international public relations. In the empirical research derived from her doctoral thesis, she focused on the constructive role of TV series. Accordingly, the Chilean participants, who regularly watch Turkish TV *dizi*s, showed a great interest and admiration for Turkish culture. However, measuring the success of Turkish TV *dizi*s worldwide and determining the strategy they will develop would be helpful in the sustainability of the TV series industry and Turkey's soft power. By managing the uncontrolled soft power generated by successful TV series, Turkey can harness this influence to its advantage while ensuring the continued success of the television industry. The sustainability of Turkish TV *dizi*s and soft power can be ensured by calculating the possible consequences of the perception of success with a strategy determined based on reliable data analysis (Aslan 2019). Therefore, realistic

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[4] Macedonia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Serbia.

marketing strategies and content production are necessary for sustainable Turkish TV *dizi*s export.

Aykut Sığın and Raheb Mohammedi Ghanbarlou's empirical study evaluated the export of TV series from Turkey to Azerbaijan with their sociological and cultural effects. The study presented data suitable for evaluating the Azerbaijani society from Turkish TV *dizi*s under three main headings, each positive and negative. On the positive side, participants saw cultural influences as strengthening national ties and portraying women as strong and emancipated. The social effects are that these series highlight the "European lifestyle" with a libertarian attitude. Specifically, young people and women are strengthening their national feelings and showing women as self-sufficient individuals. In the harmful category, it may cause the loss of the Azeri language from a cultural perspective; it encourages a capitalist lifestyle through phenomena such as directing consumption and highlighting individualism, it provides a basis for legitimising extramarital relations, it devalues the free time use of young people, it shows women as flirtatious and it legitimises violence against women (Ghanbarlou & Sığın 2020). Azerbaijan is a country that is associated with Turkey with the discourse of "two states and one nation". However, despite linguistic, religious and ethnic proximity, gender criticism is similar to Turkey's. The fact that cultural proximity is intense does not mean that there will be a lack of negative reception criticisms between even the culturally closest nations. Even though it is from the same language family, the effort to preserve its own accent and dialect is like a contradiction of linguistic closeness; there is no such concern in other countries that speak different languages. While speaking the same language provides cultural attraction under normal conditions, different accents and dialects require sensitivity to cultural diversity.

An Al Jazeera documentary discusses the socio-cultural effects of TV *dizi*s such as *Gümüş, What is Fatmagül's Fault?* and *Magnificent Century* in Turkey on women in various Arab, Middle Eastern, African, and Balkan countries. The documentary gives some hints about gender (Paschalidou 2013). In the news made at various times, it was stated that, for example, the *Gümüş* series increased the number of divorces and that fatwas were given not to watch such Turkish TV *dizi*s (France 24 The Observers 2010). However, the increased divorce rate in another country does not have any significance in Turkish public diplomacy or Turkey's goals (Ağırseven & Örki 2017: 847). Similar to the findings in this documentary, a master thesis from Afghanistan focuses on the role of TV series as a catalyst in the context of gender. Male participants object and show resistance due to the liberal representation of women in TV series (Qasmi 2020: 217). Even if divorces are not an intended situation, the empowerment of women

in the series and the fact that they are role models for seeking their various rights can be considered a positive effect. Because in Turkish TV *dizi*s such as *Fatma Gül'ün Suçu ne?*, which are criticised by fatwas in some countries or banned because they corrupt morals, there are female protagonists who seek their rights and do not keep silent in the face of violence and harassment. This situation presents Turkey, a Muslim country with advanced civil rights, as a role model through TV series that represent traditional values along with modernity in various countries with which cultural proximity is felt. However, see Qasmi's research (2020) for a critical study on Turkish television series that associate women as sexual and oppressed objects with a masculine perspective.

**CONCLUSION**

This study conducted a meta-synthesis on previous studies regarding the reception process of Turkish TV *dizi*s becoming famous worldwide and being received by audiences. The research primarily associated Turkish TV *dizi*s' diplomatic and commercial success with the concepts of cultural proximity and soft power, but they also included specific criticisms during the reception. However, the operational dimension of Turkish TV *dizi*s has become concrete with the rapid progress of tourism—the tourism boom has resulted from the aesthetic and content influences of the series with the soft power effect.

Turkish television *dizi*s initially targeted domestic audiences and began to be exported to other countries with subtitles or dubbing in the 2000s at affordable prices. Along with a screening on television channels in exported countries, watching on video streaming platforms on the Internet has also become available. Their export range is expanding daily, both in terms of series and country, with the help of online streaming platforms. Low prices were attractive to television broadcasters in many countries, including those initially experiencing financial difficulties, which has been a successful public relations and marketing strategy. At the same time, media gaps and the need for drama in various countries (i.e. Israel, Bangladesh and Sweeden) were among the factors that enabled the supply of Turkish TV series (Berg 2023: 190; Rahte 2022: 53; Sharma 2023). Selling quality audiovisual content at affordable prices that creates a perception of cultural closeness has supported cultural diplomacy and created soft power. With the increase in Turkish TV series throughout history, the diversification of tourists visiting Turkey has taken its place in history in direct proportion.

In thirteen empirical studies based on reception studies conducted on different continents about Turkish series, the concepts of cultural proximity, soft power, alternative transnationalism against the Hollywood empire, and soft diplomacy have been common themes, regardless of whether it is a distant or close geography and even if the majority religions of the countries differ. Thus, it became possible to compare and integrate the findings to obtain a broad perspective that can be applied by improving the existing knowledge. If cultural proximity emerges despite religious, linguistic and geographical differences, the role of Turkish *dizi*s in this is essential. The fact that the viewers generally felt close to Turkish culture in the series brings to mind the success of such dramas in overcoming prejudices and harbouring many universal values that the audience longs for, especially concerning different religions and modern-traditional dilemmas. Role-model characteristics related to strong and independent female profiles in Turkish TV *dizi*s should also be considered in many importer countries.

Meta-synthesis reveals that the components of cultural proximity differ across countries. One or several reasons may increase cultural proximity. For example, while in Arab countries, Islam and history provide commonalities, in Turkey, modernism, gender differences, and cultural affinities in nostalgia or ideals should also be taken into account. In various Arab countries, women's desire for emancipation and role-modelling in TV *dizi*s can be considered cultural proximity in their ideals. At the same time, it is possible to evaluate the struggle of women in Latin American countries due to everyday familial struggles in the context of cultural proximity. Although there are religious differences in countries such as Argentina, Israel, and Greece, the representations of women, men, and family relations in TV *dizi*s are related to traditional aspirations that are hybridized with modern lifestyles.

Just as South American *telenovela*s were famous for a long time but decreased in popularity, sustainable collaborations should be developed to prevent the same danger from being experienced in Turkish TV *dizi*s, and the role and contribution of film and media academics should be remembered. Carelessly produced popular culture products may have high profitability in the short term but may lead to audience boredom and reduced appeal in the medium and long term. Therefore, care should be taken regarding form content. As one study shows (Acosta Alzuru 2021), attention should be paid to domestic reception, as domestic success is taken as a reference.

It is an achievement that Turkish TV *dizi*s exported abroad have reached over 150 countries and have been met with increasing interest for more than two decades. However,

criticisms of Turkish TV *dizi*s should be addressed, and popularised productions targeting only ratings should be avoided. Initiatives to improve production quality in the domestic market will also influence transnational distribution practices. Their high quality produced for export is also vital for us to shift our attention. For example, violence in TV series is a critical issue, and its portrayal is important for exporting abroad and influencing the general audience. This is essential for the impact of universal values on the audience and for the sustainable export of Turkish TV *dizi*s. In addition, culturally more accurate, principled representations and discourses should be considered. This requires the critical-consultancy-based cooperation of the sector with the film academy. In addition, multidisciplinary approaches should be incorporated into all aspects of the series from creation to reception.

In conclusion, Turkish TV *dizi*s instil positive values through family values, humane relationships and strong female roles; this can be an opportunity to improve the criticised aspects by academic studies because the circulation of Turkish TV *dizi*s worldwide has gained momentum and proved itself. It is feasible to maintain its viewability strategies with quality content, and it has already reached the global power to take this risk. For the sustainability of the contribution of this sector, whose incomes are increasing daily, to the country's economy, tourism and diplomacy, socio-cultural issues need to be discussed in a multidisciplinary and nuanced manner. In this study, a meta-synthesis was reached from research on the reception of traditional television *dizi*s. Further studies may focus on meta-synthesis research on online streaming programs such as Netflix because online streaming platform series and traditional television series differ in time, content and aesthetic qualities. Also, providing more in-depth views on the series released on digital platforms would be useful.

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