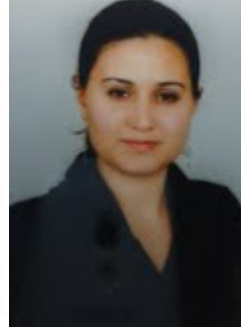# THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH OF TV SERIES VIEWERS IN TURKEY

Mehmet Özer Demir*   **Zuhal GÖK DEMİR****

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the TV series watching habits of Turkish viewers based on the uses and gratifications approach. The research for this paper was carried out in Antalya, Turkey among 313 respondents. It is proposed that viewers watch the TV series in order to satisfy their specific needs. However, it was found that TV series produce unintended viewer needs. It can be suggested that unintended outcomes neglected by the uses and gratifications approach, which posits the viewer active, makes the viewer inactive.

Keywords: Uses and gratification approach, product placement, TV series,

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ DİZİ İZLEYİCİLERİNİN KULLANIMLAR DOYUMLAR YAKLAŞIMIYLA İNCELENMESİ

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı kullanımlar ve doyumlar yaklaşımına dayanarak izleyicilerin dizi izleme alışkanlıklarını incelemektir. Bu çalışma için gerçekleştirilen alan araştırması Antalya ilinde 313 katılımcı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. İzleyicilerin dizileri belli bir takım ihtiyaçları

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karşılamak amacıyla takip ettiği belirtilmektedir. Ancak dizilerin izleyiciler için beklenmeyen yeni ihtiyaçlar ürettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bu nedenle izleyicileri aktif olarak konumlandıran kullanımlar ve doyumlar yaklaşımının göz ardı ettiği beklenmeyen sonuçların aslında izleyicileri pasif konuma ittiği söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kullanımlar doyumlar yaklaşımı, ürün yerleştirme, TV dizileri

1. Introduction

In the last decade the number of TV series in Turkey has increased enormously. These series have gained considerable attention both in Turkey and neighbouring countries, especially in Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Croatia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Middle East countries. Furthermore TV series in Turkey have begun to take place in international festivals. For instance, the Monte Carlo Television Festival has announced that "Asi," a soap opera in Turkey, is the second most watched TV series; followed by 3 billion households, in 67 countries.

Recently in Turkey viewers tend to watch TV series every night consequently resulting in an extraordinary increase in their numbers. This situation leads to a formation of a "TV series culture" that affects society and culture itself. TV series, reflecting various life styles, draw viewers from different socio-economic backgrounds (Gültekin 2006) and thus attracts the masses. Hence, the beginning of a "TV series culture" has taken hold. Both women and men, and even children (Cesur and Paker 2007; Aral *et al.* 2011) watch TV series every night. Furthermore, the viewer cannot identify the distinction between reality and fiction in the series. When Çakır, the main character in the serial "Kurtlar Vadisi" died, a group of individuals even performed a funeral in a mosque (Demir 2007; Yaylagül 2010). Due to both the immense effect of the series and widespread follow of series, new marketing

capabilities for Turkish brands are offered because usage of branded products presented in series can be used for an innovative advertisement channel worldwide offering local Turkish firms' development. Tiago (2007) has already indicated that adaption of new communication and information technologies effects on local development. Determining the perceptions and attitudes of consumers regarding the acceptance of the products has always been important for marketers and communicators (Nadiri and Tümer 2010). This paper, therefore, researches the effects of product placement in series in order to test whether viewers meet certain needs as stated by uses and gratifications approach or at the end of the process other unintended needs of the viewers are reproduced through the series.

2. The Model

This study assumes the existence of a relationship between involvement, connectedness and satisfaction towards a series and researches product placement in series watching behaviour from the point of the uses and gratifications approach.

2.1. Connectedness

"Connectedness" refers to the nature and intensity of the relationship between the series and viewers watching the series. It is proposed that connectedness extends beyond the mere viewing experience by capturing the extent to which a series contributes to viewers' self and social identities extending beyond the emotional arousal and the intensity of attention of series watching behaviour and captures the para-social relationships viewers create with their series and the characters in those series (Russell *et al.* 2004, p 152). This research also performed the original scale developed by Russell et al (2004). The survey scale is composed

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of sixteen questions under escape, fashion, imitation, aspiration, and paraphernalia factors (Russell and Puto 1999; Russell *et al.* 2004).

The escape factor represents the emotional or therapeutic element that connects a viewer to a television program. People lose themselves in television because it helps them to forget their problems as well as providing a form of escape. The modelling factor describes how much an individual relates his/her life to the characters in the program. Viewers regularly relate to characters and thus model a part of their lives by following them. The fashion factor displays how extensively a television program viewer is influenced by a character's appearance. Connected viewers are known to copy styles of their favourite characters.

The imitation factor measures an individual's tendency to imitate a character, such as phrases and voices. This factor is related to the modelling factor; however, it is a more shallow expression of identification with the characters, whereas modelling represents a deeper connection.

The aspiration factor only takes affect with the most highly connected viewers. It represents the desire to take part in the television program or meet its characters.

The paraphernalia factor analyses the degree to which people collect items to bring the television program and its characters to life. This includes books, magazines, toys, etc.

2.2. Involvement

Although there are varying definitions for involvement, the research defines involvement as "a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests" (Zaichkowsky 1985, p. 342), as involvement is a function of personal importance or interest in a stimulus (Celsi and Olson 1988). The study utilizes the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) (Zaichkowsky 1994). The original scale captures the concept of involvement for

products. It is based on the three areas that affect a person's involvement: personal, physical, and situational.

The personal area consists of inherent interests, values, or needs that motivate one toward the object. The physical area contains characteristics of the object that cause differentiation and increase interest. The situational area describes something that temporarily increases relevance or interest toward the object. Although the original Personal Involvement Inventory is a 10 item semantic scale, in this research items are asked in a 5-point Likert-type scale in order to represent the higher the value, the higher the involvement.

2.3. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is an affective reaction to media use that reflects the gratification of viewers' motives for viewing television programs. Satisfaction is an important concept because it is associated with personal fulfilment, pleasure, positive evaluations of the program, and greater exposure to television (Perse and Rubin 1988; Godlewski and Perse 2010). Items measuring satisfaction are adopted from Ferguson and Perse (2004).

3. Uses and Gratifications Approach

Katz stated that the studies on media have focused on what media do to people, but what should be focused on is how people use the media (Yaylagül 2008). According to Katz, individuals have psychological and social needs. Individuals have certain necessities in order to maintain their lives. These needs should be satisfied in order to remove tension felt by individuals in their daily lives. Escape, entertainment, and spending leisure time are considered as psychological needs of our age (Bayram 2008) and some of these needs are met by the media. When people use the media, some of their needs are satisfied and accordingly

this means that people use the media consciously to satisfy their needs (Coleman *et al.* 2008). To escape a stressful life, to be aware of the world around them, to spend a good time, to be informed about clothing, drinking, eating, services, relaxation, to keep up with fashion etc. are the gratifications that the media provides to individuals (Erdoğan and Alemdar 1990, p. 111). For instance, watching a certain TV program meets entertainment needs, watching news or reading a newspaper meets the information needs and thus the individual satisfies his/her daily needs.

The main purpose of uses and gratifications approach is to explain the reasons why people choose a specific medium over alternative communication media and to elucidate the psychological needs of why individuals use a particular medium. This paradigm assumes that users are goal-oriented in their behaviour and are aware of their needs (Cheung and Lee 2009).

According to Katz *et al.* (1974, p. 20) needs have certain social and psychological basis. Mass media is expected to satisfy these needs. With these expectations people tend to be dependent on mass communications and consequently needs are satisfied and perhaps in the process individuals quite often obtain other unintended gratifications.

The uses and gratifications approach differs from other theoretical perspectives in that it regards viewers as active media users as opposed to passive receivers of information. In this approach it is conceived that the viewers use media in accord with its benefits (Pasquier 1997, cited in, Aydın 2007). Furthermore they seek media content consciously and voluntarily in accordance with their will and needs. They are aware of their needs and they choose media contents consciously (Cheung and Lee 2009). In contrast to traditional media effect theories which focus on "what media does to people" and assumes viewers are homogeneous, the uses and gratifications approach, on the other hand, is more concerned with what people do with

media (Katz 1959). This approach suggests that people's needs influence what media they would choose, how they use certain media and what gratifications the media provides them. It allows viewers' personal needs to use and respond to the media, which is determined by their social and psychological background. Thus, viewers can read and interpret the media messages differently and also can draw a different conclusion than the given message. This approach takes notice of the subjectivity and the reason of the viewer. Accordingly media is regarded as a satisfying source of needs.

Having conducted empirical studies on uses and gratifications approach, Aydın (2007) states that the media content is determined by the viewers. However, direct viewer participation in the mass media is regarded as impossible by many researchers (Oskay 1992). The media content does not provide the viewer free and infinite choices, and the viewer must consume what the media provides (Yaylagül 2008).

Another criticism towards this approach is the possibility of unintended outcomes at the end of the process (Yaylagül 2008). In fact the study, carried out on TV series is based on the hypothesis that viewers watch a series in order to meet certain needs but at the end of the process other unintended needs of the viewers are reproduced through the series. In the light of this, the hypotheses are the following:

H$_1$: There is a positive relationship between involvement and commitment towards a TV series.

H$_2$: There is a positive relationship between commitment and uses and gratifications

H$_3$: There is a positive relationship between involvement and uses and gratifications

H$_4$: There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and uses and gratifications

H$_5$: There is a positive relationship between brand placement and uses and gratifications.

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H₆: Women watch TV series more than men.

H₇: As the level of education increases the rate of watching TV series decreases

H₈: As the age increases the rate of watching TV series increases

H₉: As the income increases the rate of watching TV series decreases.

4. Method

Research was carried out in Antalya with convenience sampling of 313 respondents. The questionnaire form is designed to measure five dimensions: involvement, commitment, uses and gratifications, satisfaction and brand placement. The first dimension contains ten items (Asriel 2006) targeting the involvement level of viewers towards a TV series. The second dimension contains fourteen items (Baker 2008) targeting viewers' commitment levels towards a series. The third dimension contains eight items (Cheung and Lee 2009) measuring viewers' needs (whether social, interpersonal communication, entertainment, relaxing and spending time) according to the uses and gratifications approach. Three items (Cheung and Lee 2009) are used to measure viewers overall satisfaction level towards a series and four items (Garza 2003) to measure viewers attitudes towards product placement. The questionnaire form also contains items regarding demographics.

4.1. Reliability and Validity Tests

In order to test the reliability of the study, Cronbach's alpha is calculated for all of the dimensions (0.666 for involvement; 0.859 for commitment; 0.816 for uses and gratifications approach; 0.897 for satisfaction, and 0.714 for product placement). All Cronbach's alpha values are good, except for involvement as acceptable (George and Mallry 2003, cited in Gliem and Gliem 2003, p. 87). In order to test construct validity (Cronbach and Meehl 1955),

factor analysis with the principal component method and varimax rotation is performed and shown in Table 1.

According to factor analysis results, commitment1, involvement2, product placement1, and product placement4 items are removed from further analysis as they have low communalities. Observed factor structure shows that related items are collected together as expected, however it is also observed that dimensions are split into unexpected dimensions meaning that there are sub-dimensions. Nine factors explain 69.576% of the variance.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Results in Test Construct Validity

	Factors								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Involvement8	.778								
Involvement6	.769								
Involvement10	.756								
Involvement1	.657								
Involvement9	.654								
Involvement4	.640								
Uses and Gratifications3		.789							
Uses and Gratifications2		.786							
Uses and Gratifications4		.775							
Uses and Gratifications1		.723							
Commitment10		.613							
Commitment7			.826						
Commitment6			.821						

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Commitment5			.770					
Commitment8			.577					
Commitment9		.434	.447					
Satisfaction3				.826				
Satisfaction2				.820				
Satisfaction1				.819				
Commitment3					.762			
Commitment2					.731			
Commitment4					.633			
Uses and Gratifications7						.861		
Uses and Gratifications5						.823		
Uses and Gratifications6						.747		
Commitment12							.798	
Commitment11							.796	
Commitment14					.407		.617	
Commitment13					.452		.546	
Product Placement3								.892
Product Placement2								.885
Involvement3								.824
Involvement5								.776
Involvement7								.590

4.2. Findings

4.2.1. Demographics

The sample is predominantly female (62.9% female), young (64% between the ages of 18-25), from a low socio-economic background (50.1% with income below $1,000), not graduated (84.3% not university graduate 15.7% university graduate), and TV series followers (49.8% watch 1-3 series per week, 33.9% more than 4, and only 5.4% do not follow any series).

4.2.2. Frequency Tests

Frequencies show that 67.1% of the respondents love watching TV series, 45.6% think series are interesting, 36.8% think series are very meaningful 26.7% think series are very important, and 40.7% think series are a necessity. Results are interpreted as viewers love TV series, and they are stick to series, and that viewers give meaning to TV series. Frequencies also show that viewers are committed to a series: 56.8% of the respondents admire the actors' and actresses' clothes, 52.6% admire their haircuts, and 37.2% is eager to buy the clothes used by the actors and actresses. Similarly, 37% of the respondents are eager to buy the products used in series, and 58.8% wants to see the places the series is shot. It can be suggested that TV series create their own fashion, and viewers tend to follow it. It is obvious that the series watched only for entertainment and free time purposes have unintended side effects and that emerge new demands.

In addition, 31.9% of the respondents use the speeches in their daily lives 18.7% imitates the gestures and postures, and 18.3% imitate the characters in a series; 43% of the respondents are eager to act in a series and 53.4% want to meet with the actors and actresses. It is interpreted that the viewer admire series characters, and they imitate them as they want to

be like them. This finding is supported by the study of Erjem and Çağlayandereli (2006), in which it is claimed that viewers tend to consider TV series characters as role models. The survey also found that 31.3% of the respondents said that they find clues in solving problems in their daily lives in a TV series, 31.4% said that they learn new ideas related to their lives, and 22.6% said they gain insights related to their daily lives. It can be interpreted that TV series mean more than entertainment to the viewers as the characters are considered as a role model in their daily lives. Viewers tend to associate and adopt the theme, the events, and the characters in TV series to their daily lives (Gültekin 2006). At the same time 13.2% of the respondents claimed that they follow a series for interpersonal relations and 27.7% just for fun, spending time and to rest.

In order to research whether viewers have negative attitudes towards product placement, a frequency analysis was performed. Although 31.3% of respondents disapprove producers receiving money from manufacturers for placing their brands in a series, and 30% find product placement in series unethical as they effect consumers decisions, 55.2% of the respondents, on the other hand, find product placement not disturbing, and 54.4% of the respondents think the presence of brand name products in a series makes the series more realistic. The findings are interpreted as viewers do not have feelings of consumer guilt (Dedeoğlu and Kazançoğlu 2010) about product placement, furthermore presence of brand names in a series is considered as product placements help viewers' needs in following fashion. However, it can also be suggested that a series creates its own fashion using brands.

4.2.3. Hypothesis Tests

In this section of the study the research hypothesis are tested. First, the existence of a relationship between involvement and connectedness with a series is tested using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The Pearson coefficient is a parametric test used to find the

relationship between two variables measured at least with ordinal scale. The coefficient is between -1 and +1 values, the sign of the coefficient represents the relationship's direction, and a value closer to 0 represents a weak relationship. Positive values represent direct relationship where negative values represent inversely proportional relationship. The calculated Pearson Coefficient values are given in Table 2. The values suggest a statistically significant positive relationship ($p < 0.01$; the Pearson correlation coefficient = 0,383) supporting H_1. Results also support evidence of a positive relationship between connectedness and uses and gratifications ($p < 0.01$; the Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.491) confirming H_2. Involvement and uses and gratifications are also positively correlated ($p < 0.01$; the Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.264) confirming H_3. Uses and gratifications and satisfaction are also positively correlated ($p < 0.01$. The Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.515) confirming H_4. Uses and gratifications and attitudes against product placement are also statistically positive related ($p < 0.01$ with the Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.182) confirming H_5. These findings support that there is a positive relations between uses and gratifications approach and satisfaction, product placement, commitment, involvement which means that the possibility of unintended outcomes neglected by the uses and gratifications approach can be reproduced at the end of the process through series.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Correlations

		Involvement	Connectedness	Uses and Gratifications	Satisfaction	Product Placement
Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.383**	.264**	.358**	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	279	254	269	273	279
Connectedness	Pearson Correlation	.383**	1	.491**	.460**	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	254	277	267	270	277
Uses and Gratification	Pearson Correlation	.264**	.491**	1	.515**	.182**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.002
	N	269	267	300	295	300
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.358**	.460**	.515**	1	.237**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	273	270	295	303	303
Product Placement	Pearson Correlation	.272**	.288**	.182**	.237**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.000	
	N	279	277	300	303	313

** Correlation Coefficient is significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

In order to test whether women follow a series more than men (H_6), a chi-square test is performed. The Chi-square analysis supports evidence of a statistically significant difference between women and men's weekly followed series averages ($p < 0.01$; $X^2 = 11.432$; $df = 2$). Cross-tables analysis shows that women follow more series than men confirming H_6, consistent with the literature (Toruk 2008).

In order to research the effect of education on weekly followed series average, a chi-square test is performed. Results show a statistically significant difference between education levels and weekly followed series average ($p < 0.01$, $X^2 = 11.549$; $df = 3$). Cross-tables analysis shows that at all education levels respondents follow at least 1-3 series. University graduates are found to be proportionally the highest group following 1-3 series weekly, while non-graduates follow more than 4 series with the highest average. Results do not support H_7 that as education levels increase; series watching behaviour does not decrease. This finding can be interpreted as "TV series culture" affects the whole society regardless of education level.

The chi-square test performed to research relationship between age and series watching behaviour represents a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$; chi-square $= 6.624$; $df = 2$). Cross-tables analysis show that ages below 25 years are the biggest group following 1-3 series weekly, ages between 26-35 are the biggest group following more than 4 series weekly. The results suggest that young viewers follow more series than older viewers rejecting H_8 that hypothesizes older viewers follow more series. The results show that young viewers are affected more by a TV series than older viewers. Cesur and Paker's (2007) study on TV watching behaviour of children supports the evidence that TV series are the second most followed TV shows after cartoons. It can be claimed that as age decreases, TV series watching behaviour increases.

The Chi-square test is performed in order to research whether average monthly income has an effect on series watching behaviour. The results, however, does not suggest a statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$). This dramatic finding suggests that monthly average income does not affect series watching behaviour and that at all income levels viewers tend to follow an average number of series weekly, rejecting H_9. This finding interpreted as "TV series culture" is common in all socio-economic levels.

5. Conclusion

TV series has become an important part of people's daily lives among all socio-economic groups regardless of age, income, and education level. Although it is claimed that TV series are followed for entertainment, spending free time, and having a rest purposes, the mental processes create unintended and unforeseen side effects. This study has researched TV series watching behaviour from the uses and gratifications perspective which claims that viewers follow TV series not only for declared intentions, but also for following recent fashion that is also created by the series itself. This situation leads to new unintended necessities to follow TV series other than entertainment or spending time. It can be claimed that the media produces new demands, at the same time while satisfying demands. The critical point is that viewers may not even be aware of the process. Viewers are not disturbed by the presence of branded products in TV series, on the contrary, viewers approve product placement as it make the series more realistic. In the light of the study's findings, the active viewer concept in uses and gratifications approach can be considered as dubious and incomplete.

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