

The Role of Online Fan Communities in the Popularization of Turkish TV Dramas in Brazil

Gabrielle Camille Ferreira, Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Postboks 1093, Blindern, 0317, Oslo, Norway. Email: gabrielle.ferreira@media.uio.no

Abstract

In just over a decade, the transnational expansion of Turkish media industry reached regions geographically and culturally distant from Turkey, thus establishing Turkish dramas as a prominent media contra-flow. In Brazil, the rise of Turkish dramas is supported by informal distribution: many online fan communities translate, add subtitles and distribute episodes without monetary profit, which is a practice known as fansubbing. In this research, I focus on the biggest Brazilian fansubbing community of Turkish dramas to investigate the complexity behind this practice from the perspectives of distribution and reception. Through online questionnaires, a virtual ethnography, and in-depth interviews, I explore how these communities operate and impact the daily lives of audiences. Findings point out that by making Turkish content more accessible, they are reshaping media practices taking the place of national broadcasters and SVOD services in the popularization of Turkish dramas in Brazil.

Keywords: Turkish dramas, transnational media flows, fan communities, fansubbing, informal distribution, Telegram, television, streaming, Brazil

Introduction

In just over a decade, Turkey became a major producer and exporter of TV dramas. At first, Turkish dramas were sold to countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and the Balkans, which share

cultural, historical, and religious similarities with Turkey. Later, the popularity of Turkish dramas reached markets geographically and culturally distant from Turkey, such as Latin America. Today, Turkey is second only to the US in television exports (Bhutto, 2019), and it is estimated that Turkish dramas have already been sold to 146 countries worldwide (Mourenza, 2020).

Turkish dramas made their debut on Brazilian television in 2015. That year, Band (short for *Rede Bandeirantes*) a free-to-air television network that usually occupies the fourth place in audience ratings, started to broadcast *One Thousand and One Nights* (TR: *Binbir Gece*, PT: *Mil e Uma Noites*) during primetime programming. *One Thousand and One Nights* did not change Band's position in the ranking of most-watched television networks, but it did significantly improve audience ratings if compared with previous results. This encouraged Band to air six other Turkish dramas between 2015 and 2019. To mimic the format of telenovelas, episodes were shortened from the Turkish original, dubbed in Portuguese, and broadcast daily.

In 2019, Band abruptly stopped broadcasting Turkish dramas, leaving *That is my Life* (TR: *O Hayat Benim*, PT: *Minha Vida*) without an ending. Afterward, cable television network Viva, which is owned by the Brazilian private mass media conglomerate Globo Group and mostly focuses on reruns of series, telenovelas, and variety programs produced by Globo, started to air Turkish dramas with Portuguese dubbing – but only during late-night programming. This view of Turkish dramas as a cheap option to fill the gaps in the programming contrasted with other Latin American countries, such as Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. There, Turkish dramas had a relevant presence on television and surpassed national and regional productions in audience ratings (Lopes and Orozco-Gómez, 2018).

At that time, subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) services also did not help Brazilian viewers have access to Turkish dramas. On Netflix, the most popular SVOD service in the country (Meimaridis, Mazur and Rios, 2020), there was a limited number of productions of Turkish origin in the catalog, and most of them were films. Often, the most recent seasons of the few dramas available were not yet accessible.

Due to the lack of options, Brazilian fans created communities that translate, subtitle, and distribute Turkish dramas without monetary profit – a practice usually called fansubbing (Dwyer and Lobato, 2016). The fansubbing communities mainly relied on the messaging app Telegram to distribute content, while Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter were used to promote their work and post information related to Turkish dramas. This attracted not only viewers that already watched Turkish dramas on television or Netflix but also new viewers that got to know about Turkish dramas through social media and word-of-mouth. As of May 2021, the largest community had over 147,000 subscribers on its main Telegram channel, and another prominent community had around 70,000 subscribers. There were also smaller communities, but mapping them was challenging as access was often restricted to approved members only.

In this research, I aim to investigate the complexity behind the informal online distribution of Turkish dramas in Brazil by understanding how these fansubbing communities operate. Therefore, I focus on the biggest Brazilian community of Turkish dramas fansubbing and employ a mixed-methods approach to look into both the distribution and reception instances. My objectives are 1. to understand how this community is structured, 2. to identify who the audiences that engage with the community are, and 3. to examine the implications of this community in the daily lives of audiences.

I begin by introducing the notions of cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 1991) and multiple proximities (Straubhaar, 2007) to contextualize the transnational success of Turkish dramas among the contra-flows of content from the peripheries of global media industries (Thussu, 2006). After this, I review the background of fansubbing and its role in promoting contra-flows of content. Then, I explain my methodology, which is based on Martín-Barbero's most recent map of mediations (Rincón, 2019). Finally, I discuss my findings while shedding light on the role of fan networks – rather than national broadcasters or SVOD services – to potentialize the contra-flow of Turkish dramas in the Brazilian market. To conclude, I expect to provide a further understanding of the

audiences' motivation to watch Turkish dramas and show how fansubbing practices are evolving alongside technology.

The Transnational Reception of Turkish Dramas

Works on the transnational reception of TV dramas, influenced by cultural studies, emphasized how audiences' meaning-making processes change according to their local contexts (e.g., Ang, 1985; Liebes and Katz, 1990). Regarding the perceptions of audiences, Straubhaar (1991) proposed the notion of cultural proximity, which states that audiences are more likely to prefer national content. When the country does not have an established national industry, audiences opt for content from countries with a similar culture, usually from the same cultural-linguistic market, since they offer narratives with familiar ideas of clothing, gestures, body language, humor, music, and religion. Audiences tend to choose content from the U.S. when it comes to productions that are too expensive even for countries with consolidated industries, such as action series or feature films.

However, as transnational media flows presented more complex patterns, Straubhaar (2007) added other factors influencing audiences' choice of content: genre proximity, value proximity, and thematic proximity. Athique (2014: 13) stresses the complexity of cultural proximity, noting that “a greater degree of cultural distance makes media content appealing, mobilizing an aesthetics of exoticism” while “proximate cultures can become vilified in localized conflicts”.

Today, content and audiences are increasingly crossing the existing spatial lines defined by national and regional flows (Straubhaar, Santillana, Higgins Joyce and Duarte, 2021). In this process, content travels multi-directionally, allowing contra-flows from the peripheries of global media industries to challenge dominant flows from the Global North, particularly the United States (Thussu, 2006). Examples of these contra-flows include dramas from emerging industries such as Denmark (Jensen and Jacobsen, 2020), South Korea (Dal, 2012), and, of course, Turkey.

The transnational breakthrough of Turkish dramas was in 2008 when pan-Arab satellite channel MBC started to air *Gümüş* (*Noor* in Arabic) (Yesil, 2015). Although *Noor* was considered

controversial and subversive by social and religious conservatives, mainly due to the depiction of taboo issues concerning gender relations and social values, it achieved unforeseen popularity among audiences in the Middle East and North Africa (Salamandra, 2012). As a result, Turkish producers, broadcasters, and distributors became aware of the potential of foreign markets and began to pursue a global expansion through multiple strategies: participating in international TV fairs, working with global distributors, investing in promotion, conducting marketing research, and teaming up with platforms such as Netflix to make dramas accessible to a larger audience (Kaptan and Algan, 2020).

The strategies adopted by the Turkish media industry proved successful as dramas reached both countries that shared cultural, historical, and religious similarities with Turkey and countries that had no ties with Turkey. This phenomenon motivated researchers to further investigate the reception of Turkish dramas within the different markets in which they are present. First works approached the success of Turkish dramas in the Middle East and North Africa, observing that, although their “westernized modernity” was perceived as controversial by some segments of society, they are contributing to positioning Turkey as a cultural, political, and economic power in the region (Salamandra, 2012; Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi, 2013; Yanardağoğlu and Karam, 2013; Anaz, 2014; Berg, 2017; Ozalpman and Sarikakis, 2018; Yalkin and Veer, 2018).

Works examining the popularity of Turkish dramas in the Balkans, where these productions have been widely present since the end of 2008, also emphasized the controversial reception. Reasons were the unsettled past of the Balkan countries and Turkey and the fear of a new cultural invasion – the region was under the Ottoman rule for almost five centuries. However, findings point out that Turkish dramas are constructing better views of Turkey in the Balkans (Vatikiotis and Zafer, 2013; Panjeta, 2014; Balaban, 2015; Aydos, 2017).

More recently, works have been exploring the rise of Turkish dramas in Latin America, where the success of these productions is attributed to the classical melodramatic structure and the otherness: Turkish dramas offer familiar narratives portrayed in “exotic” locations (Ashley, 2019; Valverde, 2020; Ferreira, 2021; Cassano Iturri, 2021; Antezana Barrios, Andrada and Mujica,

2021). Moreover, the circulation of Turkish content through alternative means, such as online fan communities (Aslan, 2020) and the weekly package system in Cuba (Herrada Hildalgo, Aslan and Almora, 2021), suggests that the informal distribution is advancing the expansion of Turkish dramas in the Latin American market. In the next section, I present how this informal distribution, combined with fansubbing and other fan practices, contributes to the travel of content, especially from emerging media industries.

The Evolution of Fansubbing

According to Condry (2013), fansubbing (also called informal subtitling, amateur subtitling, or nonprofessional subtitling) can be described as the practice whereby fan groups digitize, translate, add subtitles, and make media available online for other fans. However, it is important to emphasize that this practice already existed well before online distribution was possible. Dwyer and Lobato (2016) reviewed the history of informal subtitling and noted that it evolved alongside new technologies. In the early 1990s, generator-locking technology allowed viewers to add text over video, make copies of VHS tapes, and distribute them among fan networks. In the late 1990s, DVD players facilitated this process since the digital video disc format could carry multiple subtitles and audio tracks, and copies could be made through ripping freeware.

Fansubbing acquired broader popularity with the rise of the Internet in the mid-2000s. BitTorrent, along with open-source media players and translation technologies, made it easier for fans to distribute files online. It was possible to increase parallel distribution networks to the point that viewers do not need to rely on mainstream industry to have access to content that otherwise would be beyond linguistic, geographical, or political boundaries, thus reconfiguring global audiences (Orrego-Carmona, 2018). Even though this process contributed to an increased global presence of American content, it also allowed the rise of new contra-flows of non-Western content (Mattelart, 2016).

Despite the relevance of fansubbing in the reshaping of transnational media flows, research usually involves American media products or markets. There is a significant number of works that analyze Japanese anime fansubbing in English-speaking markets, notably the United States (Leonard, 2005; Denison, 2011; H. K. Lee, 2011; Ito, 2012; Condry, 2013; Hills, 2017). Though they are relevant to understanding fansubbing practices, they describe technological, linguistic, political, and social dynamics significantly different from the rest of the world. In Brazil, works concentrate on fan networks that provide American TV shows with Portuguese subtitles (Bold, 2011; Vandresen, 2012; Mendes Moreira de Sá, 2015; Sigiliano and Borges, 2019).

However, new perspectives on fansubbing are emerging in research thanks to the global rise of Korean popular culture. As noted by Lee (2018), amateur distribution, social media, and fan practices such as fansubbing had a fundamental role in the popularization of Korean dramas, especially in the West, as they provided visibility and accessibility to this type of content while helping fans construct their identities. This phenomenon has been explored beyond English-speaking markets, including in Brazil (Rosa, 2019; Han, 2019; Gun, 2020).

Khan and Won (2020) have traced the similarities between Korean dramas and Turkish dramas. Both challenge the dominant flow of media from the United States to the rest of the world and have achieved popularity not only in their respective regions but also in other cultural-linguistic markets. The role of fan networks in this process remains under-researched, although, just like in the case of Korean dramas, “their contribution overall is crucial for the sustainability of the Turkish television content” (Aslan, 2020).

The potential of fansubbing as a catalyst for content from emerging media industries challenges the statement that such practices have no *raison d’être* anymore due to the increasing variety of content available online through legal means (Massidda, 2020). As shown in the case of Viki, a streaming service that successfully absorbed Korean dramas fansubbing, it is more likely that fansubbing will coexist and interact with other services and technologies (Dwyer, 2012; Henthorn, 2019). Besides, access barriers that existed within linear television persist online, now in the form of

geoblocking, territorially-bound regulatory strategies, or simply lack of resources to pay for high-speed broadband and multiple subscriptions (Dwyer and Lobato, 2016). All those obstacles prevent audiences in certain contexts from watching content from certain origins, thus contributing to the survival of fansubbing.

Considering the demand for subtitled content, especially if the content is configured as a contraflow, fansubbing continues to advance alongside technology. As viewers move away from BitTorrent mainly due to a preference for interfaces supported by mobile phones or tablets (Lobato, 2020), new distribution practices emerge. In the case of the online distribution of Turkish dramas in Brazil, it relies on Telegram, a messaging application launched in 2013 by Russian brothers Nikolai and Pavel Durov. Since Telegram provides multiple privacy-enhancing and file-sharing features, it became an alternative to mainstream social media platforms that moderate content to a greater extent. ISIS used it to disseminate propaganda and recruit new members (Shehabat, Mitew and Alzoubi, 2017; Bloom and Daymon, 2018) while far-right actors use it to promote hate speech and disinformation (Rogers, 2020; Walther and Mccoy, 2021). It is also widely used for media piracy, although this facet of the app seems to be still obscure. In the next section, I describe the methods used to approach these fansubbing communities and understand how they appropriate Telegram, social media, and new technologies to fuel the popularity of Turkish dramas in Brazil.

Methodology

One of the key figures in the development of Latin American cultural studies was Jesús Martín-Barbero. Based on a Gramscian approach, he argued that simply labeling senders as dominants and receptors as dominated excluded resistances, conflicts, and contradictions within the communication process. Hence, he presented the idea of examining reception along with the mediations, described as spaces between production and reception where everyday communication happens (Martín-Barbero, 1993).

Over the decades, Martín-Barbero has proposed four different maps of mediations to investigate communication processes while accommodating contemporary cultural mutations (Rincón, 2019). In his second map, introduced in 1998, he established communication, culture and politics as fundamental mediations, whereas the technicalities, which referred to both techniques and technologies, were considered a submediation (Pieniz and Cenci, 2019). However, in his most recent map introduced in 2017, he recognized the role of technology not only as an apparatus but also as a fundamental mediation that restructures society. Therefore, technicalities moved from a submediation to a mediation in direct dialogue with the other mediations – sensorialities, temporalities, and spatialities – and submediations – networks, narratives, identities, and citizenships (Lopes, 2018).

In this research, I focus on the dialogue between technicalities, identities and networks: as pointed out by Sifuentes and Zanin (2020), technicalities reconfigure identities and networks by creating new spaces and practices beyond traditional boundaries, such as nationality, gender, and age, which seems to describe the process taking place in the Brazilian fan communities of Turkish dramas. To explore how these mediations are articulated within the fan communities, I used an online questionnaire, followed by a non-participant observation and in-depth interviews.

The online questionnaire was composed of 42 questions – 30 closed-ended and 12 open-ended – and was shared on groups, pages, and profiles dedicated to Turkish dramas on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp between April 1, 2020, to May 15, 2020. It received 505 valid responses. The data analysis allowed me to identify the audience's demographic profile, consumption habits, and relation with telenovelas and Turkish dramas.

With this data on audiences, I was able to detect the vast use of Telegram and YouTube to watch Turkish dramas, so I joined the communities responsible for this distribution. In July 2020, I started a non-participant observation on the most popular fansubbing community, called X (I chose not to disclose their real name due to concerns from the administrator of the community). My observation first included their Facebook group and Telegram channel, and later extended to their Instagram

profile. Virtual ethnography allows immersion in a setting, which helped me to comprehend how fansubbing communities were structured and to look further into them as spaces where technicalities reconfigure networks and identities.

In March 2021, while the observation was still in progress, I conducted in-depth interviews with eleven Brazilian viewers from various backgrounds selected through the online questionnaire. My goal was to further explore the viewers' personal experiences within fansubbing communities and to understand how it impacted their daily lives. I also conducted an in-depth interview with the founder of X to obtain an inside perspective. All the interviews were carried out through videocalls on WhatsApp and Telegram, and took between 45 minutes and an hour each. Subsequently, the data collected was articulated to acquire a broader view of this complex process. In the following sections, I discuss my findings.

Audience Profile

The data gathered through the questionnaire suggests that the Brazilian audience of Turkish dramas is almost exclusively composed of women. Nearly half of the 505 participants are between 40 and 60 years old, which indicates that the Brazilian audience of Turkish dramas is rather mature. The participants also have a high education level: more than 93% have finished high school, and 53% have an undergraduate degree. For comparison, 51,2% of the Brazilian population over 25 years old have not completed high school (IBGE, 2020).

Another relevant finding of the questionnaire is that 75% of the participants are either catholic or evangelical, while the remaining 25% either follow spiritism, afro-Brazilian religions, other Christian denominations or have no religion. This background seems to be related to the positive perceptions of Turkish dramas' conservatism: many viewers refer enthusiastically to the respect for traditions and moral values presented in most productions. On the other hand, Brazilian telenovelas are often described as “vulgar”, “pornographic”, and “racy”, as noted in the answers for the open-ended question that asked participants to compare Brazilian telenovelas and Turkish dramas:

The main difference is the lack of sexual relations, the vulgar behavior that is so much showed in Brazilian telenovelas. Also, the lack of characters' devaluation, mainly women's devaluation. Another thing is religion, very present in the plots.

Receptionist, 47-53 years old

Brazilian telenovelas have bad language, actresses expose themselves without pudency, and there are heavy scenes. Turkish telenovelas show families together. Wives are more devoted to their husbands, and husbands to their wives. There are no heavy scenes, it's more romantic. Also, their faith is shown: first of all, they trust in God, then, in men. No occupation, 19-25 years old

Brazilian telenovelas are families' decay. They don't add anything!

Teacher, 33-39 years old

These perceptions illustrate the multiple proximities (La Pastina and Straubhaar, 2005) within the reception of Turkish dramas as they seem to resonate more with the moral values of these viewers than Brazilian telenovelas.

Despite the sample being constituted by mature and conservative viewers, they adopt technological habits usually associated with younger audiences – a particularity possibly influenced by their education level and consequent digital literacy. First, television was not their gateway to Turkish dramas: approximately 50% found out about it through social media. Most viewers watch Turkish dramas online, notably on YouTube and Telegram (see Figure 1). Even though more than 80% of viewers claimed to have a Netflix subscription, less than 3% use it to watch Turkish dramas, probably due to the small number of Turkish dramas available there at the time the questionnaire was shared.

Thanks to the availability of Turkish dramas online, viewers get acquainted with other digital practices. But before delving into it, I detail how the fansubbing community we are focusing on operates.

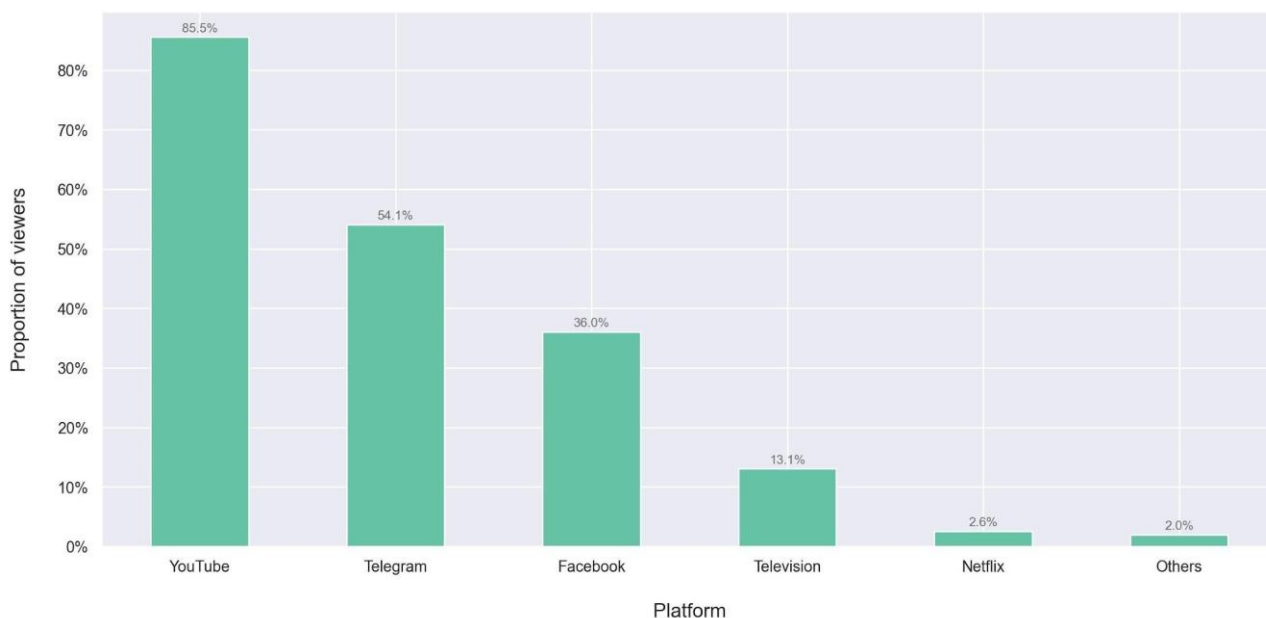


Figure 1: How viewers watch Turkish TV dramas.

The Fansubbing Community

In 2018, X started as a Facebook page for TV series reviews. The founder, Laura (fictitious name), is a former journalist who just wanted to share her opinions with friends. After Laura watched *Kurt Kurt Seyit ve Şura* on Netflix, she got interested in Turkish dramas and often wrote about them. Organically, her page became a reference for people who liked Turkish dramas.

Turkish dramas fansubbing already existed in Brazil, but it was a decentralized process consisting of individuals who subtitled episodes and uploaded them on small private groups or personal YouTube channels. Laura shared the link for these channels on her page, as well as links for Turkish dramas with Spanish dubbing or subtitles. Since her page had a considerable reach, some individuals who fansubbed Turkish dramas contacted her to become “partners”. Laura herself

learned how to make subtitles and taught other volunteers that formed the fansubbing team. She also reached fan networks in Latin America and Europe to understand how they worked.

Today, the community is present on Facebook, Telegram, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which function as the mediations of the fansubbing process. The Facebook page still exists, but viewers now turn to a Facebook group to discuss topics related to Turkish dramas – unlike the page, the group is private and any member is allowed to create new posts. This group currently has over 95,000 members. The team uses Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok to post updates about the community, and information about dramas and actors. Episodes and soundtracks are shared on the Telegram channel, which has over 147,000 subscribers. They use YouTube only sporadically to post fansubbed trailers as a way to promote the Telegram channel.

The team chose Telegram to share Turkish dramas after YouTube started to remove episodes uploaded due to copyright infringement. They did try other platforms, but most of them were not intuitive or were filled with unrelated advertising, which made watching episodes hard for viewers who were not tech-savvy. Peer-to-peer (P2P) applications, though formerly used by Brazilian fansubbing communities of TV shows (Bold, 2011), seemed out of the question due to their complexity. Telegram is completely free, allows unlimited sharing of files of up to 2 GB, and has a user-friendly interface similar to WhatsApp. Viewers just need a mobile phone and internet access to use it, and they do not have to download any additional applications since episodes have hardsubs – subtitles imprinted in the video, making it a single file. In the unlikely case they face any accessibility issue, a tutorial made by the team is available.

It is also possible to create channels on Telegram. Channels are different from groups since their purpose is to be a tool for broadcasting public messages to large audiences and only admins have the right to post. The community has a main channel that concentrates links to subchannels dedicated to each drama. Currently, there are 103 subchannels, which means there are 103 different dramas available as of March 2021. Viewers can subscribe to subchannels as well. Subchannels for

popular dramas have thousands of subscribers – the subchannel for *You Knock on My Door* (*Sen Çal Kapımı*) has around 140,000 subscribers.

Popular dramas require more commitment from volunteers since there is a demand for timely releases. Laura explained that fan networks in other countries provide raw files and English subtitles, which, according to her, seem to be an automatic translation of the Turkish closed captions. Up to 6 volunteers translate it from English to Portuguese, and even though they are not proficient in Turkish, there's a conscious effort to adapt Turkish expressions to the Brazilian context. Then, the volunteers add the Portuguese subtitles to the raw file and revise it. New episodes of *You Knock on My Door* are available with Portuguese subtitles just a few hours after the broadcast in Turkey. Typically, the team posts episodes of *You Knock on My Door* before the other Brazilian fansubbing community that is also working on it and “competes” with them. The process to fansub less popular dramas is more relaxed, with usually only one volunteer assigned and a four-day deadline. Even so, the team sometimes manages to post more than ten fansubbed episodes in a single day. Though there is no monetary profit involved, this organization reflects the neoliberal work ethic followed by fansubbing communities as there are intricately patterned relationships of competition and collaboration among them (Hu, 2013).

Volunteers are recruited on social media, and most of them have no previous training. As for their profile, Laura notes that there are both girls younger than 18 years old and ladies of almost 60 years old currently working on the team. Although the community seeks a high level of productivity, no one is eliminated from it, even if they struggle with technology or language. Just like in the case of anime fansubbing (Lee, 2011), volunteers pursue it as a hobby due to their strong affection for Turkish dramas. Considering it is something done for pleasure, they are assigned to dramas they enjoy. However, some prefer to work on dramas that are likely to be successful due to the praise they will receive within the community, which is also an aspect similar to other fansubbing communities (Henthorn, 2019).

The work that this fansubbing community develops impacts the daily life of thousands of Brazilian viewers. The Telegram channel is private, but people get to know about it thanks to the extensive presence of the community on social media. The simultaneous use of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter allows the team to promote themselves, disseminate information and interact with varied audiences in complex and networked ways (Mendes Moreira de Sá, 2015). Viewers' identities and networks are deeply entangled in this process facilitated by technicalities, as we can observe from their media practices.

Viewers' Practices

Rita, a 72-year-old retiree, watched Turkish dramas on television when they were broadcast in Brazil. Due to her interest, she joined Facebook groups, where people told her about the Telegram channel. She did not know what Telegram was but quickly learned by herself how to use it. Similarly, other viewers had their first contact with Telegram to watch Turkish dramas, and many use it exclusively for this purpose although it is primarily intended as a messaging application.

Before they got to know about fansubbing communities, viewers state that they often had to watch Turkish dramas with Spanish dubbing or subtitles. Mari, a 60-year-old civil servant, said she started watching *The Uncle in Black (Karadayı)* on Netflix, but since there was only one season available, watching it in Spanish on YouTube was her only option. Others went even further and watched Turkish dramas in Turkish without any subtitles. Ana, a 49-year-old housewife, explains that it was difficult, but she could understand some scenes thanks to the actors' expressive body language.

Even though fansubbing is available in Brazil now, Ana continues to watch Turkish dramas without subtitles. She watches *Legacy (Emanet)* live when Kanal 7 airs it in Turkey. Later, she watches it again with Portuguese subtitles on the Telegram channel. *Legacy* has a daily broadcast, so Ana watches it twice every day. Watching Turkish dramas live without subtitles was a practice often mentioned by other viewers. Younger viewers described that they watch Turkish dramas live

with friends using Discord or Rave to discuss what is going on. This practice proves the need for immediacy generated by digital technology: not even timely releases are enough for global audiences. The industry has been trying to adapt to this new context. Japanese anime industry adopted simulcasts to achieve near-simultaneous releases in and outside Japan (Denison, 2011). In 2015, HBO simulcast the fifth season of Game of Thrones in over 170 countries (Tse, 2016). Turkish industry still does not have a similar initiative, but Brazilian viewers are passionate enough to watch episodes twice – or more.

Turkish dramas usually have over 50 episodes, and the duration of episodes ranges between 120 and 150 minutes. Nevertheless, watching episodes more than once or watching multiple episodes in sequence are common practices. Fernanda, a 37-year-old teacher, explained how she manages to balance work, family, and Turkish dramas: “I always watch it on weekends. I get inside my little world and say bye-bye, kids, you’ll only see me again on Sunday night.” Similarly, Ana said she watches Turkish dramas on her phone while she does housework, such as cooking and doing the dishes. Ana added that she bought a new phone to improve her experience. Even though her daughter has already tried to connect the phone to the television, Ana prefers to watch content on the phone due to the privacy and mobility it allows her to have.

However, Turkish dramas are also a social activity. All viewers claimed to use social media to interact with other viewers. On the Facebook group administered by the team, viewers discuss episodes, share opinions, recommend new series, comment about actors’ appearance, and even make spoilers, which is sometimes welcome, as stated by Rita: “I like spoilers because then I already know what is going to happen and don’t suffer that much.” Most of them, including the elderly viewers, said they made friends online because of Turkish dramas. For Luiza, a 63-year-old teacher and an active member of the Facebook group, they are a healthy and respectful community. Alice, a 21-year-old small business owner, voiced a similar opinion to describe the fandom of Turkish dramas: “It’s beautiful because this fandom has a big age difference. You have a 16-year-old girl talking to you, then there’s a woman who is already a mother, already married, so... I think

this is the difference [between other fandoms], and this is what makes it a great place.” Besides transcending age differences, it also crosses geographical borders. Fabiana said she made friends all over Brazil and also in other countries. These experiences show how networks, combined with technicalities, detach identities from physical spaces (Brignol, Cogo and Martínez, 2020).

Moreover, social media connects viewers with actors, politics, and Turkish culture. They are aware of issues going on in Turkey, related to Turkish dramas or not. Additionally, even though many viewers admire Turkish traditions and values, they criticize the gender violence in Turkish society that is reflected in most Turkish dramas. Ana even referred to Turkey’s withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention to support her point – at the time of the interview, Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan had annulled Turkey's ratification of the treaty that aims to prevent and combat violence against women. Luiza complained about the lack of kissing scenes in *Legacy*, but added that people in the fansubbing community told her about the censoring in Turkey. On the Facebook group, there are frequent discussions about these contradictions. Laura, founder of the community, said she tries to inform viewers about the Turkish context so they will not get frustrated with how certain situations are portrayed.

Ultimately, the fansubbing community helps to promote Turkey in Brazil. Carol, a 24-year-old graduate student, is learning Turkish language because of Turkish dramas. Rosa, a 76-year-old housewife, proudly recited some phrases she knows how to speak in Turkish. Lucas, a 42-year-old journalist, traveled to Turkey in 2019 and visited places where dramas were filmed. Visiting Turkey is a dream mentioned by almost all Brazilian viewers. Turkish industry purposely emphasizes the country’s beautiful landscapes and tourist destinations on dramas (Yesil, 2015), but access to this content depends on fan networks.

Social media use, mediated by fansubbing communities, provides a space where viewers can meet like-minded people and alter the way their identities are constructed (Lee, 2018). This restructuring of how Brazilian viewers consume and appropriate productions approximates the global and the local, the individual and the collective, and the online and the offline (Brignol, Cogo

and Martínez, 2020). Furthermore, it impacts viewers' daily lives by introducing new media practices and opening their minds to a culture that otherwise would remain distant from them.

Conclusion

In this research, I have investigated the online distribution of Turkish dramas in Brazil by exploring how a fansubbing community is structured and who are the audiences that engage with the community. Additionally, I examined the implications of this community in the daily lives of audiences.

Despite being a non-professional operation, the fansubbing community provides timely releases and a great variety of dramas. Findings show how fan networks manage to occupy the place of national broadcasters and SVODs in the popularization of Turkish dramas, which constitute a media contra-flow.

This research also drew attention to the complex use of social media adopted by fan networks. The fansubbing community uses Telegram, a messaging application, to distribute content, mimicking the experience viewers have on streaming platforms. Other social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, mediates Brazilian viewers' relations with Turkish dramas.

Moreover, this research shows how fan networks, with the support of technicalities, are reshaping media practices. Despite being a mature and conservative audience according to the data collected through the online questionnaire, most viewers engage in practices usually associated with younger audiences, and reconfigure their identities by establishing social ties that go beyond national borders.

Finally, it is important to note that these findings represent a very specific time and context. As Turkish dramas become more visible to mainstream media, SVOD services are investing in them. For instance, Globoplay, a national SVOD service owned by Globo Group, added Turkish dramas to their catalog. Although this does not mean that fansubbing will stop, it can possibly bring more

suppression over informal distribution. And viewers, once again, will be obligated to reshape their practices.

References

- Anaz N (2014) The Geography of Reception: Why do Egyptians Watch Turkish Soap Operas? *The Arab World Geographer* 17(3): 255–274.
- Ang I (1985) *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. London: Methuen.
- Antezana Barrios L, Andrada P and Mujica C (2021) Digital Transformations and the Impact of Turkish Telenovelas in Chile: Back to Melodrama. In: Arda O, Aslan P and Mujica C (eds), *Transnationalization of Turkish Television Series*. Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, pp. 27–40.
- Ashley J (2019) Chilean Television on Shifting Terrain: Movement Toward a Postnetwork Era. *Television and New Media* 20(5): 476–491.
- Aslan P (2020) Digital Fandom Overseas. In Dunn RA (Ed), *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Media Fandom*. Hershey: IGI Global, pp. 118–131.
- Athique A (2014) Transnational Audiences: Geocultural Approaches. *Continuum* 28(1): 4–17.
- Aydos S (2017) Popular Culture and National Identity: A Study on University Students in Bosnia and Herzegovina who are The Magnificent Century Viewers. *Series III*(2): 63–76.
- Balaban A (2015) The Impacts of Turkish TV Serials Broadcasted in Albania on Albanian and Turkish Relations. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research* 5(1): 473–495.
- Berg M (2017) The Importance of Cultural Proximity in the Success of Turkish Dramas in Qatar. *International Journal of Communication* 11: 3415–3430.

- Bhutto F (2019) How Turkish TV is taking over the world. In: *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/sep/13/turkish-tv-magnificent-century-dizi-taking-over-world> (accessed 20 May 2021).
- Bloom M and Daymon C (2018) Assessing the Future Threat: ISIS's Virtual Caliphate. *Orbis* 62(3): 372–388.
- Bold B (2011) The Power of Fan Communities: an Overview of Fansubbing in Brazil. *Tradução em Revista* 11(2): 1–19.
- Brignol L D, Cogo D and Martínez SL (2020) Redes: Dimensión Epistemológica y Mediación Constitutiva de las Mutaciones Comunicacionales y Culturales de Nuestro Tiempo. In Rincón O (Ed) *Un Nuevo Mapa para Investigar la Mutación Cultural: Diálogo con la Propuesta de Jesús Martín-Barbero*. Quito: Ediciones Ciespal, pp. 187–214.
- Cassano Iturri G (2021) Digital Transformation: Turkish Melodramas on Peruvian Television. In: Arda O, Aslan P and Mujica C (eds) *Transnationalization of Turkish Television Series*. Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, pp. 113–126.
- Condry I (2013) *The Soul of Anime: Collaborative Creativity and Japan's Media Success Story*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Dal YJ (2012) Hallyu 2.0: The New Korean Wave in the Creative Industry. *II Journal* 2(1): 3–7.
- Denison R (2011) Anime Fandom and the Liminal Spaces Between Fan Creativity and Piracy. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 14(5): 449–466.
- Dwyer T (2012) Fansub Dreaming on Viki: “Don't just watch but help when you are free”. *Translator* 18(2): 217–243.
- Dwyer T and Lobato R (2016) Informal Translation, Post-Cinema and Global Media Flows. In: Hagener M, Hediger V and Strohmaier A (eds) *The State of Post Cinema: Tracing the Moving Image in the Age of Digital Dissemination*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 127–145.

- Ferreira GC (2021) *The Discovery of Turkey by the Latin Americans: The Reception of Turkish TV Dramas in Brazil and Uruguay*. Master's thesis, Federal University of Paraná, Brazil.
- Gun SC (2020) A Prática de Lazer na Web a Partir do Consumo de K-Dramas. *LICERE - Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação Interdisciplinar em Estudos do Lazer* 23(1): 360–393.
- Han BM (2019) Fantasies of Modernity: Korean TV Dramas in Latin America. *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 47(1): 39–47.
- Henthorn J (2019) International Fan Professionalization on Viki. *Television and New Media* 20(5): 525–538.
- Herrada Hidalgo N, Aslan P and Almora LE (2021) The Consumption of Turkish TV Series in Cuba: A Study on the Distribution, Access, and Effects of Popular Culture. In: Arda O, Aslan P and Mujica C (eds) *Transnationalization of Turkish Television Series*. Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, pp. 55–66.
- Hills M (2017) Transnational Cult and/as Neoliberalism: The Liminal Economies of Anime Fansubbers. *Transnational Cinemas* 8(1): 80–94.
- Hu K (2013) Chinese Subtitle Groups and the Neoliberal Work Ethic. In: Ari EB and Otmazgin N (eds) *Popular Culture Co-production and Collaborations in East and Southeast Asia*. Singapore: NUS Press, pp. 207–232.
- IBGE (2020) *PNAD Educação 2019: Mais da metade das pessoas de 25 anos ou mais não completaram o ensino médio*. In: Agência de Notícias - IBGE. Available at: <https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-sala-de-imprensa/2013-agencia-de-noticias/releases/28285-pnad-educacao-2019-mais-da-metade-das-pessoas-de-25-anos-ou-mais-nao-completaram-o-ensino-medio> (accessed 2 May 2021).

- Ito M (2012) Contributors Versus Leechers: Fansubbing Ethics and a Hybrid Public Culture. In: Ito M, Okabe D and Tsuji I (eds) *Fandom Unbound*. London: Yale University Press, pp. 179–204.
- Jensen PM and Jacobsen UC (2020) Unfolding the Global Travel of Danish Television Drama Series. In: Jensen PM and Jacobsen UC (eds) *The Global Audiences of Danish Television Drama*. Gothenburg: Nordicom, pp. 9–20.
- Kaptan Y and Algan E (2020) Television in Turkey: Local Production, Transnational Expansion, and Political Aspirations. In: Kaptan Y and Algan E (eds) *Television in Turkey: Local Production, Transnational Expansion and Political Aspirations*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1–24.
- Khan M and Won Y (2020) Transnationalization of TV Serials: A Comparative Study of the Exportation of Korean and Turkish TV Serials. *European Journal of Social Sciences* 59(2): 193–208.
- Kraidy MM and Al-Ghazzi O (2013). Neo-Ottoman Cool: Turkish Popular Culture in the Arab Public Sphere. *Popular Communication* 11(1): 17–29.
- La Pastina AC and Straubhaar JD (2005) Multiple Proximities Between Television Genres and Audiences: The Schism Between Telenovelas' Global Distribution and Local Consumption. *Gazette* 67(3): 271–288.
- Lee H (2018) A 'Real' Fantasy: Hybridity, Korean Drama, and Pop Cosmopolitans. *Media, Culture and Society* 40(3): 365–380.
- Lee HK (2011) Participatory Media Fandom: A Case Study of Anime Fansubbing. *Media, Culture and Society* 33(8): 1131–1147.
- Leonard S (2005) Progress Against the Law: Anime and Fandom, With the Key to the Globalization of Culture. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 8(3): 281–305.
- Liebes T and Katz E (1990) *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Lobato R (2020) Evolving Practices of Informal Distribution in Internet Television. In: Shimpach S (ed) *The Routledge Companion to Global Television*. New York: Routledge, pp. 479–487.
- Lopes MIV (2018) Barberian Theory of Communication. *MATRIZES* 12(1): 39–63.
- Lopes MIV and Orozco-Gómez G (2018) *Ficção Televisiva Ibero-americana em Plataformas de Video on Demand: Anuário Obitel 2018*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Martín-Barbero J (1993) *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From the Media to the Mediations*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Massidda S (2020) Fansubbing: Latest Trends and Future Prospects. In: Bogucki L and Deckert M (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 189–208.
- Mattelart T (2016) The Changing Geographies of Pirate Transnational Audiovisual Flows. *International Journal of Communication* 10: 3503–3521.
- Meimaridis M, Mazur D and Rios D (2020) The Streaming Wars in the Global Periphery: a Glimpse From Brazil. *Series* 4(1): 65–76.
- Mendes Moreira de Sá V (2015) From Orkut to Facebook: How Brazilian Pirate Audiences Utilize Social Media to Create Sharing Subcultures. *International Journal of Communication* 9: 852– 869.
- Mourenza A (2020) Turquía: la inesperada fábrica global de telenovelas. In: *El País*. Available at: <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-06-06/turquia-la-inesperada-fabrica-global-de-telenovelas.html> (Accessed: 2 May 2021).
- Orrego-Carmona D (2018) New Audiences, International Distribution, and Translation. In: Di Giovanni E and Gambier Y (eds) *Reception Studies and Audiovisual Translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 321–342.

- Ozalpman D and Sarikakis K (2018) The Politics of Pleasure in Global Drama: A Case Study of the TV series, *The Magnificent Century* (Muhteşem Yüzyıl). *Global Media and Communication* 14(3): 249–264.
- Panjeta L (2014) The Changing Soaps and Telenovela Genre: Turkish Series Impact. *Epiphany* 7(1): 137–168.
- Pieniz MB and Cenci MP (2019). Tecnicidades de las mediaciones comunicativas de la cultura a las mutaciones culturales. In: Rincón O (ed) *Un nuevo mapa para investigar la mutación cultural: diálogo con la propuesta de Jesús Martín-Barbero*. Quito: Ediciones Ciespal, pp. 137–160.
- Rogers R (2020) Deplatforming: Following Extreme Internet Celebrities to Telegram and Alternative Social Media. *European Journal of Communication* 35(3): 213–229.
- Rosa DFC (2019) *O Que os K-Dramas Querem?* Bachelor's thesis, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.
- Salamandra C (2012) The Muhannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama, and the Arab Female Gaze. *Anthropological Quarterly* 85(1): 45–77.
- Shehabat A, Mitew T and Alzoubi Y (2017) Encrypted Jihad: Investigating the Role of Telegram App in Lone Wolf Attacks in the West. *Journal of Strategic Security* 10(3): 27–53.
- Sifuentes L and Zanin MCC (2020) Las Identidades en el Contexto de las Mutaciones Tecnológicas. In: Rincón O (ed) *Un Nuevo Mapa para Investigar la Mutación Cultural: Diálogo con la Propuesta de Jesús Martín-Barbero*. Quito: Ediciones Ciespal, pp. 241–261.
- Sigiliano D and Borges G (2019) Fansubbing: o diálogo entre a competência midiática e a produção dos fãs de ficção seriada. *Revista Interamericana de Comunicação Midiática* 18(38): 249–268.
- Straubhaar JD (1991) Beyond Media Imperialism: Assymetrical Interdependence and Cultural Proximity. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8(1): 39–59.
- Straubhaar JD (2007) *World Television: From Global to Local*. London: SAGE Publications.

- Straubhaar JD, Santillana M, Higgins Joyce V and Duarte LG (2021) *From Telenovelas to Netflix: Transnational, Transverse Television in Latin America*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thussu DK (2006) *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-flow*. New York: Routledge.
- Tse Y (2016) *Watching Foreign TV in an Age of Online Sharing: The Cultural Implications of Cross-border Television Experience*. Doctoral dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London, United Kingdom.
- Valverde IMT (2020) *¿Los Turcos También Lloran? El Turkish Drama y sus Similitudes y/o Diferencias con la Telenovela Latinoamericana*. Doctoral dissertation, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Peru.
- Vandresen M (2012) “Free culture” Lost in Translation. *International Journal of Communication* 6(1): 626–642.
- Vatikiotis P and Zafer Y (2013) Soft Power or Illusion of Hegemony: The Case of the Turkish Soap Opera “Colonialism”. *International Journal of Communication* 7: 2361–2385.
- Walther S and McCoy A (2021) US Extremism on Telegram: Fueling Disinformation, Conspiracy Theories, and Accelerationism. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15(2): 100–124.
- Yalkin C and Veer E (2018) Taboo on TV: Gender, Religion, and Sexual Taboos in Transnationally Marketed Turkish Soap Operas. *Journal of Marketing Management* 34: 1149–1171.
- Yanardağoğlu E and Karam IN (2013) The Fever that Hit Arab Satellite Television: Audience Perceptions of Turkish TV Series. *Identities* 20(5): 561–579.
- Yesil B (2015) Transnationalization of Turkish Dramas: Exploring the Convergence of Local and Global Market Imperatives. *Global Media and Communication* 11(1): 43–60.