The Interactive Relation between Religious TV Programs and People in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the topic is to deal with role of television on the lifestyle of people and their cultural and religious understanding. TV programs will be shown to change according to lifestyle, education and cultural understanding. Nevertheless, television has a great importance on the lifestyle of people. The religious understanding is a part of the lifestyle. Many Turks shape their cultural and religious understanding by watching television. The authors will deal with cultural and religious understanding from a socio-cultural perspective, exemplifying this by two Turkish television programs called ‘Ekmek Teknesi’ (Means of Livelihood) and ‘Sir Kapisi’ (Door to Secret). The authors aim to examine the dimensions of these soap operas in the context of religious education, cultural and theological perspectives.

Keywords: Culture, Education, Religion, Soap Opera of Ekmek Teknesi and Sir Kapisi, Turks, TV Programs

INTRODUCTION

The traditional cultural structure of the modern Turkish society, which dates back to the Ottoman Empire, is especially manifest in the social and religious life/areas. Turkish society has definitely been affected by the socio-cultural developments of the modern world in terms of culture and education. Therefore religious and cultural values that are seen in the daily human relationships are greatly affected by the Western culture. In their daily relations, Turkish youth refer to discourses and communicative instruments of the Western societies. This, in a sense, is also an impact of the rapidly globalizing world (Akyol, 2010). Whereas television is on the top of the list as the major instrument of influence of the globalizing world among the masses, Internet has a secondary place, mostly common among the younger sections of the Turkish society (Ozdemir, 1998).

The presentation of religion and methods of religious education are developed together with the scientific and technological developments in the modern world. TV is the most effective one among these developments. In other words, TV is reference for modern individual to meet his/her needs concerning information. It seems that TV meets cultural and religious needs in modern Turkish society.

DOI: 10.4018/ijopcd.2013070105
In contemporary Turkey, television plays an effective role in shaping forms of relations between man and the outside world. They have also some long-term effects such as developing and changing their understandings, approaches and attitudes on the other hand.

Television programs have a very important place for the choice and common understanding of Turkish people, especially in their cultural and religious understanding because people watch specific TV programs according to their cognitive structure. These programs are also their religious and cultural choices (Condon, 1975).

Many Turkish people tend to watch television programs according to the direction of their understanding. The formal and non-formal educations, which they have received since their childhood, have a very important effect on the knowledge and formation of the religious understanding of Turkish people.

This research combines educational, social and theological perspectives. We deal with the relationship between TV programs and the people, especially interactive relationship between religious programs on Turkish TVs and people in this article; we would like focus on two soap operas that have a very high rating.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Regarding the relation between TV and the cultural-religious understanding of Turkish people and religious TV programs, we are interested in two programs that have a very high rating. We have to think about interactive relation between TV and people. Before speaking on this problem, we would like to emphasize these questions:

1. Why are Turkish people watching these two programs more than the others?
2. What do they find in these programs?
3. Is there a relation between the religious structure of the people and TV programs?
4. Do they having religious content in compliance with Islamic theology?

THE ROLE OF TV IN THE MAKING OF TURKISH SOCIETY

According to a research conducted in modern Turkish society, 96% of people definitely watch TV (RTUK, 2010; Efe, 1999). Thus many people spend their spare time watching TV. We can see, in this research, that people in many countries, including the developed West countries, spend at least six hours a day watching TV. Similarly, Turkish people also spend a huge part of their day watching TV (RTUK, 2009; Cuceloglu, 1992; Mete, 1999). It is impossible not to use mass communication media to reach people for religious presentation. Therefore, TV is the most important one among the media used in order to give religious knowledge to people and to educate them.

In parallel with the increasing number of TV channels in Turkey, in general the number and type of TV programs, and in particular religious programs increased. Due to the development of technological infrastructure and the increase of innovations in this field, television has become more popular. The discussions about the mass media in general and TV in particular have been an object of criticism and have the topic of ‘effect’ for scientists for many years. While there are some people like McQuail, who praise TV claiming that it promotes the opportunities of learning and education, there are also some people like Jerry Mander, who continues criticizing TV, taking causing addiction as a starting point (Mutlu, 1999).

The problem is of power and limits of this interactive relation. First of all, there is a receiver and a transmitter, which sends a message; this is the theory of communication. So, meanings which spectators infer from words and pictures on TV or any communication media are closely related to their cultural levels and worldviews. The same broadcasts, which those who have different worldviews watch, have different meanings for them (Turam, 1994). So, the process of being interactive is not completely independent of people. Attitudes which the individual has bring near to certain stimulants,
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