

CHAPTER 3

TURKISH TELEVISION SERIES IN INDIA: TRACING THE ALTERNATIVE CIRCUITS OF TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA FLOW

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ABSTRACT

Turkish television series have become increasingly popular in India, particularly since the telecast of the dubbed version of *Adını Feriha Koydum* in 2015. While India has a strong market of regional language TV series or serials, as they are known locally, international shows, except for syndicated television content from the United States, have hardly been popular in traditional television broadcasting. However, the rising popularity of Turkish television series and their circulation through digital media in India have opened up a rich site for exploring changing practices of audience engagement with transnational television content. This paper draws from ethnographic fieldwork among audiences of Turkish television series in India. Presently, there are hardly any Turkish series available on Indian cable television channels, barring a few on video on demand (VoD) platforms. However, social media platforms, such as Facebook, video-sharing sites, like YouTube, and file-sharing torrent sites, have continued the circulation of Turkish television series in India. These alternative modes of distribution compel us to rethink the notions of technology, medium, and emerging viewing practices and underline the parallel, often illegitimate circuits of distribution and access to international television content. Hence, this paper broadly addresses how Turkish TV series become an emblematic instance of understanding transnational media flow through alternative digital channels in a neoliberal, developing country like India.

Keywords: Turkish TV series, ethnography, transnational television, neo-liberalism, India

INTRODUCTION

Turkish television series gained popularity among Indian audiences primarily after the broadcast of the Hindi language dubbed version of the series *Feriha* (*Adını Feriha Koydum*) in September 2015 on the Zindagi television channel. Since then, the channel has broadcast a number of dubbed series from Turkey, like *Fatmagul* (*Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*), *Little Lord* (*Küçük Ağa*), *A Love Story* (*Bir Aşk Hikayesi*), and *Kuzey Guney* (*Kuzey Güney*). Zindagi, launched in June 2014, was an Indian entertainment channel that telecast series having finite episodes in comparison to long-running Indian television serials broadcast on general entertainment channels (GEC).¹ The channel mostly ran syndicated content from foreign countries like Pakistan, Turkey, South Korea, Brazil, and Ukraine. Suni Buch, Chief Business Officer of Zee Entertainment Enterprise Ltd (parent company of Zindagi), explained that Zindagi, as a channel, caters to a niche audience, who is accommodating to new content from different geographical regions; according to Buch, “This audience is well-travelled and demands a content which is not a typical Hindi GEC.” (Buch quoted in Menon, 2017). The shows became widely popular among Indian audiences, especially the Turkish and Pakistani shows. The popularity of the Turkish shows was a surprise for the channel and motivated the channel to plan further to acquire the rights of more international shows (Menon, 2017). However, with the growing tension between India and Pakistan due to the Uri attacks in September 2016,² the channel decided to proscribe all Pakistani shows and revamp the programming catalogue by focusing on Indian narratives on the Muslim community (India Today, 2016). The premium Hindi entertainment channel finally decided to move away from the television broadcast platform to the emerging video-on-demand platform OZEE from 1st July 2017, citing evolving audience preferences in terms of choices and control of content (PTI, 2017). The online streaming platform OZEE has now been merged with DittoTV to form ZEE5, an online streaming service (Mukherjee, 2018). The closure of the broadcasting channel led to the restriction of accessibility of the Turkish content for most of the TV-viewing audiences. The streaming service ZEE5 offers only the reruns of already broadcast Turkish TV shows. However, it is important to mention that the shows remain popular among Indian audiences. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, video sharing sites, like YouTube, and file-sharing torrent sites continue the circulation of Turkish television series in India. These alternative modes of distribution not only compel us to rethink the notions of technology, medium, and emerging viewing practices but also underline the parallel, often illegitimate

1 Soap operas in India are popularly known as “serials”.

2 On 18 September 2016, terrorists attacked Indian Army brigade headquarters near the town of Uri in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The attack escalated the tension between the two countries.

circuits of distribution and access of international television content. The unavailability of Turkish television programs on Indian television, irrespective of an active and enthusiastic audience base in India, has opened up a site for understanding the consumption of Turkish television series in India as public culture, a zone of cultural debate that emerges with the tensions and contradictions between national sites and transnational cultural processes (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1998, p.5). Hence, this chapter broadly addresses in what way Turkish TV series have become an illustrative instance of understanding transnational media flow through digital alternative channels in a neoliberal, developing country like India. The engagement of Indian audiences with Turkish television series generate arenas where the debates related to neoliberalism, emergent Indian public, and control of cultural production contest one another in dynamic ways.

The objective of this study compelled us to find alternatives to the established practice of doing ethnographic research focused on a single site. Janice Radway, while explaining how to develop an ethnographic approach to media reception, claimed that it is necessary to investigate “the endlessly shifting, ever-evolving kaleidoscope of daily life and the way in which the media are integrated and implicated within it” (1988, p. 366). These shifting practices in which media is integrated and implicated has emerged as exceedingly fluid, flexible, and connected over the years with the advent of digital communication. Hence, our approach was fluid and multi-sited in contrast to focusing on a singular bounded field of audience engagement (Amit, 1999; Marcus, 1995). The emergence of a multi-sited ethnography, as Marcus points out, is useful for interdisciplinary studies, including media studies and cultural studies, particularly because such interdisciplinary fields such as Turkish television content and the practice of accessing mainstream content through alternative channels of distribution, do not share an evidently demarcated object of study and the distinct disciplinary perspectives involved with them can be challenged. Following such an approach, this study draws from ethnographic fieldwork among audiences in India who have watched Turkish television serials either on mainstream or digital platforms. Twenty-seven respondents were pursued using snowball-sampling method, which is based on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. For the purpose of understanding transnational media flow through digital alternative channels, it was useful to contextualize it by the macro-constructions of the neoliberal social order in India.

Indian television broadcasting in the post-liberalization period

Before we move into the discussion, it is necessary to discuss the historical trajectory that interspersed neoliberal policy, television broadcasting, and public culture in India. Television was introduced in India in 1959 for educational purposes by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Ford Foundation. The Indian government soon realized the potential of television and undertook the responsibility to inform, educate, and entertain people. A public service broadcasting model (similar to BBC) was charted out. From time to time, different measures were undertaken by the government to strengthen the reach of television as an educational and informational apparatus especially for the rural community. State-endorsed schemes like the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (1975), the development of the INSAT- IB satellite (1982), the introduction of color transmission (1982), and the setting up of television production centers for creating educational content were undertaken primarily under the aegis of the government. Initially, television in India was under the patronage of All India Radio (AIR), but it was separated from radio in 1976. The government soon started producing pro-development soap operas, inspired by the successful and popular soap operas of Mexico, known as *telenovelas*. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting initiated several meetings with Televisa's Miguel Sabido, which led to the conceptualization of the first Indian soap opera, *Hum Log* (1984) (Singhal and Rogers, 1988, p. 114). The popularity of the serial led to the launch of many more serials like *Yeh Jo Hain Zindagi* (1984), *Buniyaad* (1986), *Nukkad* (1986), *Ramayana* (1987), *Mahabharata* (1988), and *Waghley Ki Duniya* (1988), among several others. Most of the serials focused on the trials and tribulations of Indian middle-class families with the exception of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, which were based on Hindu mythological epics. It is important to note that Doordarshan, the state television broadcaster, remained the only broadcaster until 1991, after which economic reforms were introduced by the government offering opportunities for domestic and foreign private channels to televise their content.

The Indian economy witnessed a rapid and formative change in perception with the commencement of liberalization (Rajagopal, 2001, p. 3). According to Rajagopal, the process of liberalization, which was initiated in the middle of 1980s, became more effective and persuasive in 1991 with the government adopting policies aimed towards neoliberal reforms (Ibid, p. 17). The New Economic Policy of the government led to the entry of multinational companies into the Indian market. Subsequently, the emergence of private satellite channels proved to be a watershed moment and ushered in a new era in Indian television. Interestingly, a series of events shaped the development of television broadcasting under neoliberal

imperatives in India. Star Plus became the first GEC satellite channel to be launched in India by Hong Kong-based entrepreneur Richard Li. Soon, Zee TV followed suit and began broadcasting in 1992. Zee TV was the first Indian-owned private satellite channel. Before long, the public service broadcaster, Doordarshan, started selling slots to private companies for producing news. This led to the emergence of private producers making news-based content for Doordarshan. However, while Doordarshan focused more on news-based programs, the private channels started focusing more on entertainment programs (Mathur, 2013).

With an ever-increasing range of television channels, people were offered options to choose their content. Neo-liberalization brought variety in programming style by opening the bandwidth for more private channels. Major transnational broadcasters, like CNN, Disney, CNBC, MTV, Star, Sony Entertainment Television, and BBC, started catering to the demands of the English-educated, affluent Indian middleclass. Soon, the companies changed their strategy by broadcasting content in view of audience habits which were heavily influenced by traditional Indian television content. They also tried to grab audiences' attention by producing programs in regional and local languages. For instance, MTV, which was known for broadcasting predominantly American music videos and English language music-based programs, gradually transformed into a channel that plays primarily popular Bollywood songs in Hindi to tap into the larger consumer base and to increase advertising revenue (Dey, 2009).

Indian general entertainment channels, on the other hand, were mainly dominated by long-running family melodramas that often revolved around family feuds between the housewife and the mother-in-law.³ There have been reality shows, talk shows, and musical programs on Indian television, too, but the majority of content is dominated by serials. A number of entertainment channels continued to be launched often in partnership with multinational mass media conglomerate, for instance, the Colors TV channel, which was a joint venture between USA based, Viacom and India based, Network 18. However, eventually over the years, the content turned out to be repetitive and often focused more on the melodramatic narratives of wealthy upper caste families with stereotypical characters or narratives inspired by traditional mythological or folk characters. Traditional and moral values are maintained by showing

3 One cannot deny the fact that television programming in India did experience a major creative upsurge during the 1990s but the television programming shifted its style to more melodramatic and family-oriented content mainly from the year 2000 with the launch of the TV serial, *Kyunki Saas bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* on the channel Star Plus. The success of the show has led to the homogenization of the television content by sticking to family values, morals and bringing in superstitious elements to engage the viewers. Majority of these serials have been criticized by feminist scholars as being regressive.

“good” women wearing *sarees*, *bindi*, and *sindoor*,⁴ engaging in traditional routines, like performing *puja* (Hindu ritual of worshipping God), taking care of extended family, and participating in the act of self-sacrifice for the good of the family. These serials tend to enjoy a substantive viewership, mostly consisting of housewives (Deprez, 2009, p. 429). Interestingly, the Hindi serials broadcast on satellite television channels have been so popular that the regional television channels, too, have started to follow the same format (Ibid.). It has also been argued that Indian television channels conceptualize television serials glorifying the traditional roles of women within family in order to generate revenue from the rural market (Bakshi, 2018). It is important to note that the India Brand Equity Foundation report 2018 has pointed to a growth of US\$ 220 billion by 2025 from US\$ 29.4 billion in 2016 in the rural FMCG market in India. Thus, it is believed that there is a huge potential for television channels to earn revenue from this sector through targeted sponsored shows. On the other hand, experimental content depicting real, sometimes uncomfortable issues with progressive female characters have found digital platforms to be lucrative enough to reach out to its target audience, which mostly consists of the urban population who are more accustomed to watching international TV series on their laptops or 4G-enabled smartphones (Ibid.). Hence, even after the neoliberal reforms, there was a significant demand for quality content on Indian television, especially among the urban, upwardly mobile middleclass audience of India.

Audience engagement with Turkish television series: Notes from the field

The brief overview of the trajectory of Indian television broadcasting in the post-liberalization period was necessary to understand how foreign television series create a notable impact among Indian audiences. As mentioned earlier, the availability of foreign television shows is limited within the conventional television-viewing pattern, with channels mostly focusing on national and regional content. However, online platforms like Zee5 offer a number of foreign TV shows dubbed in Hindi, yet availability of the most popular and recent foreign shows is restricted to some paid platforms. Therefore, the question is then how Turkish shows are gaining popularity in India? Which section of the audience is viewing these shows in India and with what kind of access?

Broadly, Turkish TV series have similarities to the ‘soap-opera’ format, which has been popular in India for a long time since the launch of the first Indian TV serial, *Hum Log*.

4 These markers are part of the Hindu practice of ‘Solah Shringar’, which literally translates into sixteen adornments that have been mentioned by the Hindu scriptures. Each of these adornments is believed to be auspicious.

The soap opera format has been mainly used in non-western contexts in countries like India, Brazil, and Egypt (Yanardagoglu & Karam, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the soap opera format was introduced in India by the Indian public service broadcaster, *Doordarshan*, following the model of Mexican *telenovelas*, to inform and educate the people about issues related to social development and national unity. The format is still popular in India though the notion of promoting developmental and ethical issues through serials have been replaced by melodramatic morality tales often revolving around the undivided Hindu family. Turkish TV series thus become a natural extension of the narrative and aesthetic content that is otherwise available in the mainstream, Hindi language television serials in India.

Turkish TV series have gained popularity due to their melodramatic plot structure showing protagonists belonging to business families, living in palatial mansions, travelling to chic locales, engaging in romantic relationships, suffering from betrayal, confronting the female vamp, and finding a resolution in the end. Indian audiences are familiar with these narrative and aesthetic traits through Indian serials and popular Hindi cinema, and hence, when presented in different geographical context, they have found it interesting. *“Whenever I see the actors and their dilemmas, I feel so connected to their problems. The problems somehow seem very Indian”*-said Taufikul Islam, 22. The question is how to account for this “connection” of viewers within the experiential sphere? One important aspect of the Turkish TV series has been the actors who have been able to generate significant interest among the Indian audiences. Nandita Adhikary, 24, says *“Most of the Turkish actors have features that appear to be Indian- black hair, big brown eyes, and a fair skin tone. That is what attracts me to them. Turkish men are often identical to Punjabi or Jaat men of India, who are supposed to be the traditionally good-looking men.”* One of the reasons for the popularity of Turkish dramas in India has been the emotional connect that the audience experiences while watching them. *“They are very similar to our culture. They show a lot of emotion.”* –said Partha Chakraborty, 35. Romance, family feuds, and action has been the main narrative points of series that have engaged Indian audiences due to their familiarity with the narrative and aesthetic characteristics of Bollywood cinema. The viewers can also relate to the rigid, often patriarchal family values, the tradition, and the culture to which the protagonists stick to in the Turkish TV series. *“We can definitely relate to the characters. They are very Indian in their thinking,”*-says Deepshikha Naskar, 31. She further adds, *“Feriha (Adını Feriha Koydum) doesn't want to hurt the sentiments of her mother, but she wants to create a sense of identity for herself at her university by not revealing her background. I think we see such crisis in Hindi TV serials, but here it somehow appears fresh.”* For Chandan Jana, 22, it is the simplicity of

the narrative structure of most Turkish TV series that attracts him; He says, “*Turkish series deal with simple people who have a modern outlook and suffer from their own fault. The narrative structure is easy to follow and does not involve over-the-top twists and turns, unlike Indian television serials.*” Indeed, Turkish TV series often depict common universal themes of love, emotions, family, betrayal and tragedy (Maanvi, 2016). The issues dealt with are usually non-political and non-religious, similar to the story patterns of popular Hindi Television serials.⁵ However, Indian television serials are usually of a thirty-minute duration whereas, in the case of Turkish series, one episode often extends to two hours or more. Indian mega-serials are broadcast over a period of 4-5 years (until their Television Rating Points (TRPs) begin to wane), and this is what has disinterested the audiences. “*They keep repeating the same story again and again through generations, with illogical plot twists. A number of characters are added to break the monotony, but they fail to portray them in a believable manner*”, says Sudeshna Das, 25, “*The case is not so for the Turkish series. The episodes of the Turkish series are fixed, and this helps in retaining the quality of the series and also the attention of the viewers*”.

In addition, a number of respondents mentioned that the predicament between tradition and modernity in the narrative often underlines a similarity between Indian and Turkish television series. However, in contrast to Hindi mainstream serials as Sweta Chakraborty, 30, mentioned, “*Turkish series represent the familiar story in a much more enjoyable package. The presentation of the story is often much more intelligently done. It brings a breath of fresh air which offers a respite from the daily drudgery shown in the Hindi TV serials.*” Hence, while the narratives often seem known, if not predictable, there is a feeling of newness and freshness which the respondents think is missing from Hindi TV serials. The sense of newness emerges from various factors; for some it is the “geographical location” or “cultural practices shown in the series” while for others “it is the actors” “production value,” or simply the “quality of the script.” Rather than providing a competitive narrative in comparison to Indian serials, Turkish series complement them. This is evident as India and Turkey share common social and political discourses due to the shifting socio-economic background. Turkish series bring in an element of modernity in their narrative structure. Hence, the stories in Turkish series provide a link with Indian audiences as they challenge the patriarchal traditions by bringing women to the fore, who form a significant part of both modern India and Turkey (Ahmad, 2017).

5 Interestingly, a number of television serials in India are based on mythological or folk narratives or characters. Although the mythological narratives are often a part of the religious texts, but they are not overtly religion-oriented television serials. However, there is evidently a Hindu dominance in terms of showing mythological and epic narratives.

A recurring aspect mentioned during the interviews was the rising popularity of the actors of these television shows. The well-dressed, handsome, and fashionable actors are often the main attraction for some of the Indian viewers. As Jaya Das, 30, mentions, *“I am in love with Can Yaman of Full Moon. He is such a good-looking actor. First, I saw a short clip of him on YouTube, and from then on, I have tried to watch all the TV series that featured Can Yaman.”* In the same way, Pritha Adhikari, 24, responded, *“I cannot forget the way the character Ferit looks at Nazli. He is such a good actor. I am certain that none of the TV actors in India would be able to match up to that.”* Neha Ghosh, 32, stressed on enjoying watching the chemistry between the character Hayat (Hande Erce) and Murat (Burak Deniz) in the series *Aşk Laftan Anlamaz*, *“I felt that both of them have been made for each other. The way they fight and tease each other is awesome. Especially, I love the romantic comedy of Burak Deniz. We do not have much romantic comedy on Indian television”.*

Turkish dramas have been popular on the traditional broadcast medium since its launch on the Zindagi channel. The show *Feriha* held the number one spot in terms of ratings on the channel in 2015. The show *Fatmagul (Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne)* even helped Zindagi to retain its leading position in the premium channels category that year (Irani, 2017). Thus, the popularity of Turkish series among traditional Indian television viewers have been witnessed by the industry. However, the Indian fandom around Turkish television series is most expressive in YouTube, where thousands of fan-made music videos have been uploaded showing clips from Turkish television series with popular Hindi film songs in the background. The editing has been done in such a manner that the song appears to be part of the original Turkish series. The songs are supposed to fit the atmosphere completely, thus providing a new identity to the series. A passing glance at the comments section may give us the transnational nature of these videos. The videos may be uploaded by Indian viewers, but comments from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Spain, Russia, Sri Lanka, and various Middle Eastern countries underline that the videos have been popular not only among Indian audiences but also among audiences from various other geographic regions. So, what makes the music videos popular? *“Bollywood films are replete with romance and music,”* says Poulomi Ghosh, 28, *“These music videos produce the feelings of a romantic musical, which fits perfectly with the Turkish TV series. In fact, I started watching Turkish TV series because of these music videos.”* Such responses point to a growing fandom culture in India dedicated to Turkish television series.

Three themes may emerge from this discussion that can help to frame an understanding of the rising popularity of Turkish TV series. First, there is a narrative and representational continuity between Turkish TV series and popular Hindi serials and mainstream Hindi films;

second, the aspirational markers of neoliberal culture are in tandem with Turkish TV series. Third, the growing digital network and alternative circuits of distribution facilitate the flow of transnational media content.

Emerging viewing practices and Circuits of distribution

While the Turkish series which were broadcast on television or are available on streaming platforms are dubbed in Hindi, a significant number of Turkish series which are available on YouTube or other websites which host links and embedded videos, allowing users to stream or download pirated content, are not available as dubbed versions. On these websites, the availability of series with English subtitles is also very limited. The viewer has to search for the matching subtitle from other online sources to watch the series. As Nazia Akhtar, 27, remarks, “*I was interested in watching the series Magnificent Century: Kosem but couldn’t find any English subtitles after accessing a few episodes on YouTube.*” This brings us to the question of alternative circuits of distribution.

Indian audiences primarily remain television-oriented viewers. The Broadcast India (BI) 2018 survey released by the Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC) pointed to an increase in television viewership by 12 percent compared to 2016. Also, the number of TV-owning households has increased to 197 million, which points to a 7.5 percent increase. TV in India continues to play a crucial role in the generation of advertising revenues, even in comparison to online platforms. This points out that, though there has been a rise in the use of smart phones with inexpensive, high-speed internet connection, particularly due to the launch of Reliance Jio in India, over-the-top (OTT) viewing practices are yet to catch up thus, retaining the popularity of television (Tandon, 2018). However, one cannot deny the rise of digital platforms and the growing popularity of OTT platforms in India. According to the FICCI-EY report, 2019, India has about 570 million internet subscribers, which is second highest in the world, and it is increasing at a rate of 13 percent yearly. As of 2018, India is the tenth largest market for OTT in the world with overall revenue standing at INR. 44 billion. The over-the-top video industry, as per report, “will record the highest growth rate among all segments and drive evolution over the next four years in the overall media and entertainment industry in the country” (Jha, 2019). Nonetheless, it is to be noted that India has a huge market for its locally produced content, and so, the dominance of Hollywood films, or Turkish series for that matter, is limited to a niche audience. However, with the growing interest in international TV series and focus on critically acclaimed TV shows available on streaming platforms, there has been a steady rise in the access of variety of content online.

Nonetheless, in the context of Turkish television series in India, the problem of access has always been a critical issue. *“It is not easy to get hold of all the episodes online. I don’t have Netflix, so I have watched most of the episodes of the show Ask Laftan Anlamaz on the online streaming website kinemania.tv. The series is available on the Show TV website, but there are no English subtitles,”* states Budhaditya Adhikari, 25. The availability of Turkish television series have been limited on television due to the closure of Zindagi TV channel from the traditional broadcasting domain and its subsequent shift to the online video-on-demand platform, OZEE. Though paid online streaming platforms like Netflix do offer subtitled versions of some old Turkish television shows but, the reach of Netflix in India is limited to only 1.2 million subscribers (Gupta, 2019), which is significantly low compared to television viewership in India. Hence, the audiences watching the Turkish television series have been mostly dependent on alternative circuits of distribution like YouTube, illegitimate online video-streaming websites, and Facebook groups for the availability of content. The major challenge for Indian viewers has been language, and so some of the shows, though officially available on the website of the television channel where they were broadcast in Turkey, are difficult to comprehend because of the lack of subtitles. As Meghna Ghosh, 26, mentioned, *“One day randomly while browsing through YouTube, I found a fan-made video of a Turkish TV series named Ask Laftan Anlamaz. I became desperate to watch the series and got hold of one or two episodes with English subtitles on YouTube, but as the other episodes were not available in English, so after a long search, I started watching the episodes free of cost with English subtitles on turksub24.com.”* A number of respondents echoed Meghna’s concern about getting suitable subtitles of the series. A parallel circuit of distribution has been established, consisting of Facebook communities, file sharing websites, online discussion groups, pirated video sites, and sometimes even the comments section of YouTube. Interestingly, although initially the alternative platforms offered their services free of cost, like providing English SRT files for download, now most of them charge for the content they provide. Perhaps, the growing popularity of Turkish television series and rising demands from the viewers are gradually transforming a peer-to-peer sharing network into a profit-based distribution network. As Rahul Indurkar, 30, added, *“I watched the entire series, Ask Laftan Anlamaz on kinemania.tv without paying a single penny at the end of 2017, but now they charge money for viewing the newer content. I had tried to access the series Afili Ask on their website, but they asked for about five euros.”* The norms of open access and voluntary response may not be tenable in the long run, as the control of cultural production is governed by competing state and private enterprise in a delicate and capricious way. However, the growing popularity of Turkish television series in India opens up these alternative circuits

of transnational media flow as part of a public culture that dynamically negotiate values, attitudes, and pleasures related to the collective association through media and other social practices. Turkish television series are able to appeal to a consciously diverse audience and as “messages of public culture are therefore directed to audiences without regard to the limits of family, locality, or social category” (Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1995, p.6).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to understand in what way Turkish television series can be read as an illustrative instance of understanding transnational media flow through digital alternative channels in a neoliberal, developing country like India. What can be said with much confidence is that the narrative and representational continuity between Turkish TV series and popular Hindi serials and mainstream Hindi films invest in the growing popularity of these television series. Although there is a familiarity in terms of narrative structure, there is a sense of newness, which emerges from various factors, including attractive actors, high production value, exotic locations, and interesting cultural practices. Also, the aspirational markers of neoliberal culture, such as a cosmopolitan lifestyle, the display of wealth and power, and global associations are unambiguously displayed in these series. Such visual and narrative signifiers function suitably among an audience imbibed with neoliberal rhetoric. Finally, the expanding digital network and alternative circuits of distribution facilitate the flow of transnational media content. Social media and video sharing sites bear witness of the fact that Indian fandom around Turkish television series is expanding with the help of digital communication. These alternative circuits of transnational media flow contribute to the popularity of Turkish television series in India. These series as part of public culture dynamically negotiate values, attitudes, and pleasures related to the collective association through media and other social practices in India. Turkish television series stimulate cultural debate that emerges with the tensions and contradictions between national sites and transnational cultural processes. However, this chapter, with all its limitations, aimed to address the gap in research on the popularity of Turkish television programs beyond their domestic market and explored how Turkish television series in India produce sites, where the debates related to neoliberalism, emergent Indian public, and control of cultural production challenge one another in dynamic ways.

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