

Special Issue Editors' Introduction: Television in the Global South

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Despite being considered old media, television is still one of the most powerful media forms. With the rise of digital platforms and streaming services, television continues to play a central role in globalization, dissemination of information, and entertainment. These new developments have helped television acquire a new significance by enabling a wider consumption of TV content through the Internet and other digital technologies all over the world. While this new media environment has contributed to an increase in television production worldwide, it has also led the way for a number of players in the Global South to become visible outside of their national contexts. The TV products originating from the Global South, which have reached millions of viewers, have challenged the global monopoly of the West (Thussu, 2024).

In light of these contemporary developments, this special issue aims to bring forth new discussions that can contribute to the de-westernization and decolonization of media and television studies. In this special issue, the authors investigate the influence of non-Western television production and consumption in a rapidly changing "global mediascape" (Appadurai, 1998) by focusing on the transformations in contemporary television in the Global South. In this introduction and the framework of this special issue, we define the "Global South" with reference to Dados and Connell (2012). According to Dados and Connell, the Global South refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It denotes regions outside Europe and North America, mostly low-income, economic inequality, and often politically or culturally marginalized (Dados & Connell, 2012).

Since the development of satellite TV, the audiences' media consumption has diversified (Ogan, 2001). In the last three decades, due to the multidirectional flow of transnational media across different countries and regions, national audiences have been exposed to a wide range of global television content as well as local productions. Three articles in this special issue focus on audience reception of popular TV dramas in global circulation and the cultural politics of TV drama consumption. In the first article titled, "How past-present-future interconnect in China: CDramas as a tool of cultural governance and the possibility of a 'Chinese wave' in the case of *GenZ*," Sevdâ Ünal and Mutlu Binark explore Chinese Dramas (CDramas) and the Chinese Wave via a thematic discourse analysis and netnographic research. Specifically focusing on *Gen Z* series, Ünal and Binark compare transnational and Chinese audiences' perception of CDramas to shed light on the instrumental function of these dramas for the cultural governance of the Chinese government, youth politics in China, and audiences' response to the subtle ideological content of CDramas.

In their article titled "Conditions and consequences of Turkey's transnational TV production: A study of American women audiences," Uğur Baloğlu and Lee Artz investigate the worldwide fame of Turkish TV series and their reception in the United States of America. Through audience ethnography and in-depth interviews, this article examines the cultural perceptions of American audiences who watch Turkish TV dramas and TV dramas' importance in intercultural interaction. As a significant initial touchpoint from a Global South country, the Turkish TV dramas not only spark American viewers' curiosity about Turkish culture, history, and social life but also foster an appreciation for this foreign culture and deepen understanding of global intercultural dynamics between two countries by challenging existing stereotypes.

The popularity of Turkish TV series (*dizi*) makes them a field of hegemonic struggle (Carney 2023). In the same vein, the third article titled, "The influence of Turkish TV series on the perception of Türkiye in South Africa: An exploratory study," analyzes the global popularity of Turkish TV series in South Africa in the context of international relationship between two countries. As Türkiye's presence in South Africa has become more prominent in the past 25 years, especially the younger generations (*GenZ*) began to watch Turkish TV series. Conducting semi-structured interviews with audiences, Mercia Coetzee, Fatih Barıtcı, and Zühal Fidan Barıtcı discuss Türkiye's soft power in South Africa and illustrate that Turkish TV series have a positive impact on South African audiences' perception of Türkiye.

In the age of contra-flows of media, cross-cultural remakes, especially TV dramas, offer a valuable and insightful opportunity to explore the intricate connections between global media flows, media texts, and transnational audiences (Kaptan, 2018). In the fourth article, inquiring about Curran's radical democratic view of entertainment theory in Global South contexts, Ayşenur Kılıç points out the political and ideological meanings embedded in TV dramas and their remakes. By looking into the popular Israeli TV drama, *Shtisel* and its Turkish remake *Ömer*, Kılıç argues that *Shtisel* portrays religion (Judaism) as a natural part of daily life, avoiding real-time socio-political conflicts in the society. In contrast, its remake presents religion (Islam) as a site of contestation and identity polarization, highlighting political issues and a pervasive skepticism toward the outside world.

After the neoliberalization of television in the 1990s, the late 2000s proved to be the start of the next important transformative phase for world television marked by the widespread use of personal digital media devices and

increased access to the internet. This contemporary phase has witnessed rapid technological developments in television, such as the digitalization and platformization of television services and the expansion of television consumption via social media. In his article titled ‘Bad word’ for good engagement: The commodification of ‘the Suroboyoan language’ in Indonesian local television newsroom, Aditya Fahmi Nurwahid, Esa FK Wibowo, and Citra Safira show us how the Indonesian TV station, JTV, utilizes its social media channels and short video form to increase its viewers and revenues at the expense of reinforcing the stereotypes about the Suroboyan culture. Drawing from a critical media studies perspective, this paper argues that the commodification of the Suroboyoan dialect by JTV’s revenue-driven editorial strategies turns a cultural marker of a regional identity into a tool for creating marketable content.

In their article titled “A cultural analysis of generation Z’s perception of individualism and collectivism in Turkish television commercials through a Hofstedian lens,” Nilnur Tandıçgüneş Kahraman and Özlem Kalan examine the impact of television advertising on younger generations in Türkiye, who are attuned to global trends and ideologies, via an intercultural communication perspective. Their research has found that the cultural values of Generation Z, who grew up under the influence of globalization and digitalization, show individualistic tendencies as opposed to collectivistic values, as once had been identified by Hofstede for countries, such as Türkiye.

In her article titled “Populist styles and meanings in Acun Medya reality shows,” Gökçe Baydar Çavdar illustrates how populism is reproduced by the reality show formats, the lucrative Acun Medya production company, and contestants participating in the programs. Tracing how the ideological positions in the show regarding the family and nationalist sentiments align with those of the conservative right-wing populist government, this article is a great reminder that “culture sits in places” (Escobar, 2001) and in order to situate television in the global South, we need to consider the ‘place’ of its production and consumption.

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