Chapter 7
Digital Fandom Overseas:
How Do Turkish Television Fans in Latin America Do It All?

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with Latin American fans of Turkish television series within the context of digital fandom and convergence culture. With the rise of internet technologies, the spread of the television series has become easier on a global scale, and this process leads to a rather more multifaceted world where Latin American audiences are not compelled to Latin American telenovelas anymore; they can even become devoted fans of Turkish television series that are quite successful worldwide. In this chapter, the transformation of television series fandom is analyzed through the case study of Latin American fans of Turkish television series. The way they become fans and contribute to the sustainability of the success of Turkish television series in the region and worldwide through fan labor is studied in detail. Since Turkey has become the second exporter of television series right after the United States, such a study aims to come up with a roadmap on the transformation of fandom presenting future directions for further study.

INTRODUCTION

Turkish television series, or if we consider them a brand-new genre that is on the rise Turkish *dizis*, have been quite popular recently in different parts of the world. This is thanks to many parameters such as cultural or physical proximity in some parts of the world whereas it is quite inexplicable in some other parts, such as Latin America. This study deals with the success of Turkish television series from the viewpoint of fandom. An in-depth analysis of the current situation of Turkish television series fandom in Latin America signals to the fact that the rise is mainly thanks to the work fandom accomplished, and this work can be categorized in three main groups: content producing, crowdfunding, and representing.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO FANDOM TODAY

Globalization has doubtlessly had a deep impact in many concepts and media consumption is "perhaps the most immediate, consistent and pervasive way in which 'globality' is experienced" (Murphy & Kraidy 2003, p. 7). The way globalization has transformed media is very visible mostly due to the rise of internet technologies and their simultaneous effect on culture. Today's culture is not only global but also participatory with the inclusion of the reciprocity of the communication process. It is participatory and "participatory culture is everywhere" (Cova et al., 2012, p. 2). Similarly, Galuszka (2015) states that the rise of the internet and its natural consequences directly related to the rise of the audiences: "The first consequence of the advent of the Internet, digitalization, and new social media could be described as the empowerment of audiences" (p. 27). Today's audience is listened to and appreciated since it talks back. The audience is not a simple consuming machine anymore. Jenkins summarizes this transformation and signals to the birth of the fan: "In the old days, the ideal consumer watched television, bought products, and didn't talk back. Today, the ideal consumer talks up the program and spreads word about the brand. The old ideal might have been the couch potato; the new ideal is almost certainly a fan" (Jenkins, 2007, p. 361). The rise of the fandom means that there is a certain need to analyze the past, present, and possible future of fandom to be able to understand today's media and culture. However, "the fan still constitutes a scandalous category in contemporary culture, one alternately the target of ridicule and anxiety, of dread and desire" (Jenkins, 1992: 15). Fans have been looked upon as people who are too much into the fiction; they are not taken seriously by scholars who unfortunately ignore the fact that fandom has created its own economy in many different levels. This means that fan scholars have a lot to focus on starting from the justification of fan studies. "Perhaps it is about time we thought more about the transformational, gradual and sequential temporalities of fandom" (Hills, 2014, p. 19).

But who is a fan? A fan is not only the mere audience. Firstly, there is a certain difference in terms of involvement: The distinction between a viewer and a fan is an important one. "To 'view' television is to engage in relatively private behavior. To be a 'fan,' however, is to participate in a range of activities that extend beyond the private act of viewing and reflects an enhanced emotional involvement with a television narrative" (Bielby et al, 1999, p. 35). In other words, fans do participate and become a part of the media and culture. This involvement changes the communication process between fans and their target cultural product. In today's world, the way fandom has transformed thanks to internet technologies is also to be considered in such an analysis. "The digital revolution has had a profound impact upon fandom, empowering and disempowering, blurring the lines between producers and consumers, creating symbiotic relationships between powerful corporations and individual fans, and giving rise to new forms of cultural production" (Pearson, 2010, p. 84). Furthermore, fans produce and eventually become a part of the subculture thanks to their shared conventions: "the shared conventions bind the fans into a subculture" (Fiske, 1990, p. 14). These conventions are to be studied in detail to see what turns audience into fans and why their effort and labor is valuable.

One of the main features fans have is the shared consciousness and the feeling of belonging in a group. Jenkins (2007) signals to this notion of consciousness created among today's fans. "There is a new kind of cultural power emerging as fans bond together within larger knowledge communities, pool their information, shape each other's opinions, and develop a greater self-consciousness about their shared agendas and common interests" (Jenkins, 2007, p. 363). This self-consciousness should be analyzed with the power that comes along. A fan is an active version of the viewer in terms of the feedback he provides and the content he produces. "The fan is not merely a 'viewer' but also an active

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