

Chapter 7

TV Soaps Influence on the Attitudes of Kazakhstani Women Towards the Represented Turkish Way of Life

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ABSTRACT

Open market relations opened the opportunity for media representatives to deliver their products worldwide. Thanks to this tendency, TV products became more than entertainment. They are used as a persuasive medium abroad. Turkish TV soaps are the subject of this study. The research further discusses the perceived influence of Turkish TV soaps on Kazakhstani female audience towards the represented Turkish way of life. This study used qualitative in-depth interviews to collect data during August of 2018. The implications are discussed in relation to social learning theory and uses and gratifications theory.

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to replacement from communism system to capitalism in Kazakhstan. These changes brought significant transformation to local social and economic environment such as market relations, opened borders, new international relations and change of socio-politics.

The process of the open market also influenced the Kazakhstani TV industry. Thus, over the last 20 years, Kazakhstani viewers have started consuming not only Russian and local TV products but also foreign ones such as American, Brazilian, Turkish, Korean and Indian ones (Thomas, 2005). The world's leading media exporters such as American Viacom, Warner Brothers, Disney, Brazilian Globo, Turkish Ay Yapim media companies began to promote their media products in Kazakhstan and elsewhere in Central Asia and beyond. It is thought that the most highly exported TV products in the world are TV soaps. Looking from the perspective of foreign production companies they have not only financial profit, but also they promote national values and lifestyle of the country of origin to “destination” region or set of countries.

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This study examines the context of Kazakhstan and the perceived influence of foreign TV products to this country because Kazakhstan and wider Central Asian countries have not received adequate scholarly attention. To fill this gap, this study specifically analyzes potential influence of foreign TV soaps on Kazakhstan viewers. Specifically, this study examines the perceived Turkish TV soaps influence on Kazakhstan based on the perception of female TV viewers. Going into historical aspect of foreign TV products broadcast in Kazakhstan, existing literature suggests that first TV soap broadcasted in Kazakhstan was the Brazilian TV soaps – “Slave Isaura” only in the 80-s of 20th century (Razzakov, 2009). In that time Kazakhstan was the part of the Soviet Union. It is noteworthy to note that in the Soviet Union there were predominantly local documentary films and programs in the network of the Soviet television broadcasting. There weren’t any serials and advertising because of communism regime (Poluehtova, 2010). Since Kazakhstan got its independence in 1991, TV series production began in the country. The first Kazakh TV soap produced by local production company was “Perekrestok” (Crossroad) in 1996 according to news website 24.kz. It includes 465 episodes. It was a family saga about ordinary residents of Alma-Ata in the difficult period of the 90-s of 20th century. The plot of the TV soaps included stories of ordinary Kazakhstani families (“Kino-teatr.ru”, 2018). But at the same time the flow of international TV soaps filled Kazakhstan national TV channels. For instance, in 2011 Kazakhstan was viewed to be the leading country where Turkish TV soaps were broadcasted. The number of Turkish TV soaps being broadcast reached 42 TV soaps in the country just from Turkey alone (Turkelpress, 2011). It is because that the lack of own products and cheap prizes of series lead to this tendency. Turkish TV products became more popular among the local population. Thus, the high popularity of Turkish TV soaps in Kazakhstan was the reason for the former minister of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Kul-Mukhammed’s concern according this issue. In 2013 he said during a briefing at the Central Communications Service under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan “Our TV channels obviously got carried away by Turkish and Korean TV series. Therefore, this year, a final decision has been made to suspend the purchase of Korean and Turkish television series. Since this year, we are not buy any such series”. (Zakon.kz, 2013).

Today Kazakhstan government is trying to cut down the dependence on foreign TV products for Kazakhstan audience and is trying to increase the national production of TV soaps or other media products/content. In 2017 the number of state ordered TV series raised to 40. (Kaumetova, 2018). There are bright examples among recent produced series like “An aga”, “Kozykorpeshbayansulu”, “Aizhan” etc. However, Turkish TV soaps are still popular among Kazakhstani viewers, especially among women. Kazakhstani TV channels continue to buy Turkish TV soaps.

The possible reasons of Turkish TV soaps being popular locally can be explained by various factors. It is possible that positive diplomatic relations and similar cultural values between Kazakhstan and Turkey also played some role in this tendency. Turkey was the first country in the world which recognized Kazakhstan after it gained political independence on December 16, 1991 from the Soviet Union. Since then, the relations between Turkey and Kazakhstan have flourished, the Kazakh-Turkish cooperation has been characterized by a positive development dynamics since the first days of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1991. Thus, Kazakhstan was the first foreign distance of Turkish TV soaps in the middle of 2000-s.

The current research will examine some of the reasons of why Turkish TV soaps are popular among Kazakhstan female viewers, and what gratifications they seek from watching them. This research also explores perceived influence of Turkish TV soaps on Kazakhstan at the societal and individual level of those viewing. This study specifically focuses on female audience members because TV soap audience

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