

Chapter 10

Transformation in Daytime Television Programs in Turkey since 2000

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ABSTRACT

The research conducted in Turkey indicates that the television viewers usually spend their leisure daytime watching television programs such as health, cooking, beauty, fashion, shopping, and competitions. These programs that mostly refer to entertainment function enable viewers to learn as well as have an enjoyable time. Among the reasons why the television viewers prefer to watch these programs are migration to larger cities and the need of the viewers, who spend more time together at home with the family and have nothing but the television at home as the neighborhood culture has disappeared, to see their equivalents and communicate their troubles. This chapter discusses the changing program preferences of the television audience and the causes affecting the transforming program contents since the early 2000s in Turkey, which is one of the countries with the highest television-viewing rate and uses the method of in-depth interview with the experts in the field.

INTRODUCTION

All of the mass media that more or less influence people's perceptions communicate the masses the messages of their liking with the concerns of continuing their existence, and strive to make the masses actually ask for such messages (Erengegin, 1993, p.5). It wouldn't be assertive to say that in the heart of the wide use of mass media is television. For television still holds the power to reach the largest masses today. 55 to 88% of the

households in Western countries have television, and in 80% of them television is viewed almost every day (Coste Cerdon, 1992, p.68). Television was developed in the United States and spread to world in 1950s. While this communication media that took an important place in peoples' lives before long, first assumed the function of satisfying the need for information and learning, nowadays, its entertainment function is more prominent. The research shows that Turkish society spends an average of four hours a day in front of television

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(Akkor, 2005, p.58). Since the rate of literacy is low in developing countries such as Turkey, the messages conveyed by television is easier to comprehend than those conveyed by other mass media. Because television has a significant influence on the way people perceive life and events, its entertainment function must be performed with the consciousness that it is addressing the public domain. One doesn't have to know how to read and write to be able to understand the messages conveyed by television; ability to see and hear suffices to comprehend these messages. Therefore, the target audience of television is less specific than that of other mass media, and it addresses people from all walks of life without discriminating between cultures and classes. Televisions programs that have large variety of contents are able to offer alternatives also to women-man, young-old, and people with different nationality and religion. The fact that television offers what is current and demanded, as well as the fact that it is easy to obtain make it all the more appealing.

Television is -a sophisticated- story-telling device. Structures producing texts of different types of programs aired on television are developed based on the story. These story telling models are not products of printing technology; these story telling models were developed long before the printing technology, during the times when the oral culture prevailed; by using narrative models, television has enabled the oral culture to become the focus in modern societies again.

BACKGROUND

Development of Television in Turkey

Compared to other countries, it is possible to say that television broadcasting started late in Turkey. The development process of ownership of television companies is viewed in two major stages. The first stage is the period between 1966 and 1990 when television broadcasting was a state

monopoly and when only TRT televisions channels were airing. The second era is from 1990 to date when private television channels opened and a combined system existed.

Developments in the broadcasting field began with TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) starting to broadcast in 1964 in Turkey, which led to, though late, entry of private channels into our life.

As of the commencement of TRT to operate, the number of technical, administrative and program personnel significantly increased, the institution's financial ability grew, significant developments were achieved in its technical equipment and program production, and broadcast time increased. However, As a result of inefficient internal institutional regulations, personnel inflation, and lack of coordination between technical, administrative and program personnel, centralization caused by hierarchal organization factors as "package program" had a negative impact on the development of broadcasting. (Ural, 2009, p.231).

Effects of economic globalization started to be observed in Turkey clearly after the post-1980 period. In this period called the new world order, Turkey entered into a fast social transformation process. One of these transformations was the privatization of the television channels (Ergül, 2000, p. 158). The start of private channels to broadcast as of the 1990s was with Magic Box, i.e. the Star television of today. The main purpose of the Star television that strove to abolish the rules was to prepare Turkey for a new restructuring. TRT, on the other hand, was unable to make solo decisions as it was owned by the state. Later with Show TV and Teleon starting to broadcast, channel diversity grew, and in 1994, the number of televisions channels in Turkey grew to be 400. The new conception introduced by these channels was quite different than the television broadcasting Turkish society was used to. The fact that the transition from the state television to private television channels enabled multi-vocality and offered more television channels to be selected from that can be considered to stir a democratization feeling.

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