Received Date: 6 October 2025 I Accepted Date: 25 November 2025

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPUS Journal of Society Research

# "Hear Our Voice, Screenwriter!": Participatory Culture in the New Media Age and Active Audience of Local TV Series

**Nisa Yıldırım**[1]

[1] Asst. Prof. Dr., Istanbul Gelişim University, Depertment of Radio Television and Cinema İstanbul/Türkiye
**ROR ID:** https://ror.org/0188hvh39
**ORCID:** 0000-0002-7941-4470
**E-Mail:** nyildirim@gelisim.edu.tr

November 2025
**Volume**:22
**Issue**:6
**DOI**: 10.26466/opusjsr.1797840

**Citation:** Yıldırım, N. (2025). "Hear our voice, screenwriter!": Participatory culture in the new media age and active audience of local tv series. *OPUS– Journal of Society Research*, 22(6), 1254-1268.

## Abstract

*Participatory culture has led to a higher level of industry-audience interaction in the field of television in the new media age. This research aims to examine the effects of viewer feedback on the duration of characters' existence in the series, by analizing YouTube comments for the series Masumlar Apartmanı, Kızılcık Şerbeti and Bahar with the netnography method. In all three series, there are side characters whose existence in the story was terminated in line with the audience's demand. It is understood that the reason for the negative comments in the two examples is about the function of the character in the story, while in the third example, the actor is not considered suitable for the role. Regardless of the reasons, it is seen that in all three series, the audience expresses their demands, knowing that their voices are heard, and that they say that they will stop watching the production if their opinions are not taken into consideration. It is seen that participatory culture in the new media age creates a result in favor of the audience. However, the creators' need to obtain the audience's approval at every step may turn into an element of pressure on them.*

**Keywords:** *Participatory culture, series, local series, audience, audience comments.*

## Öz

*Yeni medya çağında yaşanmakta olan başlıca kültürel dönüşümler arasında katılımcı kültür öne çıkmaktadır. Kullanıcılar sosyal medya platformları başta olmak üzere çeşitli mecralarda kendi içeriklerini yayınlayabilmekte veya mevcut içerikler hakkında görüş bildirebilmektedir. Bu durum televizyon alanında da endüstri-izleyici etkileşiminin üst seviyeye taşınmasına neden olmuştur. Söz konusu yerli diziler olduğunda hikayelerin gelişimi ve karakterlerin devamlılığının büyük ölçüde izleyici görüşleri doğrultusunda şekillendiği söylenebilir. Son yıllarda popüler dizilere sonradan dahil olan bazı yan karakterlerin izleyicilerin olumsuz geri bildirimleri gerekçesiyle hikayenin dışında bırakıldıkları görülmüştür. Bu araştırma izleyici geri bildirimlerinin karakterlerin dizilerdeki varlık sürelerine olan etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Netnografi yönteminin kullanıldığı bu araştırmada Masumlar Apartmanı, Kızılcık Şerbeti ve Bahar dizilerine yönelik YouTube yorumları incelenmiştir. Her üç dizide de izleyicinin talebi doğrultusunda hikayedeki varlıkları sonlandırılan yan karakterler bulunmaktadır. İzleyicinin olumsuz yorumlarının gerekçesinin iki örnekte karakterin hikayedeki işlevinin beğenilmemesi olurken üçüncü örnekte karakteri canlandıran oyuncunun role uygun görülmemesi olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Gerekçelerinden bağımsız olarak her üç dizide izleyicilerin seslerinin duyulduğunun bilincinde olarak taleplerini dile getirdikleri, görüşleri dikkate alınmazsa yapımı izlemeyi bırakacaklarını ifade ettikleri görülmektedir. Sonuç olarak, yeni medya çağında katılımcı kültürün izleyicinin lehine bir sonuç yarattığı söylenebilir. Bununla birlikte, yaratıcıların her adımda izleyicinin onayını almayı gerekli görmelerinin üzerlerinde bir baskı unsuruna dönüşeceği yorumunu yapmak mümkündür.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler**: *Katılımcı kültür, dizi, yerli dizi, izleyici, izleyici yorumları.*



intihal.net

CC BY NC ND

**Review Note**: *Evaluated by Double-Blind Peer Review*
**Ethical Statement:** *Ethical matters may be addressed via editorialoffice@opusjournal.net*

## Introduction

Participatory culture was conceptualized by Henry Jenkins back in the 1990s, a period that saw the peak years of the traditional media age and before widespread internet access for individual users. Referencing the fan culture created by the film and television industries, Jenkins argued that media texts were being interpreted and transformed by fan communities into re-created outputs. He emphasized that this process weakened the media's monopoly over content. With the advent of the internet, the feature of convergence—meaning the accessibility of multiple media channels through a single device—was interpreted by Jenkins as an innovation that would create a cultural shift, suggesting that participatory culture would reach an entirely new dimension in the new media age.

In the new media age, the user, now an active participant, also transforms into an active audience when it comes to series and films. Thanks to the internet, the film and television industry is now interacting with its audience more than ever before. Through their comments and/or likes, viewers have become decision-makers whose feedback is closely monitored by television channels and production companies. In recent years, the habit of watching television series on YouTube has been steadily increasing. While watching series content on YouTube, viewers can simultaneously write comments, respond to existing comments, or react with a like or dislike. Based on all these developments, it can be argued that the audience's position as a 'decision-maker' regarding the productions created is constantly growing stronger. It is a known fact that decisions are made based on audience comments on various issues, from how the series' storyline will progress to which supporting characters should be written out of the narrative.

This research aims to examine the impact of audience feedback on the duration of characters' presence in series. Audience comments regarding the Turkish TV series *Masumlar Apartmanı (The Innocents)*, *Kızılcık Şerbeti (Cranberry Sorbet)*, and *Bahar (Blooming Lady)* were analyzed using the netnography method. Prior to this analysis, information on the transformation of participatory culture and its relationship with the media was provided.

## Participatory Culture and Television

Participatory culture defines the practice that emerges when the viewer or user goes beyond merely consuming the content presented to them, to producing their own content, interpreting, liking, or sharing existing content. Henry Jenkins was the first to coin the term "participatory culture." In his 1992 book, 'Textual Poachers': Television Fans and Participatory Culture, which focused on the fans created by television content and their behavior, Jenkins argues that fans re-create the works they watch or read through their own interpretations. Fans also gather under the titles of their interests, forming various communities. The shares and creations that emerge allow for the development of a culture independent of the media monopoly. Jenkins states, "It transforms the experience of media consumption into a participatory culture which produces new texts, even a new culture, and a new community" (1992, p.46), and he initially developed the concept of participatory culture through analyses of the relationship between traditional media tools and the audience. In his 2006 book, 'Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide', he addresses the transformation of participatory culture with new media tools. He links the transition of the viewer or user from being a mere consumer of the media text to a producer with the concept of 'convergence', which describes the system resulting from the combination of different media channels on internet-enabled devices. According to Jenkins, convergence should not be perceived merely as a technological development; it should be viewed as a more comprehensive concept that initiates the re-shaping of the relationship between the industry and users, and even creates a new culture (2008, p.15). The author also touches upon participatory culture's relationship with collective intelligence, suggesting that virtual communities increase their expertise by combining the talents of their members, thereby enabling a task that could not be achieved individually to be accomplished collectively (ibid, p.27).

The participatory culture undergoing a transformation with today's communication technologies aligns with the concept of "prosumer" put forth by Toffler. This concept, derived from the combination of the words "producer" and "consumer", signifies that individuals are simultaneously in the position of both producer and consumer. According to Toffler, who divides societies into three categories in the context of production and consumption practices, the majority in the agricultural society were consumers, whereas in the industrial society, the distinction between producer and consumer became clear. When it comes to the information society, the new concept of "prosumer" should be used to define individuals (1980, pp.283-284)."

The transformation the internet has undergone over time is what has shaped participatory culture in the digital age. The transition to the Web 2.0 era was pioneered by the transformation that social media applications created in internet communication. The cultural effects of these applications quickly began to emerge. Chief among these is the influence of participatory culture, realized through social media, on language use. It can be said that users have started frequently using expressions like to like, to stalk, and to tweet in their daily lives, independently of their native languages (Koç, 2020, p.907).

Internet technologies, by enabling two-way communication, have led to the emergence of new professions that did not exist in previous eras. Examples of these include jobs known as social media manager and content creator. Users can share their own produced content for purposes such as informing or entertaining other users on various topics. Users who increase their followers with content prepared in various media formats using their creativity can eventually collaborate with brands or share advertising content. In summary, it is possible to define individuals who gain the appreciation of communities with the content they produce using their creativity as content creators today (Yeygel Çakır, 2015, p.243).

In their research titled "Social Media in the Context of Participatory Culture: A Netnographic Analysis," Eren Çetin and Ayhan divide participation occurring through social media platforms into four categories based on their forms. Accordingly, producers of social media content, those who write comments on this content, and those who perform a secondary action (participating in a campaign, survey, etc.) based on the content are engaged in 'direct participation'. Those who share existing content for others to see—in other words, those who announce them—demonstrate 'indirect participation'. The form of participation by those who only 'like' the content is defined as 'fixed participation', and merely following without taking any action is defined as 'passive participation'. The classification of participation based on purpose is further categorized by Eren Çetin and Ayhan as "coming together," "sharing," "acquiring information," "entertainment," and "change" (2020, pp.58-59).

Another point that should be emphasized regarding participatory culture is that it's not mandatory for users to create any content. What's important is that users know they have the potential to produce, share, or engage in interaction whenever they want or need to (Çavuşoğlu, 2022, p.55). On the other hand, internet technology, which has led to the transformation of participatory culture, has also paved the way for new debates. For example, the limitless data obtained through the voluntary interactions of users constitutes a resource for technology companies. This situation leads to these companies unilaterally benefiting from the characteristics of this new communication medium. Fuchs, one of the pioneers of the concept of "digital labor", defines the fact that internet users, who are prosumers, generate data with every step they take as "unpaid labor" (2015, p.506). He argues that the participatory culture fostered by social media leads to "digital labor exploitation" by enabling technology companies to acquire resources at no cost (2015, p.146).

In terms of digital labor, Toffler's concept of "prosumer" was updated by Burns for the new media age. Bruns introduced the term "produsage," which is derived from the English words "production" and "usage," and offered a definition that focuses on collective rather than individual creation. With the transformation brought about by internet technology, consumption practices have also changed, and "the boundary between passive consumption and active production has become

blurred." Considering the existence of a large number of users who are unaware that they are also producers, it can be argued that it has become ambiguous to determine who is the producer and who is the consumer (Bruns, 2006, as cited in Sevgi, 2021, p.25).

Despite such negative aspects, it can be said that internet technology has turned its ability to meet the communication and entertainment needs of individuals to its advantage. The promise of free communication independent of time and place, which the internet has emphasized since its early years, can also be interpreted as the emergence of a new medium that will enrich and facilitate participatory culture. Furthermore, participatory culture is enriched not only by new media technologies but also by the natural reflections of traditional media into digital spaces.

As Jenkins emphasized, many of the cultural transformations experienced in the digital age are directly related to 'convergence'. The transformation of television viewing practices is among these. Television channels recognized that having a presence on social media was a vital move in the Web 2.0 era and quickly established themselves in the digital sphere. By adapting to the transformation, they aimed to "benefit from and guide the online practices of television viewers" (Ateşalp & Başlar, 2015, p.167).

With the development of the internet infrastructure in the Web 2.0 era, the possibility of watching synchronized video enabled the emergence of digital platforms that would bring content belonging to the television and cinema industries to the audience. These platforms, initially thought to pose a threat to the television medium, later became a "complementary" element for television broadcasting (Dikmen, 2017, p.434). As of 2025, highly-watched local series from mainstream television channels are being broadcast on platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney Plus.

It is known that even before the new media age, television viewers had a desire to express their opinions about the programs they followed, especially local series. They used to send letters to television channels to report their complaints about what was happening in the series they watched or to demand the continuation of productions that had an unexpected finale (Yıldırım, 2020, p.214). With the advent of the internet, it became much easier for the television audience to communicate their views to broadcasters. Television channels began to promote their programs through social media posts and, in this way, could access the opinions of potential viewers even before the program airs. The opinions obtained this way largely influence decisions made regarding the program's content and continuation. Posts shared on social media during a program's broadcast provide information about the extent to which the audience is following it. Social media, offering a measurement possibility outside the traditional rating system, has become indispensable for television organizations (Gökmen, 2023, p.561).

The 7:00 PM – 11:00 PM time slot, known as prime-time, which is when television broadcasting sees its most intensive viewing, is also the time when social media usage is at its peak (Kırık & Domaç, 2014, p.418). It is known that shares about television content especially increase during the evening hours. Headings sourced from television are frequently seen on the 'Trendtopic' list of the most popular topics on the X platform (formerly Twitter). Viewers share their comments using hashtags composed of the series name or character names while new episodes of local series are airing. They are observed not to wait for the episodes to finish to post these comments. The number of viewers who engage in series watching and social media use simultaneously is quite high.

Aside from social media shares, another example of the output of participatory culture in the new media age is re-created content made by modifying traditional media content with digital tools. Some users can modify photos obtained from content they are fans of using Photoshop or similar tools and circulate them (Çetin, 2019, p.157). Examples of this include visuals from popular television series being used as a humorous element (memes).

Local series serve as a source not only for pictures but also for videos used as a humor element. Users dress up as the most engaging characters from highly-watched series and produce short videos consisting of parodies of the shows. Many of these receive significant engagement when circulated on social media. It is common to find such

videos on YouTube, a video-sharing platform that exhibits social media platform characteristics.

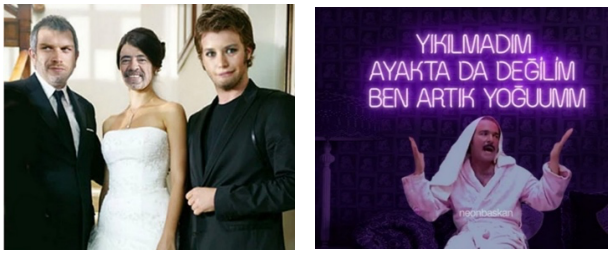



***Image 1. Memes about series of Aşk-ı Memnu ve Avrupa Yakası***

When it comes to television content, YouTube can be said to function as a secondary television screen. It is observed that all television channels and series have their own YouTube channels. Most series upload their new episodes to their YouTube channels in one continuous piece, with the commercials removed, as soon as the broadcast time on television ends. A segment of local series viewers now states that they prefer to watch the shows they follow via YouTube channels instead of on the television screen. These dedicated series channels feature not only full episodes but also short videos consisting of clips from episodes presented under various headings. Viewers can write comments on the YouTube content of local series, reply to each other under these comments, or simply like the comments. Due to the platform's nature, the view counts and the level of audience interaction received by the series are transparently visible to everyone.

**Aim and Methodology**

When considering the relationship between participatory culture and the television audience, it is observed that YouTube receives significantly more interaction than other social media platforms. The reason for this is that the channels allow their followers to comment or like the content instantly while watching it. Viewers can share their detailed opinions about the events and character developments in each episode, thus providing a form of feedback to the series creators. This feedback sometimes leads to changes in the plot or supporting characters of the series. In recent years, it has been witnessed that some actors who were later added as supporting characters to popular series have faced negative comments from the audience, and after a while, these actors were removed from the production's cast. This situation is even covered in tabloid news, with phrases used about the actors like, "the character they played was not liked by the audience." The fact that characters are often removed from the story without allowing time for their roles to be gradually minimized demonstrates the extent to which the creators of the productions value audience reactions and make decisions accordingly.

Based on the audience-industry interaction in the context of participatory culture, this research aims to examine the effects of viewer feedback on the duration of characters' existence in television series. The series selected as examples for the research are *Masumlar Apartmanı* (2020-2022), *Kızılcık Şerbeti* (2022 – Present), and *Bahar* (2024 – Present), all popular productions from recent years. The characters who were later included in these series and whose presence in the series ended due to negative audience feedback are indicated in the table below.

***Table 1: Episodes with Side Characters***

| Series | Character | Episodes |
|---|---|---|
| Masumlar Apartmanı | Rüya (Melisa Şenolsun) | 38-57 |
| Kızılcık Şerbeti | Heves (Şebnem Dönmez) | 67-75 |
| Bahar | Süreyya (Büşra Pekin) | 17-22 |

The research analyzing the comments found on the YouTube channels of the series used the netnography method. As is well-known, the proliferation of internet communication has caused user behaviors to turn into online data. This data, which the digital environment makes visible and accessible, has led to the emergence of a new research method. This method, which can be considered the virtual application of the ethnography method, is defined as netnography. It is also referred to as "cyber-ethnography," "cyber-anthropology," "digital ethnography," "online ethnography," and "virtual ethnography" (Özbölük & Dursun, 2015, p.233). Social media platforms that emerged during the Web 2.0 era have started to form a resource for research in the field of social sciences (Yarar Aksoy, 2023, p.101). The number of studies using netnography as a method is increasing every day.

With this method, users' online behaviors can be monitored in real-time, their behaviors and preferences can be determined, the language and expressions they use can be analyzed for various purposes, and their opinions or suggestions can be identified (Özbölük & Dursun, 2015, p.245). The application of the netnography method consists of five stages. The first is identifying the research questions; the second is selecting the sources (communities) to reach; the third stage is the evaluation of data related to the topic; the fourth stage is the analysis of the findings obtained; and the final stage is transforming the results into meaningful inferences (Kozinets, 2010, p.61).

All three series have their own YouTube channels that were launched concurrently with their start dates on television. These channels can also be considered an archive containing content such as trailers, full episodes, and short videos produced from these episodes. Information about the channels and the number of subscribers and views they reached as of June 20, 2025, are provided below.

***Table 2: Data of Youtube Chanells of The Series***

| Channel Name | Date | Subscribers | Number of Content | Views |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Masumlar Apartmanı | 25.08.2020 | 1,09 Million | 3.828 | 1.281.848.415 |
| Kızılcık Şerbeti | 07.10.2022 | 2,68 Million | 5.250 | 3.092.168.442 |
| Bahar | 23.01.2024 | 1,44 Million | 1.978 | 963.556.055 |

The narrative structure of a fictional screenplay is fundamentally constructed around the events experienced by the protagonist. When devising the plot, it is mandatory that the main character possesses a definitive objective and acts in accordance with that goal. Concomitantly, the presence of supporting characters is required. The paramount rule governing the utilization of supporting characters in a script is the necessity for them to be intrinsically linked to the main character. Furthermore, the function of the supporting character must be readily comprehensible. Crucially, the supporting character's function is required to align with the main character's overarching objective. This, however, does not preclude supporting characters from having their own internal goals and desires. In feature film screenplays, an excessive quantity of supporting characters may compromise the narrative's overall integrity. Conversely, the deployment of supporting characters in television series does not inherently pose this risk. The serialized nature of television allows for the gradual development of characters over time, enabling supporting characters to simultaneously advance the protagonist's narrative arc while pursuing their own storylines. Indeed, for multi-season series, the establishment of supporting characters as well-developed and profound individuals is one of the most critical factors determining the production's quality. Nevertheless, given that series screenplays continue to be refined throughout the ongoing production process, the introduction of new supporting characters into the narrative is considered both routine and necessary.

The supporting characters selected as examples in the three series analyzed in the research are those introduced to the narrative in later episodes. All three were presented to the audience with a direct connection to the main character(s). The research examined the comments made on the first episode in which each character was introduced to the series and the final episode in which they departed. Furthermore, within the 'playlists' on each channel, short videos dedicated to specific characters in the series are featured. From these, one short video corresponding to the character's first appearance and one corresponding to their last appearance were selected, and the comments on these videos were also included in the analysis. Four videos were selected for each series in the research. As is known, YouTube offers two options for listing video comments: 'Newest first' and 'Top comments.' For this research, the 'Top comments' option, which displays comments liked by other users, was chosen for every video, and the first five comments were taken, ranking them from 1st to 5th accordingly. In summary, the comments were determined as the five most popular comments for each video.

It was seen that a portion of the message writers' usernames are real first and last names. These examples have been changed as "Participant (number)" for the protection of personal data, while anonymous usernames have not been altered. It is

recognized that the use of capital letters in digital messaging practices signifies 'speaking loudly.' Therefore, comments written entirely in capital letters were shared exactly as they appeared, without modification. Some comments were observed to include emojis. These comments were transcribed with the emojis removed, but no intervention was made regarding spelling errors. The number of likes received by the comments has been added in parentheses.

**Findings**

When the audience's reactions to the characters are evaluated through the comments, the following conclusions were reached:

**Masumlar Apartmanı**

The series narrates the psychiatric disorders experienced by three siblings due to childhood trauma and their subsequent efforts to hold onto life despite these conditions.

***Characters and Plot Introduction:***

The main characters—siblings Safiye (Ezgi Mola), Gülben (Merve Dizdar), and Han (Birkan Sokullu)—reside in the same apartment building. Safiye and Gülben are portrayed as young women with severe cleanliness obsessions, while Han is presented as an obsessive and manipulative character. In stark contrast to his sisters, Han, a highly educated man, falls in love with and marries İnci, a young woman characterized by her joyful and free-spirited nature, during the first season of the series. Later in the narrative, İnci and their newborn child tragically perish. Han is plunged into deep grief and isolates himself from the outside world. During this period, Rüya, another free-spirited and cheerful young woman, similar to İnci, moves into the apartment building.

***Rüya's Function in the Narrative:***

Rüya was introduced to the story to provide a new direction for Han's plotline. By introducing a new young woman during Han's mourning process, the seeds for a potential romantic relationship were sown from their initial encounters, thereby attempting to fill the dramatic void left by İnci's passing with a new love interest.

***YouTube Data for Rüya's Introduction:***

The 38th episode, which marks the first appearance of the Rüya character, was published on the YouTube channel on September 15, 2021. The video garnered 5,309,314 views and received 5,450 comments:

*@emine06204: I think Rüya came into the story way too early. Han should've stayed alone for a while—both his wife and child died, so he didn't need to meet someone right away. The scenes between Rüya and Han, their first meeting and all, felt really off-putting to me. (382)*

*@idontcareduh806: I don't think there should be love between Rüya and Han. If I had written this script, I would've added someone to help Han, but I'd want him to learn to love himself, not someone else. (378)*

*Participant 1: Rüya feels completely unnecessary for this series. Honestly, she ruins the emotion and the tone. Bringing someone new into Han's life right away was a bad idea. You should've waited at least a while. (291)*

*@aaaaay8341: Melisa Şenolsun just doesn't fit the aura of this series somehow... (231)*

*@berrak8383: They tried to replace İnci with Rüya, but we already watched the love story between Han and İnci. You should've left İnci at her peak — that would've been much better, in my opinion. (129)*

A video titled 'Rüya and Han Meet! | Masumlar Apartmanı Episode 38', featuring sequences from the first episode in which the character Rüya was introduced, was published on September 15, 2021. The video received 144,131 views and accumulated 267 comments.

*@unknown_4744: Please don't put these two into a romantic relationship — the script has gone downhill, they have zero chemistry. If there has to be some kind of*

*connection, make the girl Han's close friend or something. Also, I'm sorry but Melisa just doesn't fit well with the show or the other actors in general. (650)*

*@warai-san: I feel like Rüya is going to ruin the entire atmosphere of the series — and she already did in this episode… (147)*

*Participant 2: Sorry, Rüya, but I never liked you :( (91)*

*@TheRealSpecialGuest: I hope they're not planning to put them together because there's literally no chemistry. Couldn't they find anyone else to be his love interest besides a spoiled, petite young girl?? İnci's character and this one are worlds apart. (67)*

*@clarissa5420: Rüya really doesn't work. Even just one of İnci's smiles could warm your heart. Yes, Melisa is beautiful and acts well, but it just doesn't feel the same after İnci. (26)*

It is evident that the audience articulated that the grieving protagonist beginning a new romantic relationship was unnecessary, starting from the very first episode featuring the character Rüya. While the Rüya character may have been found amiable in isolation, the potential direction for the storyline contradicted audience expectations. It is also understood that a segment of the audience was dissatisfied with the absence of the character İnci. Rüya's introduction to the narrative as a replacement for a beloved, departed character was instrumental in the emergence of negative audience opinions.

Since the audience's views regarding the potential relationship between the two did not become positive in subsequent episodes, the series creators decided to terminate Rüya's presence in the story. The decision to remove the character was announced in tabloid news before the episode featuring her last appearance, stating: "The story of Han and Rüya failed to attract the expected interest from the audience" (t24.com.tr, 2021).

The 57th episode, marking Rüya's final appearance in the series, was uploaded to the YouTube channel on February 9, 2022. The video received 3,113,395 views and garnered 2,110 comments:

*@mamba1654: This one's for the screenwriters — since we know you like reading the comments. You dressed Melisa like Inci from the very first episodes and made her a target (they even look alike visually). Instead of having her listen to music in those chimney scenes, you should've added depth to her character and stayed consistent — the audience would've liked her. You shouldn't have shaped the story based on comments. A man who loved his wife could've healed and returned to life through love — everyone would've believed in that. As for the so-called chemistry between Rüya and Han... (145)*

*@senay3272: If Rüya hadn't been introduced as someone trying to flirt with Han from the start, she would probably still be in the show. While we were mourning İnci, we didn't like the idea of Han being with someone else — and this is the result. (28)*

*@g.n.c4019: I think a different kind of storyline could've emerged from Rüya and Han. There's no spark or chemistry between Han and Ceylan — she feels more like his older sister. Unfortunately, Han doesn't show even a trace of excitement, just wanders around blandly. (24)*

*Participant 3: The screenwriter brought in Rüya at first to replace İnci, but when the audience didn't like her, they pushed her to the background — so much for being the lead... (16)*

*Participant 4: They put Rüya in front of Han. It didn't work… and now they've sent her off just as quickly. (3)*

A video titled 'Rüya Bids Farewell to Everyone... | Masumlar Apartmanı Episode 57', featuring the character's departure sequences, was published on February 8, 2022. The video received 177,807 views and accumulated 448 comments:

*@runrunrun4114: Rüya didn't come into the story for Han or to replace İnci. She had a very deep backstory. But instead of developing it professionally, they adjusted the script based on YouTube comments. As a result, only the surface of that depth was filled. (940)*

*@Serendipity_143: Congratulations — you finally got what you wanted. Dear Masumlar Apartmanı viewers, and dear screenwriters who take every single audience*

*comment seriously… A show could only crash this badly. (52)*

*@berdine223: There were so many harsh comments here that I always tried to put myself in the actor's place. I think I would've been devastated and felt awful psychologically. I'm sure Melisa went through a really hard time. The result is what we see now. I actually think Rüya was a good character — if only she had been developed properly. (29)*

*@bkzade4688: A character like Rüya was wasted. She deserved to be happy, to rise from the ashes together with Han. Instead, they chose to cling to the past — Ceylan. Rüya represented hope; she was like the light at the end of the tunnel… You truly wasted her. (20)*

*@KING-ci9dd: They cast her as the lead, and then kicked her out of the show. (9)*

When analyzing the comments regarding the departure of the Rüya character from the series, it is evident that the character's function within the narrative was what troubled the audience, independent of the casting choice or the actress's performance. In fact, some comments indicate that certain viewers actually liked the Rüya character and suggested that her continuation in the story could have been ensured by assigning her a different narrative direction. In summary, it can be stated that the audience did not reject the Rüya character herself, but rather the premise of Han immediately beginning a new relationship after losing his wife.

**Kızılcık Şerbeti**

The series is built upon the conflicts experienced by the members of two families, both amongst themselves and in their personal lives, following the marriage of a young woman raised in a modern family to a young man belonging to a traditional family.

***Characters and Plot Introduction:***

The main characters, Doğa (Sıla Türkoğlu) and Fatih (Doğukan Güngör), experience difficulty in their relationship due to their contrasting lifestyles and family structures. Another key character, Doğa's mother, Kıvılcım (Evrim Alasya), causes the relationship between the two families to become more intertwined by marrying Fatih's uncle. Following a turbulent divorce due to Fatih's infidelity, Doğa eventually marries Giray (Kaan Taşaner), a wealthy and understanding man she recently met. Giray, who is secretly engaged in an illicit affair with Heves, the much younger second wife of his elderly, terminally ill father, soon begins to experience problems in his marriage with Doğa and separates from her. It is revealed that Giray married Doğa to conceal his relationship with his stepmother.

***Heves's Function in the Narrative:***

Sometime before the introduction of Heves, the character Giray's behavior had already created an impression that required the audience to be mistrustful of him. The character Heves, who was introduced in the first episode of the third season, is presented as a flashy and seductive individual.

***YouTube Data for Heves's Introduction:***

The 67th episode, which marks the introduction of the Heves character, was broadcast on September 14, 2024. The episode reached 13,574,673 views and received 11,943 comments.

*Participant 5: The only thing missing was an incestuous stepmother fantasy — now that's happened too. (8,600)*

*Participant 6: This season didn't engage me at all. Honestly, it felt like I was watching a completely different show. Some scenes with Heves and Giray were really disturbing. (8,200)*

*Participant 7: Are you really going to make us watch that disgusting relationship between a stepmother and stepson? How can you be so disgusting! (284)*

*Participant 8: Romance with a stepmother is nauseating — don't normalize it! (237)*

*Participant 9: No one seems to notice this detail. Shame on my country, shame on these people. We've gone beyond uncles and cousins; now they're promoting incest with a stepmother. Damn this show. (83)*

A video titled 'Doğa and Giray Move Next to Heves! | Kızılcık Şerbeti Episode 67', created from the episode in which the audience first saw the character Heves, has 492,765 views and received 602 comments:

*@playerinhell: They've messed it up. They've completely turned the show into Forbidden Apple. The screenwriters are the same anyway — what did you expect? (1,600)*

*@ayişığı518: An incestuous stepmother fantasy was missing anyway. (833)*

*Participant 10: Was such a disgusting scene really necessary? Seriously, a forbidden romance with a stepmother was really missing? How disgusting and unnecessary — did anyone really think this through? (646)*

*@Barbiee35: How immoral! The scenario goes against societal morals — incest! The screenwriter should be replaced immediately because of this ridiculous script!!! (377)*

*@hazell_trk2871: Look at how disgusting the topic is! It made me sick. (366)*

It is observed that the audience immediately criticized Giray, a character they already mistrusted, for being involved with the most ethically compromised person possible. The character of Heves was perceived as taking the series outside the established thematic boundaries it had maintained until that point, and was consequently deemed superfluous. Viewers who found the clandestine relationship with a stepmother to be morally objectionable used the term "disgusting" to describe this affair.

The 75th episode, which marks the final appearance of the character Heves in the series, was broadcast on November 9, 2024. The episode received 10,594,560 views and accumulated 7,802 comments.

*@edaa0613: Seeing Heves on screen killed my desire to watch the show — it's good that she's gone. Hopefully the same happens with Giray. (319)*

*Participant 11: The excess characters in the show — Meri, Cemal, Giray, Heves — I wish you'd replaced them with something nice like flowers or nature scenes; it would've been more pleasing. They annoyed us. (68)*

*Participant 12: Giray was already having a forbidden affair with Heves, so why did he marry Doğa? (66)*

*@Domestos-dc2le: Cemal, Giray, Heves — seeing them was really disgusting. (59)*

*@burume280: You added so many toxic characters that the show's original excitement is gone. (17)*

A short video titled 'Heves Tests Doğa's Patience! | Kızılcık Şerbeti Episode 75', featuring sequences from the final episode in which the character Heves appeared, was published on November 8, 2024. The video was observed to have 706,696 views and received 292 comments:

*@Gercekler-k6x: Heves is leaving, but if the screenwriter doesn't reveal the relationship between Giray and Heves and keeps Giray and Doğa's marriage going, I'll be furious. (77)*

*Participant 13: The screenwriter started conflicts with Doğa just because Heves is leaving the show. (61)*

*Participant 14: I get so annoyed with Heves — even if she leaves, I hope Doğa is saved too. (37)*

*Participant 15: I can't stand Heves, Giray, and Görkem — please, let them leave already. (5)*

*Participant 16: We finally got rid of Heves; hopefully, we'll get rid of Giray too. (1)*

It is evident that the audience's discomfort stemmed not primarily from the infidelity against the protagonist, Doğa, but rather from the fact that her husband Giray's partner was his 'stepmother'. The Giray-Heves relationship, as indicated in the comments, generated intense audience backlash, a

reaction also highlighted in tabloid reports. These reports noted that the storyline involving the Heves character did not progress as desired (Altuntaş, 2024). Kaan Taşaner, the actor who portrayed Giray (Heves's stepson), stated in an interview that he was also displeased with the narrative trajectory (ensonhaber.com, 2024). In summary, this case study also demonstrates that the negative audience feedback was driven not by casting or performance issues, but by the character's 'inappropriate' position within the narrative structure.

**Bahar**

The series centers on a woman in her forties who, immediately after graduating from medical school, was compelled to live a life devoted to marriage and raising children. After experiencing a serious illness and recovering, she decides to return to the medical career she had deferred years earlier.

***Characters and Plot Introduction:***

The protagonist, Bahar (Demet Evgar), spent years fulfilling the role of the ideal mother and wife, making sacrifices for her two children and her doctor husband. Bahar, who had deferred her own dreams and was confronted with her husband's selfishness during her illness, decides to end her marriage and begins her specialty training. During this period, Bahar enters a relationship with Evren (Buğra Gülsoy), one of the hospital doctors, while maintaining communication with her two children and her ex-husband. The character Bahar, who takes control of her own life after many years of great sacrifice, has won significant acclaim, particularly from female viewers. The character Süreyya is introduced to the story as the hospital's new chief physician.

**Süreyya's Function in the Narrative:**

Shortly after starting her role as Chief Physician, it is revealed that Süreyya is Evren's ex-girlfriend. Süreyya's actions, which involve creating difficulties for Bahar from the moment she arrives at the hospital, are attributed to her intense jealousy.

**YouTube Data for Süreyya's Introduction:**

The 17th episode, which marks the introduction of the Süreyya character, was uploaded to the YouTube channel on September 24, 2024. This content has accumulated 12,066,572 views and received 6,529 comments from viewers:

*@zenmerina4156: Let's remove Süreyya from the show, girls, together! We got rid of Dora, we can do this too! Update: Reporting from Episode 22 — we did it, girls! (3,000)*

*@berriousb3509: Büşra Pekin doesn't fit at all; I'm almost not going to watch the show because of her. (2,400)*

*Participant 17: Could Büşra Pekin get an offer from another show, please? She doesn't belong in this one. (2,000)*

*@nslgnl0107: Büşra Pekin really doesn't fit this show. I wish they hadn't cast her. (1,200)*

*@huzurluolmakistiyorum: Büşra Pekin feels as artificial and mismatched in the show as her cosmetic procedures. (803)*

A short video titled 'The Süreyya Biçer Era Begins at the Hospital! - Bahar Episode 17', which contains sequences from the episode featuring the character's introduction, was observed to have been viewed 105,582 times and received 107 comments:

*Participant 18: I hope I don't stop watching the show because of how annoying this character is. (255)*

*@Su-nr1ro: I'm sorry, but Büşra Pekin really doesn't work. Her way of speaking feels so forced. The backstory with Evren is also nonsensical. A different storyline could have been explored. (166)*

*Participant 19: DID THEY REALLY HAVE TO CAST HER? With so many other actors available, where did Büşra come from? She was extremely off-putting. (159)*

*Participant 20: Was this head doctor even necessary? The new season didn't start well at all, in my opinion. (86)*

*Participant 21: People are going to quit the show because of the head doctor. (84)*

When analyzing the comments made on the episode where the character was first introduced to the audience, it is evident that almost all comments regarding the character were negative. It is possible to state that the comments claiming the actress, Büşra Pekin, was "unsuitable" for the production outnumbered the negative opinions about the Süreyya character itself.

The 22nd episode, which marks the departure of the Süreyya character from the series, was uploaded to the YouTube channel on October 29, 2024. The content, which has 10,457,263 views, received 5,280 comments:

*Participant 22: Those who are really happy that Süreyya left the show. (13,000)*

*Participant 23: "A woman shouldn't do this to another woman — Bahar, I'm sorry." I guess this is an apology requested by the audience. Thank you. (6,100)*

*@basrole.dusman: We can literally control the script, are you aware? We wrote and removed two partners that came for Evren. If Aşk-ı Memnu had done this, Bihter would still be alive today. (3,800)*

*Participant 24.: It's great that you listened to the audience and removed Süreyya. Thank you very much, please continue like this… (616)*

*@eylul-hn3tv: Ohhhh, Süreyya finally left — I feel so relieved. (242)*

A video titled 'Süreyya Falls into the Trap She Dug for Bahar! - Bahar Episode 21', which was published on October 22, 2024, was observed to have reached 1,679,275 views and received 482 comments:

*Participant 25: What a relief! We finally got rid of Süreyya! Now, who's next for Efsun? How many of us are there? (1,800)*

*Participant 26: Thanks to the screenwriter for listening to the comments and making us happy. (560)*

*Participant 27: Oh, those Süreyya's hairstyles — finally, we're rid of them! (314)*

*Participant 28: Friends, good news: Büşra Pekin is leaving the show next week. In Bahar, when there's a dramatic separation, the actor leaves — Büşra Pekin is leaving next week. I really thank the screenwriter; I've never seen a writer pay this much attention to the audience. (86)*

*@ccarriee: I also think you made the best decision by listening to the audience. (42)*

The comments regarding the episode marking Süreyya's departure clearly show that the audience was highly satisfied with this decision. It is not surprising that viewers were displeased with a character introduced into the narrative as an adversary to the protagonist, Bahar, who had finally achieved happiness.

However, an examination of the comments reveals that the majority of the negative feedback was directed at the actress portraying the character. Users expressing dissatisfaction frequently mentioned the actress's name (Büşra Pekin) rather than the character's name (Süreyya). Other malevolent characters were introduced to the series with the intent to complicate Bahar's life, yet none of them received a negative reaction comparable to that directed at the Süreyya character. In summary, this case demonstrates that the reasons for the audience's negative opinions were based not only on the narrative development but also on casting choices. Indeed, the audience's complaints about the Süreyya character were taken into account by the production's creators, and the termination of the character's presence was announced in news headlines such as "The Audience's Call Regarding Büşra Pekin Was Heard!" (Köşger, 2024). The comments show that viewers expressed a sense of suc-

cess in having their voices heard by the screenwriter, with some even declaring that they could "dictate" the script. Furthermore, comments expressing gratitude to the screenwriter for listening to them and making decisions in line with their wishes are also notable.

## Conclusion

The advent of two-way communication in the era of new media has fundamentally altered the role of the television audience. It is established that the producers of television programs are commencing the consideration of audience feedback via social media concerning both narrative development and casting decisions. This study, which aims to examine the impact of audience feedback on the screen time of supporting characters in television series, focuses on *Masumlar Apartmanı*, *Kızılcık Şerbeti*, and *Bahar*. In all three series, it is known that supporting characters introduced in later episodes were eventually removed from the storyline following intense criticism from viewers. Reports circulated by entertainment journalists, with the approval of the production companies, included statements suggesting that "the audience's demands were taken into consideration." The study analyzed comments made on full episodes shared on the official YouTube channels of the three series, as well as short video clips featuring excerpts from these episodes. In *Masumlar Apartmanı*, the character Rüya, and in *Kızılcık Şerbeti*, the character Heves, were criticized by viewers regarding their narrative functions. The character Rüya was introduced to replace another female character who had left the show, intending to fill the dramatic void in the story. Although viewers acknowledged that Rüya was a well-developed character in some respects, they expressed discomfort with the transformation she brought to the narrative. In *Kızılcık Şerbeti*, Heves was introduced as a woman involved in a forbidden romance with her stepson, and from the very first episodes, she elicited strong audience reactions on the grounds that her storyline was "incompatible with societal moral values." In *Bahar*, the character Süreyya became the target of negative comments primarily due to the actor portraying her rather than the narrative function of the character. Viewers argued that the actor was not suitable for the head doctor role she played and/or could not harmonize with the rest of the cast.

Regardless of the underlying reasons, in all three series, the supporting characters who generated negative audience commentary were subsequently removed from the storyline. The comments clearly reveal that viewers openly articulated their desire for the characters' departure, even threatening to stop watching the productions if their opinions were disregarded. Furthermore, it is evident that viewers are aware that they successfully made their voices heard by the creators, particularly the screenwriters, and that they possess the ability to "dictate the story," to use their own phrasing. In summary, when examining the audience–industry interaction within the context of participatory culture, it is tenable to conclude that the transformation witnessed in the new media age has yielded an outcome that heavily favors the audience. It must also be added that this dynamic creates significant pressure on creators, compelling them to seek audience approval at every stage of the narrative development.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the data collected in this research has limited representativeness and reliability. In services like YouTube, where membership is free and can be anonymous, users might be inclined to share content that does not reflect their genuine thoughts, or comment with manipulative or discrediting intentions. This research, which was conducted from a neutral standpoint consistent with the applied methodology hopes to provide a resource for future researches on participant culture and television audiences.

## Declarations

***Funding:*** The author declares that no financial support was received for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

***Conflicts of Interest:*** The author declares no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

***Ethical Approval:*** This research did not require ethical approval as it analyzed publicly available online data, specifically comments on YouTube, where participants' identities were anonymous and voluntary.

***Informed Consent:*** Since the study utilized publicly available comments from YouTube videos, electronic informed consent was not required. The comments were voluntary, and participants were aware that their public responses could be viewed by others. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained by anonymizing usernames in the analysis.

***Data Availability:*** The data collected for this study consists of publicly available comments on YouTube channels related to the series analyzed. Due to privacy concerns, raw data from the comments are not publicly available. However, de-identified datasets and analysis materials are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

***AI Disclosure:*** No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the conception, analysis, writing, or preparation of figures for this study. All content was generated by the author in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical standards.

## References


Altuntaş, B. (2024) *Giray ve heves kızılcık şerbeti'ne veda edecek* https://www.birsenaltuntas.com/dizi-/giray-ve-heves-kizilcik-serbetine-veda-edecek/51122/

Ateşalp, S., & Başlar, G. (2015). Katılımcı kültür tartışmaları ekseninde sosyal medyada diziler: Kardeş payı örneği. *Intermedia International E-Journal*, *2*(1), 158-180.

Çavuşoğlu, Ç. (2022). Youtube platformunda katılımcı kültür bağlamında babalık temsilleri. *İstanbul Arel Üniversitesi İletişim Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 10(21), 49-80.

Çetin, İ. (2019). Yeni medyada yükselen ses "Katılımcı Kültür": Survivor örneği. *Dördüncü Kuvvet*. 2 (2). 150-173.

Dikmen, E. Ş. (2017). Türkiye'de televizyon yayıncılığının dönüşümü: Sosyal tv yayıncılığı. *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi*, 5(1), 425-448. https://doi.org/10.19145/gumuscomm.283117

Ensonhaber.com (2024) *Kızılcık Şerbeti'nde bir değil iki ayrılık! Kadrodan çıktılar...* https://www.ensonhaber.com/medya/kizilcik-serbetinde-bir-degil-iki-ayrilik-kadrodan-ciktilar

Eren Çetin, Ş., & Ayhan, A. (2020). Katılımcı kültür olgusu bağlamında sosyal medya: Netnografik bir analiz. *Intermedia International E-Journal*, 7(12), 47-69.

Fuchs, C. (2015) *Dijital emek ve Karl Marx*, NotaBene Yayınları

Gökmen, E. (2023). Televizyon yayıncılığının değişen yüzü: Televizyon ve sosyal medya yöndeşmesi. *Finans Ekonomi Ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 8(3), 550-563. https://doi.org/10.29106/fesa.1355807

Kırık A.M. & Domaç A. (2014) Sosyal medya üzerinden reyting ölçümlerinin analizi: Twitter örneği. *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, (2) 5 414-430

Koç, N. E. (2020). Sosyal medya, katılımcı kültür ve kitle çevirisi. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, (Ö8), 905-927. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.822087.

Kozinets, R. V. (2010), *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*. First Edition, London: Sage Publications.

Köşger, H. (2024) *Seyircinin Büşra Pekin çağrısı duyuldu! Bahar'da beklenmedik Süreyya hamlesi* https://www.aksam.com.tr/magazin/seyircinin-busra-pekin-cagrisi-duyuldu-baharda-beklenmedik-sureyya-hamlesi/haber-1515-402

Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*, NYU Press

Jenkins, H. (1992) *Textual poachers': Television fans and participatory culture*. Routledge: New York

Özbölük, T., & Dursun, Y. (2015). Pazarlama araştırmalarında paradigmal dönüşüm ve etnografinin dijital evrimi: Netnografi. *Erciyes Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* (46), 227-247.

Sevgi, H. (2021) Dijital ağlarda kullanıcı emeği ile sermaye birikimi arasındaki ilişkinin değerlendirilmesi. *Emek Araştırma Dergisi (GEAD)*, 12(19), 21-45

Toffler, A. (1980). *The third wave*. New York: William Morrow and Company. Inc.

T24.com.tr, (2021) *Masumlar Apartmanı'nda reyting krizi: Melisa Şenolsun diziden ayrılıyor* https://t24.com.tr/haber/masumlar-apartmani-nda-reyting-krizi-melisa-senolsun-diziden-ayriliyor,992820

Yeygel Çakır, S. (2015). "Kullanıcı reklamcı mı oluyor?: Sosyal medyada etkileşimciliğin gücü ve kullanıcı merkezli içerik üretimi." *Yeni Medya ve Reklam*. Abdullah Özkan, Nilnur Tandaçgüneş, ve Betül Önay Doğan (der.) içinde. İstanbul: Derin. 213-252.

Yıldırım, N. (2020). Post-television Era in Turkey: An analysis of local tv series genres by streaming services, [Doktora Tezi, Bahceşehir Üniversitesi]. https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/TezGoster?key=_F5QEpay-DXGqGZlp9XiFtDXGji_hAQL8qgYJ63cysm6mcKFmK5lHXGysGGvzyG9w