


Understanding the Media Audience of Subscription Video on Demand (SVoD) Platforms in Turkey:

Constructing cosmopolitan taste and cultural capital



Dissertation submitted to King's College London
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts in Arts and Cultural Management

Dissertation Supervisor

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September 2020

Abstract

Subscription video on demand (SVoD) platforms have become widespread on a global level as well as in Turkey. Thus, their impact on media distribution, access, and consumption has become a significant topic of study in related research. However, little research has focused on the audience's motivation to consume media through digital platforms in the context of Turkey. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reasons for intensive use of SVoD for media consumption and how this consumption is related to cultural capital and cosmopolitan taste formation in Turkey, particularly for the audience aged between 25 and 34 years old, which constitutes a major proportion of the total audience. To address the research questions, this research adopts a conceptual framework to analyse data collected through survey and interview methods. The findings reveal that convenience and perceptions regarding television content have a strong influence on platform selection. In addition, the availability of a large amount of content on the platform encourages use. The audience perceives SVoD platforms as a status marker of their social environment values which shape their decisions. The cultural capital of the audience also does not have an impact on their consumption decisions. The findings show that the audience particularly consumes foreign content to form a cosmopolitan taste that enables them to obtain status and cosmopolitan cultural capital.

Keywords: SVoD, Turkey, media audiences, digital platforms.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank, first of all, my family for their support and endurance. After that, I would to express my thanks to Ministry of National Education of the Turkish Republic, without their support and funding I would not accomplish this Master's degree. Moreover, I want to thank my academic supervisor, Dr. Wing Fai Leung for her beneficial help and professional supervisors Ahmet Kamil Gençel and Ahmet Seçkin from Turkish Radio and Television Institution. I would like to thank my flatmates and friends for their psychological support that enables me to study on this dissertation during lockdown period.



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1 Introduction

“Texts are not finished objects.”

(Edward Said, 1994)

Television (TV) viewing is the primary social activity and main method of media consumption worldwide (Saxbe, *et al.*, 2011). However, recently, the digital platforms serving as over-the-top (OTT) media services have become an increasingly essential component in the media industry and now play a key role in television and film distribution (Lobato, 2017). The use of video-on-demand (VoD) platforms has expanded globally, and particularly subscription video on demand (SVoD) platforms have emerged as a critical player among all media platforms, with 1.3 billion subscribers worldwide (Ene, 2019; Statista, 2020c).

According to a report published by the Radio Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) (2018), the average number of hours spent watching TV in Turkey is 3.34 per day; however, the report also noted that traditional TV watching habits have shifted to nonlinear online platforms, particularly among younger generations. As a result, Turkey has emerged as a growing market for VoD platforms, with a 23.2 million users —11.6 million of which are subscribers of SVoD platforms (Statista, 2020b). At the time of writing this paper, BluTv (a local SVoD) is the leader in the market, and Netflix and Amazon Prime (which represent an international outlook for users) account for 25% of total subscriptions (Statista, 2020b). Furthermore, research (İşler-Sevindi and Katmer, 2020) has shown that audiences significantly prefer the content published on these platforms over traditional TV productions. Hence, in the last year, the penetration of digital platforms has increased, and is expected to increase significantly in Turkey in the coming years, similar to global trends (Statista, 2020b; 2020c).

This emergence of digital media platforms has been referred to as disruption or revolution (Iordanova, 2012; Curtin *et al.*, 2014). In particular, its impact on access and how it enables global distribution has been examined by various scholars (Jenkins, 2006; Lotz, 2014). Some researchers (McDonald *et al.*, 2016; Lobato, 2019) have focused on a specific platform, such as Netflix, to illustrate how platforms have changed the media environment in terms of consumption practices. However, few studies have investigated the audience of the platforms, particularly Netflix. According to Lobato (2017), Netflix's audience profile is variable in different countries; however, the international image of the platform appeals to upper class, elite populations with the cultural capital —English competency — to consume the content (Lobato, 2017; Straubhaar *et al.*, 2019).

DiMaggio (1987, p.443) argued that cultural activities are a form of identity marker and “taste is a form of ritual identification” and status indicator. Turkey's relationship with the West in economic, social, and political areas has influenced the cultural practices and consumer culture in the country (Emrence, 2008; Üstüner and Holt, 2010). American culture in particular is significantly promoted by the media, and consumption of American culture is linked with the perception of a good life (Bali, 2002; Karadağ, 2009). As a new form of cultural activity, digital platforms have a similar function that opens people to world. However, there has been a very little discussion regarding the reasons for the audiences' preferences and in particular how consumption through digital platforms is related to status, identity, and cultural capital. This indicates a need to understand the media audiences of digital platforms. With regard to media audiences in Turkey, little is known about the media consumption preferences of 25-34 year old audiences of digital platforms; however, studying this population is essential, as it constitutes 38.5% of the users of SVoD platforms in Turkey as of 2019 (Statista, 2020b). As Arun (2012, p.300) described: “In contemporary Turkey, the group enjoying the highest level of cultural capital consists of professionals and managers within the youngest generation (age 18-49)”. In addition, “They use brands to create image,

to represent personality and to communicate their values” (Farina *et al.*, 2014, p.13). Indeed, they are becoming the leading consumer group and currently account for 15% of the population. As a result, their purchasing power is increasing and they play a significant role in leading changes and trends in society (Farina *et al.*, 2014; OECD, 2019).

This research argues that the media consumption of 25-34 year olds through SVoD platforms is significantly associated with cosmopolitan taste and cultural capital formation. Therefore, this dissertation attempts to explore the reasons for digital platform usage in 25-34 year old Turkish people by investigating the impact of social status concerns, cultural capital, and cosmopolitanism on consumption preferences. To do so, the study asks the following questions: 1) What are the reasons behind the 25–34 year old audience’s attraction to SVoD platforms in Turkey? 2) To what extent does social status and cultural capital construction explain the consumption habits of this audience? 3) In which ways does this audience use digital platforms to construct cosmopolitan taste and identity? By answering these three questions, this research attempts to contribute to a deeper understanding of the media consumption preferences of 25-34 year old audiences, since understanding their preferences regarding media consumption will provide a broader understanding of the future media landscape in Turkey.

This dissertation is presented in four sections. Initially, the literature review section discusses the existing literature on the topic. The literature review is composed of four parts. Firstly, existing research on Turkish media and the audience is examined. Secondly, the place of digital platforms in the literature is investigated. This is followed by an investigation of studies on the consumption of media through digital platforms. Finally, the literature review section concludes with a discussion of the literature related to media consumption and identity. The second section of this dissertation is the conceptual framework, in which the concepts of cultural capital (as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984)), conspicuous

consumption, cosmopolitan taste, and capital are explained. The third section — the methodology section — explains the research methods used in the study — specifically the survey, interview, and data analysis processes. This section concludes with a discussion regarding the study limitations. The following section is the main section of the paper, in which the research findings are presented, beginning with an explanation of the reasons of the media consumption through digital platforms. This section discusses the connections between the results and the concepts of status consumption, and cultural capital. Finally, it explains the consumption using cosmopolitan taste and cultural capital theory. Finally, the conclusion section presents the overall discussion, results of the research, and study limitations.

2 Literature Review

This section is a discussion of existing research regarding the media audience in Turkey, digital platforms and their audiences, and the consumption of media in relation to cultural consumption, identity, and cosmopolitanism.

2.1 Television and the audience in Turkey

The literature on Turkish TV has tended to focus on Turkish TV series and their expansion to other countries (Yanardağoğlu and Karam, 2013; Karlıdağ and Bulut, 2014; Özalpman, 2016). A report conducted by RTÜK (2018) on the consumption of TV indicated that time spent watching TV has decreased in Turkey in recent years. Similarly, household spending on culture has increased in recent years; however, this increase has been predominantly rooted in spending on TV and TV content (TÜİK, 2019). Hence, TV and TV products remain the primary social activity in Turkey (IKSV, 2018). The RTÜK report (2018, pp.94-95) also found that 87% of the participants surveyed watched television and approximately 35% liked watching television series and programmes. However, 22.5% of participants noted that the

quality of TV has declined in recent years. Nevertheless, 38.7% percent of the audience in the range of 25-34 years old engaged with television in order to follow their favourite shows (RTÜK, 2018, pp.94-95). The report also showed that majority of non-viewers did not like the content on television (RTÜK, 2018). In addition, an industrial report by Deloitte (2014) found that the leading linear TV broadcasters in Turkey shaped their programming by including approximately 80% local productions. Misci Kip (2013) defined TV audiences in Turkey as cultural omnivores and argued that cultural capital has no significant impact on genre and content choices. However, their study only considered the linear TV audience; hence, it may not reflect more recent digital consumption trends.

Research has also indicated that as education level increases time spent watching TV decreases (RTÜK, 2018). The middle-class segment of the Turkish community has grown in the last 30 years with significant participation in tertiary level education (Karademir-Hazır, 2014) which has had a considerable impact on overall TV consumption. Furthermore, studies on the TV consumption of the Turkish middle class have shown that cultural capital has an impact on consumption preferences (Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Karademir-Hazır, 2014). As the participants in the current study were predominantly middle-class individuals who had completed tertiary-level education, the knowledge that cultural capital influences consumption is critical for this research.

2.2 Digital platforms

Research on digital platforms has identified several elements to consider, such as distribution, access, democratization, and changing consumption habits. In order to understand the emergence of online platforms, Cunningham and Silver (2013, p.31) presented an historical background of online downloading or streaming starting from around 1999, in which they emphasized that online streaming gained significant importance in the third wave of online distribution of film and TV shows, which Lotz (2014, p.9) defined as the

“post-network era”. Indeed, new online platforms such as Amazon and Netflix have been described as “the new King Kongs of the online world” (Cunningham and Silver, 2013, p.31) and the “seeds of transformation” (Curtin *et al.*, 2014, p.2). Some scholars have investigated digital platforms in terms of their impact on distribution and the flow of TV and film (Iordanova, 2012; Curtin *et al.*, 2014; Lobato, 2017). Lotz *et al.* (2018, p.38) examined the “internet distributed television” concept of Netflix, Hulu, etc. with particular emphasis on the distributional function of these platforms. Meanwhile, Iordanova (2012, p.6) argued that online platforms have brought about a “new world distribution”; that is, they facilitate global distribution and enable disintermediation that leads to the elimination of distribution channels between the audience and media text. This disruptive innovation in “transborder media flow” (Iordanova, 2012, p.7) has changed the media landscape by granting easy and cheaper access for audiences as becoming users (Curtin *et al.*, 2014).

On the other hand, Lobato (2016) challenged the idea of global distribution and access by explaining how digital platforms apply localization tools and geo-blocking to limit content. For instance, whereas some productions are available on Netflix USA, they are not available on Netflix Turkey (Parmaksız and Kırçova, 2020). Similarly, convergence between digital platforms has been criticized as the new tool of media conglomerates instead of a way of democratizing viewing and access to content (Jenkins, 2006). Ward (2016) investigated the expansion of Netflix into other countries, and Lobato (2017; 2019) discussed the one-way flow of media and cultural imperialism that arises from Netflix content being comprised of predominantly American productions. In the current research, the fact that platform content constitutes mainly American and Western productions is useful for explaining the audience’s preference for Netflix and Amazon Prime and their international content.

Regarding the digital platforms in Turkey, some studies (Kuyucu, 2015; Küçük, 2015; İşler-Sevindi and Katmer, 2020) have emphasized that especially younger generations’ viewing

habits in Turkey are inclined towards transmedia usage and internet-based TV, and they tend to use time-shifting to view content (RTÜK, 2018). According to the MAVISE (2020) database, there are twenty-six VoD platforms operating in Turkey, sixteen of which are SVoD platforms. Major players in the market are Blu TV, Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube. Blu TV is a Turkish SVoD which has 55% of the market (Statista, 2020b). A few studies have investigated media consumption through digital platforms in Turkey. Some studies (Küçük, 2015; Söğüt, 2019) have focused on the impact of VoD and pay TV in the Turkish television sector, and some studies (Aral, 2018; Gürmeriç, 2019; Tüzün-Ateşalp and Başlar, 2020; Parmaksız and Kırçova, 2020; İşler-Sevindi and Katmer, 2020) have investigated SVoD platforms in Turkey, particularly Netflix and Blu TV.

2.3 Consumption through digital platforms

Many researchers (Jenkins, 2006; Tryon, 2013; Lotz, 2014; Jenner, 2016) have noted that the audience and its relationship with media texts has changed and will continue to change. SVoD platforms, especially Netflix, position themselves differently to traditional TV (Jenner 2016; Wayne, 2018). According to Burroughs (2019, p.7), Netflix seeks to maintain a “cult” status through attempting to offer “quality contents” compared to television. Additionally, Wayne (2018, p.729) noted that “SVOD services invoke the rhetoric of ‘quality TV’ as a means to assert the medium’s progress and place it in the same cultural category as cinema or literature”. There has not been a study in Turkey specifically focused on how SVoD platforms position themselves, but research has shown that this ‘quality image’ is perceived by the Turkish audience regarding these platforms (Parmaksız and Kırçova, 2020). Thus, investigating how the perception of the quality of the platforms shaped consumption and motivation is a worthwhile research focus.

This new TV model encourages different viewing habits (Jenner, 2016). In his book *On-Demand Culture* Tryon (2013) highlighted the individualized and personalized media

consumption that comes with digital platforms. Consuming TV and films has now become a mobile, free from location, and less social activity than before (Tryon, 2013; Curtin *et al.*, 2014; Lotz, 2014). Instead of linear schedules on TV, catalogues offer a personalized consumption space for audiences (Lobato, 2017). Recommendation systems and catalogues that are algorithmically tailored influence how audiences encounter and engage with media, which studies have particularly highlighted about Netflix (McDonald *et al.*, 2016; Lobato, 2019). Furthermore, Matrix (2014) argued that the ability to binge-watch shows on Netflix leads to a connection between the audience and the media text and between the audience and a broader community of viewers who binge-watch shows as soon as they are released.

With regard to Turkey, scholars (Gürmeriç, 2019; Tüzün-Ateşalp and Başlar, 2020) have examined changes in audience behaviour due to algorithmic catalogues and binge watching. Gürmeriç (2019) argued that audiences tend to watch more content, especially series, and consider the recommendations of Netflix as a reference point. Indeed, binge watching behaviours in the Turkish audience has increased with the introduction of Netflix (Tüzün-Ateşalp and Başlar, 2020; İşler-Sevindi and Katmer, 2020). Moreover, İşler-Sevindi and Katmer (2020) observed that young audiences are moving away from traditional television due to Netflix. Meanwhile, Aral's study (2018) showed that audiences are motivated by schedule freedom and interactivity when consuming media on digital platforms, and also that original contents offered on Netflix and Blu TV are essential influencing factors for consumption on SVoD platforms (Küçük, 2015). In addition, a recent paper on the consumption motivations in relation to subscriptions in Turkey analysed consumption in relation to five categories: "perceived content quality, effort expectation, price perception, hedonic consumption and perceived usefulness" (Parmaksız and Kırçova, 2020, p.779). The results of the study indicated that perceived content quality was the main motivation of consumption among participants (Parmaksız and Kırçova, 2020). These studies provide

important insights into the reasons for the SVoD platform preferences of media audiences in Turkey; however, some aspects related to consumption remain unknown, such as the motivation of the specific 25–34 age group and its relationship with identity and cultural capital.

2.4 Consumption and the identity of the audience

With regard to audience characteristics, Lobato stated that Netflix appeals to varying segments in different countries (Lobato, 2017). In non-anglophone countries, “Netflix use is either negligible or limited to cosmopolitan upper classes whose tastes may not be indicative of those of their fellow citizens” (Lobato, 2019, pp.157-158). Considering that platforms are consumed by a group of people who differentiate themselves from others through their consumption (Lobato, 2019), individuals define themselves whereas defining others through imagined communities and world of class and hierarchies (Anderson, 1983; Hayward *et al.*, 2006; Clarke, 2008). Particularly, media texts and television enable individuals to perceive themselves as belonging to visionary distant worlds and reinforce cosmopolitanism defined lately as “inhabiting the world at a distance “(Szerszynski and Urry, 2006, p.115; Robertson, 2012). Similarly, Elkins (2019, pp.376-377) claimed that platforms reinforce “cosmopolitan ideals” and “imagined globality” by branding themselves as cosmopolitan and giving importance to global cultures and cross-cultural interactions that unite the audience independently from their national identity. Furthermore, the emergence of globalization and transnational mobilities has generated new symbols of identity formation, such as “cosmopolitanism as a consumer construct”, which means that consumers immerse themselves in diverse and cross-cultural experiences (Saran and Kalliny, 2012, p.283; Bookman, 2013). Thus, engaging with cross-cultural media products forms new worlds for the audience and turns them in to cosmopolitans who are “the citizen[s] of the world” (Ong, 2009, p.450).

Straubhaar *et al.* (2019, p.233) argued that “the international nature of Netflix programming is of particular interest and appeal among the upper middle class and elite, who have the cultural capital to enjoy and appreciate it”. Cultural capital is an embodied asset that enables people to consume legitimate, highbrow culture (Bourdieu, 1986; Holt, 1998). In other words, cultural capital is about having material and immaterial belongings regarding the culture that form taste and skills and equip one with the required manners to enjoy and interpret art and culture, and also includes. In relation to cultural capital and media consumption, Bennett and Savage (2009, p.150) stated that “television occupies the position of a negative asset in the processes of cultural capital formation”. In contrast, Wayne (2016) argued that if television is engaged with highbrow culture through a legitimising discourse, then middle class audiences can consider it a form of cultural capital. He also added that post-network television is culturally legitimized since the audience perceive it as original and sophisticated and offering intellectually demanding content. Thus, it may represent a higher status. In Turkey, TV content is acknowledged as legitimate depending on genre (Karademir-Hazır and Purhonen, 2017). Cultural shows and documentaries are assumed to be high culture whereas local TV series are linked with low cultural capital (Karademir-Hazır and Purhonen, 2017). On the other hand, Bennett and Savage (2009) argued that new platforms emerging with rapid technological changes impact the value and appropriation that can bring about a new approach to cultural capital.

This section has highlighted that despite the significant amount of research on television overall, few studies have investigated audiences’ motivation for using SVoD platforms in relation to identity and cultural capital. Therefore, there is a clear gap in the literature that requires further research to be carried out.

3 Conceptual Framework

The study is combined with a conceptual framework to explain the empirical findings. In this regard, Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) concept of cultural capital is adopted as a fundamental theory. The framework also includes additional concepts such as conspicuous consumption, cosmopolitanism as identity form, and emerging cultural capital.

3.1 Cultural capital

Bourdieu (1984) introduced cultural capital in his book *Distinction* along with economic and social capitals that inform distinction in society. Cultural capital refers to the possession of distinct tastes, skills, and knowledge to enjoy arts and culture (Holt, 1998). It emerges in three forms — *embodied*, *objectified*, and *institutionalized*. Embodied cultural capital refers to “long-lasting dispositions of body and mind” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.17), which means it is integrated within a person through unconscious acquisition or inheritance from family. One example of embodied capital is knowing how to behave in certain settings. Objectified cultural capital refers to owning cultural goods such as books, paintings, and instruments (Bourdieu, 1986). Although these materials can be transferrable, the meaning of possessing and truly consuming them depends on the embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Institutionalized cultural capital is the objectification of capital through academic degrees (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu, (1986) also defined *habitus* as acquiring habits and skills that inform taste and consumption and mediate class and status unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1984; Warde, 2008). In this way, habitus leads consumers to structure their consumption by developing enthusiasm towards specific objects (Holt, 1998).

3.2 Conspicuous consumption in culture

According to Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption, people rely on certain goods as status symbols. As Sussman (1984, p.285) explained, “social structures generate

their own symbols which exist in economic, cultural, aesthetic forms". Research has shown scholars that consumption practices and brands have a powerful influence on constructing individual and collective identity and expression of them (Baumann, 1998; Zukin and Maguire, 2004; Arvidsson, 2006; Hayward *et al.*, 2006). This aligns with Bourdieu's (1984) claim that people differentiate themselves from each other through their consumption of highbrow or popular culture. For example, Bourdieu (1986) argued that consumption of certain products, especially in cultural fields, objectifies cultural capital. Hence, cultural consumption is related to the social structures, class, and collective identity created through shared taste (Bourdieu, 1986; DiMaggio, 1987). This paper assumes that the consumption of media such as TV series and films is a form of cultural consumption (Wayne, 2018). Thus, audiences' preferences in terms of media consumption are related to social status, identity, and conspicuous consumption.

Üstüner and Holt (2010) identified Turkey as among the less industrialized countries (LICs) in which Western goods have become status symbols. They argued that the Turkish upper middle class constructs status in accordance with the Western lifestyle (Üstüner and Holt, 2007). Furthermore, they explained global trickle-down which means that LIC citizens are concerned with owning Western goods, and when they have sufficient income, they adopt similar consumption patterns to their Western counterparts in terms of class (Üstüner and Holt, 2010). This feature of Turkish middle upper-class consumption relates conspicuous consumption to the construction of cosmopolitan identity.

3.3 Cosmopolitanism and cultural capital

The Western lifestyle myth has also impacted the cultural sector in Turkey. European and Western taste informs cultural hierarchies (Karademir-Hazır, 2014) and is perceived as a way of differentiating oneself from others. According to Karademir-Hazır (2014, p.684), Western cultural forms represent highbrow taste in Turkey. In addition, Ong (2009, p.450)

introduced the term 'instrumental cosmopolitanism' to refer to self-representation and consciously behaving in a way that displays cultural capital; that instrumental cosmopolitanism is the "use of one's knowledge of the world to promote oneself. In other words, it uses otherness for the sake of the self and to further delineate self from other." (Ong, 2009, p.456). Thus, this term aligns with Saran and Kalliny's (2012) argument that consumers seeking to being more cosmopolitan is related to building a social status and reinforcing cultural capital through diverse and international consumption. According to Holt (1997, cited in Saran and Kalliny, 2012, p.283):

...consumers who aspire to high cultural capital are likely to seek to cultivate cosmopolitan tastes, which could be translated into consumption of music, literature, and other products, which have their origin in countries and cultures other than one's own.

Drawing on the concept of diversity in cultural consumption, DiMaggio (1991) stated that educated, cosmopolitan people value participation in cross-cultural activities since it becomes a reward or a resource with which to succeed in society. Thus, the margins and definition of cultural capital change in different settings.

3.4 Emerging cultural capital

Lizardo (2008) and Prieur and Savage (2013) argued that cultural capital exists but it is not limited to highbrow culture. Emmison (2003, p.226) also reflected on the topic by stating "...the whole of cultural life -high, middle, popular- as symbolic resources in the achievement of distinction". Hence the term 'cosmopolitan cultural capital' was introduced by Prieur and Savage (2013) to refer to people being interested in American culture rather than in their local cultural forms, and at the same time respecting foreign productions by acknowledging them as high quality and exclusive. They also claimed that "cosmopolitan taste' can

circulate in powerful and pervasive forms through new technological forms, and in various kinds of ‘popular’ culture” (Prieur and Savage, 2013, p.263).

According to Üstüner and Holt (2010, p.50), “rather than Bourdieu’s cultural capital, which is sedimented in everyday life and continually reproduced among local cultural elites, in the Turkish context cultural capital must be imported.” Western-focused education and having international connections are forms of cultural capital acquisition (Emrence, 2008; Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Karademir-Hazır, 2014) and “cultural capital is organized around the orthodox practice of the Western Lifestyle myth” (Üstüner and Holt, 2010, p.37). Hence, for Turkey, Üstüner and Holt (2010, p.50) proposed the term “Deterritorialized Cultural Capital”. They argued that cultural capital is not inherited, “rather, it is based upon the ability to properly interpret, learn, internalize, and then enact the consumption of a distant other” (Üstüner and Holt 2010, p.50). Turkish people do not have an unconsciously developed habitus; on the contrary, they pursue taste and habitus strategically and seek to develop it even during adulthood (Üstüner and Holt, 2010, p.53). Pursuing habitus strategically by engaging with foreign and Western cultural forms is similar to the concept of cosmopolitan cultural capital. These theories, therefore, help to define the Turkish media audiences and their preferences regarding international digital platforms in terms of identity and cultural capital formation.

4 Methodology

This section introduces the research strategy and methods of data collection and analysis implemented to answer the research questions. Additionally, the limitations of these research methods are also discussed.

4.1 Research strategy

This dissertation project was a qualitative study that used empirical mixed methods for data collection in line with Patriarche *et al.*'s (2013, p.2) assertion that "In order to capture audience practices and meanings of media consumption, multimethod research designs are required". This research adopted a constructivist position, since the main objective was to understand the motivations of the audience's media consumption and how they constructed meaning from this consumption (Merriam, 2009; Bergman, 2010). Correspondingly, the researcher sought to reveal the mindset of the audience and understand their ideas and explanations of the topic; hence, the research was interpretivist. In addition, this empirical research aimed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and analyse them by adopting a mixed-methods research design since understanding the media consumption of an audience is best derived from the "real world" (Veal and Burton, 2014, p.39). Thus, mixed methods were applied in an explanatory sequential research design that started with a subsidiary quantitative method followed by primary qualitative data collection (Bryman, 2016). The reason for using a sequential mixed method was development; that is, the findings of one method facilitated and improved the other method (Hesse-Biber, 2010). The quantitative data collection conducted via an online survey sought to describe the recent phenomena of the media consumption of the audience and provide an introductory insight into the second step of data collection, which was the qualitative interviews. The qualitative research results were not generalized but could be transferred to other research topics and concepts. Similarly, despite the use of some quantitative data, overall this project was a qualitative study; hence, it did not aim to obtain generalizable results from the analysis.

4.2 Research methods

Surveys and interviews were the two methods applied in this research to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Several authors have measured cosmopolitanism, the

relationship between lifestyle, and status and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Sullivan, 2001, Bennett *et al.*, 2005; Saran and Kalliny, 2012; Sieben and Lechner, 2019). Bourdieu applied mixed methods by using statistical data and interviews to explain his theory of lifestyle and habitus (Bennett and Savage, 2009). Indeed, Silva *et al.* (2009, p.312) argued that “methodological eclecticism” is the most effective method with which to reflect complex social topics such as cultural capital, because they must be approached from different angles with the collection of various form of data. This research sought to gather information on the consumption patterns and preferences of media audiences broadly via a quantitative method and also asked ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions during the interviews to reveal, explain, and interpret the meaning attributed those consumptions in relation to cultural taste and capital formation (Merriam, 2009). Hence, adopting both survey and interview data collection methods reinforced both each other and the results of the research. The researcher collected a written consent from the survey participants by adding a consent letter at the very beginning of the survey and a verbal consent from the interviewees before starting data collection processes. Both consents were designed in align with KCL GDPR standards.

4.2.1 Survey

The initial step of designing a survey begins with deciding the population and sample. As mentioned earlier, the participants selected for this study were the media audience in Turkey aged between 25 and 34 years old. However, this paper did not intend to represent the whole audience in the 25-34 age range, due to constraints such as time and location that prevented the use of a sample that represented the entire population. Besides, as De Vaus *et al.* (2013, p.88) highlighted, “some research is not interested in working out what proportion of the population gives a particular response but rather in obtaining an idea of the range of responses or ideas that people have”. Hence, nonprobability sampling was selected as the most appropriate sampling method for this study. In alignment with this, the researcher also used a common form of purposeful sampling known as snowball sampling

to reach the right audience (Merriam, 2009). The research method selected for the primary data collection stage was an online survey. A major advantage of conducting online surveys is that the internet facilitates broader access to participants (Snee *et al.*, 2015), which was especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic period in which contacting people socially became impossible (Jowett, 2020) and the researcher was unable to travel Turkey to conduct face-to-face surveys.

The snowball sampling method involves selecting a few participants who meet the criteria and then also help to distribute the survey and reach more participants (Walliman, 2006; Merriam, 2009). Correspondingly, the online survey, generated by the Survey Hero website, was distributed on the researcher's social platforms, and some of the key participants also shared the survey with similar profiles through their social media accounts. Due to the distribution of the survey through the researcher's social connections, the participants were more likely to have similar characteristics and backgrounds, meaning they might not represent all the media audiences of digital platforms.

To ensure the survey was the right length, the questions were understandable and related to the research objectives (Fink, 1998), a pilot survey was distributed to five participants who were eligible to assess the survey in both Turkish and English. According to their feedback, some questions were reformed verbally, and the types of answers were changed. Ultimately, the online survey included 16 close-ended Likert-scale questions (for which participants were asked to rate the answer on a scale of strongly agree, agree, etc.) and multiple-choice questions. Additionally, 5 open-ended questions were included, such as "Can you describe the platform you use in three words?" (see Appendix 2). Therefore, the survey provided both quantitative and qualitative data. The feedback given by some of the participants showed that the context of the survey — being about media, platforms, and TV consumption — attracted participants to take part in the survey. Also, providing survey in both English and

Turkish increased participation (only 38 out of 225 completed the survey in English, and the rest completed it in Turkish). During the ten days that the survey was active (from 22nd of June to 1st of July), 225 participants completed it, which illustrates Dencombe's (2010) claim, that snowball sampling enables a researcher to obtain a reasonable sample size for a small-scale project.

Quantitative questions sought to generate information about the reasons for platform usage, such as availability, content, interface, and social motives. In order to assess cosmopolitanism and cultural capital, example studies (Sullivan, 2001; Bennet and Savage, 2009; Zabihi and Pordel, 2011; Saran and Kalliny, 2012) were investigated and questions and methods were adopted according to the research questions and country context. Saran and Kalliny (2012, p.287) generated the COSMOSCALE to measure cosmopolitanism and asked questions that investigated participants' attitudes towards world problems and other cultures and communities. In this current study, the research questions were adapted to media consumption preferences; for instance, they investigated the participants' local and foreign content consumption (see Appendix 2.). To measure cultural capital, the survey asked various diverse questions. Questions about language proficiency (Sullivan, 2001; Zabihi and Pordel, 2011) and education (Bennett and Savage, 2009) examined the participants' institutionalized cultural capital; questions about participants' family demographics such as art attendance and occupations investigated the participants' embodied cultural capital (Noble and Davies, 2009; Zabihi and Portel, 2011), and questions about the number of books owned, and art attendance sought to demonstrate the participants' objectified cultural capital (Sieben and Lechner, 2019; Sullivan, 2001; Bennett *et al.*, 2005).

4.2.2 Interviews

After the collection of the survey data, interviews were conducted as the second and qualitative data collection step. The interview stage was critical for the research since it elaborated the survey data in a qualitative manner, thereby deepening the understanding of the statistical data. A qualitative interviewing method with semi-structured questions was used since this approach prompts participants to express themselves in depth and extend their answers by using their own words, and also enables a researcher to ask follow-up questions to adjust the interview depending on the issues to be explored (Merriam, 2009; Brinkmann, 2013; Bryman, 2016). Hence, the researcher was able to learn the motivations and assumptions of the audience regarding consumption; furthermore, how respondents formed cosmopolitan taste through conspicuous consumption of foreign content and if they pursued capital acquisition through consumption were also investigated.

Interviews were conducted with 10 participants chosen via purposeful sampling from the survey participants who had shared their e-mail addresses in order to be contacted for the interviews. One of the reasons of choosing a small sample was the time constraint. Interviews take a lot of time to record and transcribe. For a small size project, keeping the sample size small also benefited the quality of the interviews and analysis, since they could be conducted in greater depth (Brinkmann, 2013). Purposeful sampling enables a researcher to learn most out of interviews; therefore, the researcher in the current study selected participants depending on what needed to be discovered and learned in depth (Merriam, 2009). In order to select interviewees from the survey participants, some criteria were determined (Merriam, 2009) such as membership with at least one platform and results from the cosmopolitanism and cultural capital related survey questions. Although the sample size and the sampling method used meant the interviews were unlikely to represent the whole population, they nevertheless could reflect a group of media audiences' motivations in depth.

Qualitative interviews normally also include observation of non-verbal cues such as attitudes, gestures, and clothes (O'Connor et al., 2008; Veal and Burton, 2014); however, in the current conditions caused by COVID-19, conducting interviews on online setting was necessary both due to the researcher's location and the requirements of the University Ethics Committee (see Appendix 1.). Despite the lack of some observations, online interviewing through Zoom video calls enabled the researcher to reach participants easily, since they were open to communicating through online applications and arranging a time slot became easier (Denscombe, 2010). Each interview consisted of four sections split according to the research questions (see Appendix 3.). The first section included some questions for understanding what kind of media consumer the participant was. Thus, in this section, the researcher asked questions related to digital platform consumption that were extended versions of the survey questions, such as "Why do you prefer Netflix over Blu TV?" or "How do you think Netflix is perceived by the society and people around you". Then, the section related to cosmopolitanism investigated how the participants approached foreign productions and how the platforms impacted their perceptions of other cultures. In order to understand how cultural capital plays role in consumption, respondents were asked to define a cultured person, their ideas of Netflix and its impact on being cultured, and how their taste in arts, films, and TV productions changed after consumption and why. Although a general structure was followed during the interview, some adjustments were made to the questions; for instance, the researcher added different questions or rephrased according to the insight obtained from the participants' responses to the survey. Hence, as Brinkman (2013, p.25) described, the interviews sought to obtain knowledge according to the researcher needs, they were developed using the participants' descriptions which were "about life world phenomena as experienced", and the researcher needed to use interpretation to understand the given descriptions.

4.2.3 Data analysis

In order to analyse the data collected through the survey, both descriptive and explanatory research methods were applied. The survey engine used for the online survey had already provided some descriptive analysis, but Excel was also used to adjust the categories (see Appendix 2.) and organize the quantitative data. Descriptive analysis of survey data provides total numbers, frequencies, variances, and means (Veal and Burton, 2014). For the analysis, questions and answers were grouped depending on their relation to the research question and what they revealed (De Vaus *et al.*, 2013); for example, “availability of international content” was included in the cosmopolitanism category, and “easy use of interfaces” was included in the convenience category. This categorization enabled the calculation of cosmopolitanism and cultural capital scores for the respondents. In order to extract meaning from the data and evaluate the findings in a more explanatory manner, means and derivations were compared in selected categories and the researcher used cosmopolitanism and cultural capital points to observe any correlations and assess the impact of cultural capital on other selections such as foreign content preferences, platform usage motivation, etc. The responses to open-ended questions survey questions and the qualitative data from the interviews were evaluated using NVivo 12. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) defined thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.” A theme is a concept that is significant for responding to research questions and illustrates a pattern in the qualitative data (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researcher used open coding (Merriam, 2009), whereby codes were decided during the collection and transcription of the qualitative findings. This ongoing analysis enabled the researcher to collect more focused data and process it more easily (Merriam, 2009). After themes such as convenience, diversity and quality, status and class consumption, etc. had been identified, the researcher labelled the transcribed data with the corresponding themes.

Creating connections between themes to conceptualize them facilitated the interpretation of the findings according to the conceptual framework and to answer the research questions.

4.3 Limitations

Considering the qualitative research design and non-probability sampling methods used, this research does not accurately represent all 25-34 year old digital platform users in Turkey. However, as stated previously, qualitative research does not aim to detect what a whole population thinks, but seeks to explore in depth what a group of people think about a subject (Brinkmann, 2014). In addition, the use of snowball sampling in this study led to selection bias, since the researcher distributed the survey link through social connections who most probably came from similar backgrounds in terms of education and social life. Furthermore, the participants of both the survey and the interviews may have been reluctant to respond the questions related to social status and cultural capital, since in Turkish culture talking about these topics openly is generally avoided. In order to mitigate such bias, the questions and options were reworded considering their verbal variants in Turkish society. Finally, the interviews only represented the specific time period in which the research took place; hence, the conditions caused by COVID 19 — such as everybody spending much more time engaged with digital platforms and thus consuming more media — may have influenced the motivations of audience to consume media through platforms.

5 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results for both the surveys and interviews, which were conducted with 225 and 10 participants, respectively. The survey started with questions on the demography and general media usage of the respondents, followed by questions regarding their perceptions of digital platforms. Around 98% of the participants had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 68% percent of the participants were fluent at English. The majority of

respondents were either employed for wages, students, or self-employed (55.11%, 18.22%, and 9.78%, respectively). Hence, the participants were highly educated and self-sufficient in terms of income.

To filter the non-users of the platforms, the participants were asked if they subscribed to any SVoD platforms in Turkey. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents had a subscription for at least one of the platforms given as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Blu TV. Interestingly, the whole of this 68% respondent group subscribed to Netflix, and only 18% and 10% of the group also subscribed to Blu TV and Amazon Prime, respectively, which is a significantly different finding to the statistics provided by Statista (2020b).¹ One of the interviewee's words may provide an opinion for this difference is that some premium users of Netflix Turkey share one account with other people since it can be used in multiple screens with a premium account. Hence, the number of recorded subscribers is only one, but the actual number of users are four persons.

Additionally, 32% percent of the participants (72 out of 225) did not have a subscription to any of the listed platforms. Indeed, approximately 40% of non-users preferred other platforms such as YouTube and piracy sites. Furthermore, 50% of non-subscribers did not like the content offered through the platforms and perceived it as low quality. The open-ended responses demonstrated that the participants thought that the platform contents were harming social and moral values.

The findings and discussions are presented below in the order of the research questions. Therefore, the reasons behind the 25 to 34 year old audience's attraction to SVoD platforms in Turkey are first discussed with regard to the impact of television consumption, convenience, and content. Then, the findings from the survey and interviews are analysed

¹ Statista shows that in Turkey Blu TV had a 55% usage share of SVoD, Netflix 20%, YouTube 10%, and Amazon Prime 5% in 2018.

to determine the relationship between media consumption for status and cultural capital. Finally, the relationship between the media consumption of the sample audience and cosmopolitan taste formation and emerging cosmopolitan cultural capital is discussed.

5.1 The reasons for consumption through SVoD

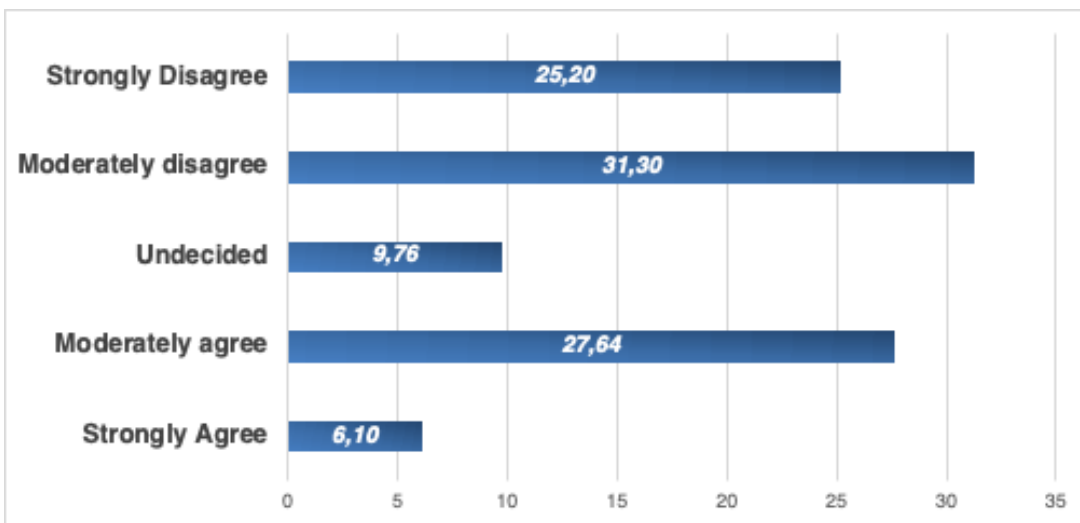
The initial objective of this dissertation was to identify the reasons for media consumption through digital platforms. Hence, both the survey and interviews asked participants about their motivation for subscribing to such platforms. It is notable that television was deemed to have a significant impact on switching to SVoD platforms. In addition, convenience was identified as prompting the decision to both subscribe to and stay on a platform. Related to television, platform content also impacted subscription but participants' views on this changed over time.

5.1.1 The opinions of the audience regarding Turkish television and content

The SVoD platform, defined by Lotz *et al.* (2018) as internet distributed television, is a new method of consuming media which beforehand were distributed through television. Before investigating the participants' reasons for consuming media through digital platforms, it was necessary to understand how television consumption was perceived and had changed over time in order to see how the audience's perception of TV prompted a shift from TV to SVoD.

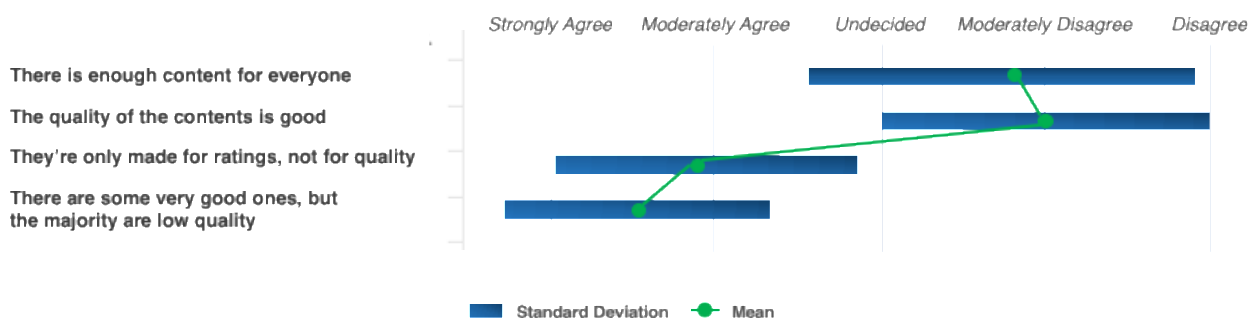
According to the survey results, approximately 20% of the respondents did not have a television at home. When asked the reason for this, more than half of the respondents indicated that they did not watch TV at all and they considered it time consuming, and 43% of the respondents indicated that they used other devices to watch media. In addition, some survey questions sought to examine the participants' perceptions regarding the TV shows and serials released on Turkish television channels.

Figure 5-1 The percentage representation of the responses to "I like watching TV shows and serials on terrestrial TV."



The responses to the questions were somewhat dispersed and inconsistent, since 56.5% of the participants did not like consuming content on television and 33.74% liked watching content on television. Despite this deviation regarding watching content on Turkish television channels, the responses to questions about available content revealed that 60% of the participants agreed that there was not enough content on television for everyone (Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2 Responses to "For the TV shows and serials on terrestrial TV..." in relation to content quality.



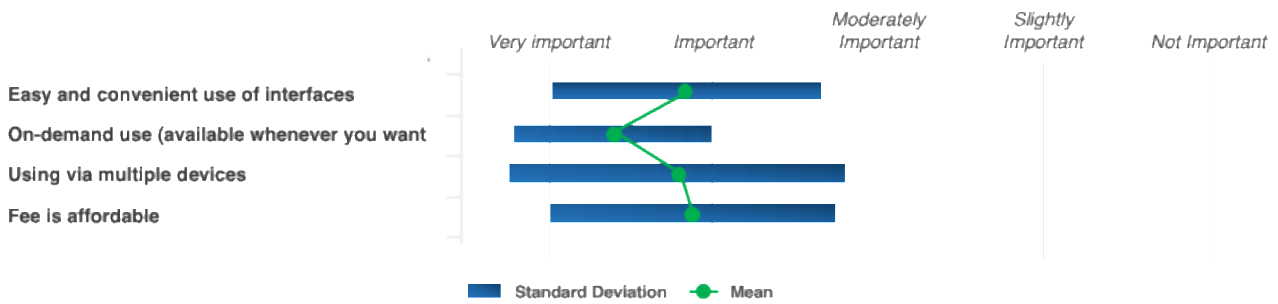
Considering the quality of the content on TV, approximately 85% of the respondents moderately agreed that although there were very few good productions, overall the quality of the content was quite low, and productions were produced with ratings in mind. A

recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst interviewees that content on television was not “original” or “different”; for example, one participant explained: “*they have so many classical scenarios*”. Respondents also made some negative comments about the genres of the shows, which they described as generally romance or comedy and criticized because “*they do not make people think*”. Another common view amongst the interviewees was that the shows on television were unnecessarily long compared to the content offered on the platforms (each television series episode in Turkey tends to be around 120-150 minutes long). Thus, both the lack of diversity and poor quality of the television content were agreed by the respondents, which indicates that television content did not attract the media audience investigated and is consistent with the literature (İşler-Sevindi and Katmer, 2020). In addition, this perceived poor condition of television content prompted the audience to compare it with the content provided by SVoD platforms and eventually led them to subscribe to these platforms.

5.1.2 Convenience

Internet distributed television differentiates from linear TV by changing viewing habits through technology. Elimination of scheduling, personalized screens, and enhanced usability through apps on multiple devices are some features provided by SVoD platforms that are not offered by television (Lobato, 2017; Lotz *et al.*, 2018). In order to describe the motivations behind SVoD consumption among adults in Turkey, both the survey and interview included a section about convenience and user experience. This section consisted of questions about on-demand use, easy interface, availability on multiple devices, and affordable fees. The table below illustrates the respondents’ perceived importance level of these different factors in terms of convenience.

Figure 5-3 Responses to “What describes your reasons to subscribe to digital platforms?” in relation to convenience.



This shows that convenience was highly significant for the respondents, because approximately 85% selected the “very important” and “important” options. Also, the responses only deviated slightly, which indicates that the majority of participants shared similar opinions regarding convenience (Figure 5-3). Question 12 on the survey required participants to write three words about the platforms. A thematic analysis of the words revealed that around 41% percent of the statements contained expressions related to convenience, such as “easy”, “practical”, “reachable”, “fast”, and “cheap”.

The themes of easy use of interface, categories, personalized screens, and no advertisements recurred throughout all the interviews. Respondents particularly emphasized convenience both as a reason to subscribe in the first place and also to remain a subscriber. In addition, before legal platforms were available, audiences mainly watched foreign television series using piracy websites with huge amounts of advertisements and no personalization such as the ability to continue where you left off. Some respondents noted that at the very beginning, paying for a video site felt meaningless since they could obtain the same content for free on the internet; however, later on, the complications of these sites pushed them to use the much easier, and as one interviewee put it “*simple*”, SVoD platforms. These findings are consistent with the Netflix study conducted by İşler-Sevindi and Katmer (2020) which identified ad free features and resuming from where you left off as among the significant reasons for subscribing to Netflix. Similarly, Parmaksız and Kırçova (2020) found

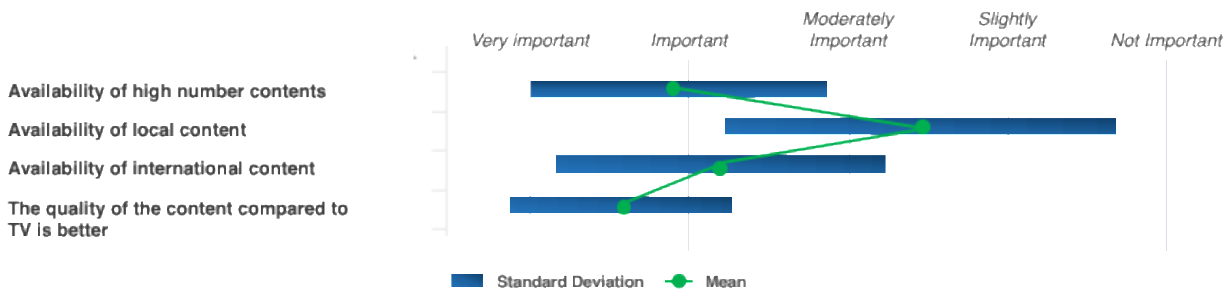
that comfort and ease of use impacted the intention to adopt SVoD over illegal options in Turkey. Since the majority of the participants in this research were Netflix users, the convenience that Netflix provided influenced them to consume media through that platform.

As mentioned before, the audience not only started using platforms due to ease and comfort, but also kept using them for the same reasons. In this respect, when they were asked whether their motivation to subscribe had changed or not, some interviewees commented that their motivation was the ease of use and practicality offered by technology, so they preferred Netflix for these reasons. Commenting on comfort, one interviewee said: *“If I decide to watch a movie, and I cannot find it on Netflix, I give up the movie and stick with Netflix, since searching on other places is really hard. Instead, I go with something on the platform.”* This shows that convenience critically influenced the motivation for choosing SVoD platforms, especially Netflix.

5.1.3 Content

As indicated above, that media audience in the research sample reported finding the content on TV insufficient and being unsatisfied with its quality. This prompted them to prefer using SVoD to consume media. In particular, the availability of a large number of diverse content types such as TV series, documentaries, and films motivated the audience to subscribe to the platforms. Nevertheless, the quality of the content was still criticized even though it was rated better than television content.

Figure 5-4 Responses to “What describes your reasons for subscribing to digital platforms?” in relation to content.



Initially, the availability of a large amount of content was evaluated as significant for every participant, and approximately 40% of the respondents rated it as very significant for subscription (Figure 5-4). When Netflix first entered the Turkish market, the amount of content available was quite low due to issues regarding translation. The interviewees noted that the number of available content had increased since then and continues to increase. During the interviews, the participants on the whole agreed that the Netflix library was quite rich and this was a reason for their continued use of the platform. Accordingly, the survey respondents were asked to write three words that reminded them of the platforms, and 16% of the answers were associated with the words “diversity/diverse”, “rich content”, and “original”. A small number of interviewees noted that although the amount of content on the platform was not as large as in the US or UK, they still considered it satisfactory; for example one interviewee explained: *“you can find content in every genre — although it is only one or two, you still can”*. This shows that content diversity and the availability of various amounts of content were critical to the participants’ consumption of media through digital platforms because the respondents perceived the content offered on TV as insufficient.

The survey included statements measuring the respondents’ perception of the quality of the content on the digital platforms compared to TV content. Ninety-one percent of participants stated that the quality of the content on the platforms was better than that of the content on TV (Figure 5-4). The responses did not vary significantly, which shows that this was the

common opinion of the respondents. Additionally, for the statement given for Question 13 (“All productions on platforms are better than traditional TV.”), on average all respondents selected the “moderately agree” option. This aligns with the findings presented earlier which indicated that almost all participants thought the content offered on TV was of lower quality.

Indeed, the literature review revealed that digital platforms tend to try to associate their names and brands with the perception of “quality TV” and “quality content” (Wayne, 2018, p.729; Burroughs, 2019, p.7). However, although the participants agreed that the quality of content offered by digital platforms was better than that offered by television, they also highlighted the varying quality of the content offered on digital platforms. They used Netflix as a main example, and described that at the very beginning any content offered by Netflix was considered to be high quality; however, over time, popular content was produced to attract a larger audience, which eventually decreased the quality-content ratio. Almost all interviewees stated that if they wanted to watch quality content, they had to search and find themselves. They could not randomly watch something and find it to be of high quality because they noted that popular productions were quite similar to each other. Hence, when they were asked if they perceived Netflix content as high quality, they replied as *“I cannot say that for all”*.

This finding regarding perceptions of content quality is contrary to the previous studies on Netflix conducted by İşler-Sevindi and Katmer (2020) and Parmaksız and Kırçova (2020), which found that the audience preferred Netflix due to its high-quality content and perceived content quality. This inconsistency may be due to sample differences, since İşler-Sevindi and Katmer (2020) have chosen a sample mostly aged under 25 years old and was made up predominantly of high school graduates. Nevertheless, overall the findings show that audiences put emphasis on the amount and diversity of content when choosing digital platforms with which to consume media. However, although the quality of the content is

assumed to be better than television content, this is not the main reason for using the platforms, as audiences do not perceive the quality of the content as very high.

5.2 Media consumption as social status marker

People engage with specific consumption practices in order to form and show their status. Symbols of status change according to time and society, and as Sussman (1984) explained, societies generate their own cultural symbols. According to Bourdieu (1984), cultural consumption is a way of separating oneself from others. Hence, cultural consumption is related to the social structures, class, and collective identity created through shared taste (Bourdieu, 1986; DiMaggio, 1987). In alignment with this theory, this paper investigated how media consumption of digital platform audiences in Turkey is shaped by conspicuous consumption. The results show that media consumption through digital platforms in Turkey has become a new distinction and resembles a higher status image in the eyes of the people.

Almost all of the interview participants said that their decision to subscribe to platforms was influenced by their friends and social circle. They described how their friends started watching Netflix and making suggestions which eventually led them to use the platform themselves. Also, approximately 40% of the survey respondents agreed that “none of the people in my workplace or classroom watch content on TV”. Thus, although television had been losing its popularity in their social environment, the popularity of digital platforms was increasing. One of the interviewees commented that: *“in my friend group, everyone uses it and talks about the shows on it. You want to keep up with them and engage with this popular hype”*. Some of the interviewees also emphasized the word “popular” when describing the position of the platforms in their social environment and in society in general. That is, obtaining acceptance from their social circle and engaging with other people were facilitated by subscribing to the digital platforms.

With regard to TV consumption, 85% of the survey participants agreed that TV audiences were not from high cultures, and 62% thought that TV audiences were from low cultures. On the contrary, a common view amongst the interviewees was that platform audiences were mainly educated, eligible to speak or understand English, and able to afford to pay a monthly subscription; hence, they were generally members of the upper-middle class. This aligns with the reflections of Lobato (2017) and Straubhaar *et al.* (2019) on the Netflix audience profile. Furthermore, similar to Wayne's (2016) findings, the participants believed that the requirement of intellectual skills to consume media means that consumption of it represents a higher status. Üstüner and Holt (2010, p.42) mentioned in their study on Turkish society and cultural capital that "mass media content proved to be less important as a status marker, perhaps because it is so widely available". However, a requirement to pay in order to use these platforms prevents access for everyone and was identified by participants as a distinction or "a marker" for users. Thus, contrary to television watchers, platform users were perceived by respondents as educated, elite, upper class, and intellectually competent.

Furthermore, when the interviewees were asked how the platforms were perceived in their social environment, almost two-thirds reported that Netflix had an elite image, or people believed that it had. In the word analysis, 28% of the respondents associated the word "quality" with the digital platforms. In this instance, quality was used in reference to the overall platform rather than the content. Thus, it appears that "the socially constructed aura might be as valuable as the material qualities of the product" (Arvidsson, 2006, p.67); hence, the audience believed that the platforms were high quality even though the content offered was not consistently of high quality.

To conclude, the users of the platforms acknowledged the SVoD platforms as being perceived as high quality by society. They also described how the platforms were used as a marker of distinction from others, which indicates that consuming media on digital

platforms is a tool for status and class marking. Thus, the “socially constructed aura” of the platforms plays a significant role in the decisions of the audience aged between 25 and 34 in Turkey.

5.3 Media consumption and cultural capital

Cultural consumption is a method of showing and representing existing cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus, the survey and interviews collected a variety of answers to investigate how media audiences make decisions about consumption in relation to their cultural capital. After the cultural capital score of the participants of the survey was calculated, a correlation analysis was conducted. Almost all the participants had higher education degrees that fell under the classification of institutionalized capital. Thus, they were differentiated in terms of their recent cultural preferences, such as arts attendance, and their habitus inherited from their families. However, it was found out that the existing cultural capitals of the audience did not have a statistically significant correlation with their views about television content or the platforms. This result was unexpected, and suggests that the current cultural capital level of the audience did not impact their decision to consume media through SVoD significantly.

On the other hand, concerns about forming cultural capital may have impacted the audience’s media consumption. Wayne (2018) noted that the acquisition of some content in this post network television era is similar to the objectified cultural capital defined by Bourdieu (1986); that is, owning the same cultural materials that signify distinction in terms of taste and knowledge in arts and culture. Seeing the digital platforms as a social status marker and something that differentiates one audience from another shows that consumption through SVoD has become a form of objectified cultural capital.

Regarding embodied cultural capital and habitus formation through consumption, the survey included the statement “Develop my own understanding and taste about the culture” as a response to the “Netflix/Amazon prime enables me...” question. A little less than the half of the respondents selected this answer, and approximately 20% also selected that the platforms enabled them to “develop intellectually” and “enjoy arts and cultural activities”. In contrast to Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of embodied cultural capital and habitus that enables a person to enjoy arts and culture with inherited and unconsciously obtained taste, the audience in the current study sample believed that they could obtain it through the digital platforms. These findings align with the concept of deterritorialized cultural capital: that Turkish people do not have an unconsciously developed habitus but pursue taste and habitus strategically and seek to develop it even during adulthood (Üstüner and Holt, 2010, p.53).

However, it is important to note that strategically pursuing habitus is meaningful; hence, not every audience can obtain habitus through consumption. Considering that the existing cultural capital of the audience investigated in this study did not impact their media consumption, it can be understood that the audience did not relate SVoD usage with the consumption of arts and culture. As the interviewees pointed out, only those looking for it could reach it. During the interviews, the majority of the participants reflected on their consumption intentions. They agreed that only consuming television shows and films does not improve taste and cultural capital, even consumption via Netflix or similar SVoD services. Indeed, one common view presented by the interviewees was that TV show and films can only offer cultural benefit and taste enhancement if the viewer is consciously pursuing these. Therefore, consuming media through SVoD platforms is a way of forming habitus and embodied cultural capital only if a person is aware this and seeking to obtain it strategically. Otherwise, the audience is just consuming the media without the concern of forming cultural capital.

5.4 Media consumption for cosmopolitan taste formation

Consuming through the platforms enabled the audience to separate themselves from other audiences, in accordance with Bourdieu's (1984) theory. However, although the use of digital platforms was identified as legitimized and a status marker of objectified cultural capital, the audience could only develop embodied capital and habitus through a conscious consumption of the platform content. Thus, what was consumed on the platforms was significant to determining the reasons for consumption related to cultural capital.

Before the introduction of the legal SVoD platforms in Turkey, media was already consumed through the internet. The interviews revealed that the TV consumption of the participants started to change after they encountered the American series *Lost* and *Prison Break*, which corresponded to the years 2004-2005, when interviewees attended secondary school and high school. After they were introduced to these American serials, they experienced certain realizations regarding the quality, editing, and originality of the scenarios. One of the interviewees reflected that “ *...it became an addiction, after I discovered Lost and Prison Break, I said this is what TV series should be, Turkish television series are not for me... This is how a television series should be I guess.*” In accordance with the consumption preferences identified previously, the audience in this study demonstrated an attraction to the foreign productions on the platforms.

According to the survey results, in terms of the origin of the content, there was a sharp contrast in opinions regarding local and international content availability. As mentioned previously, the availability of a large amount of content had a significant influence on the participants' in consumption via SVoD platforms. On the other hand, 73% of the platform users gave importance to the availability of foreign content, and the availability of local content was deemed slightly less important on average (Figure 5-4). Question 13 in the survey sought to find out how much the participants agreed with the statement of “I prefer

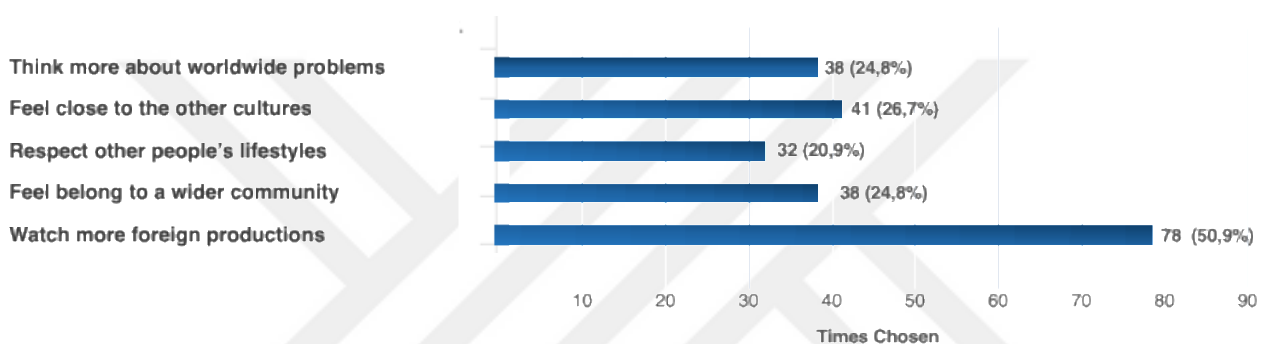
watching foreign content rather than local content on Netflix and Amazon Prime.” On average, the respondents selected “moderately agree”. Blu TV offers local, Turkish productions, whereas, Netflix, and Amazon Prime mainly offer foreign productions and very few local productions. However, the audience in the sample mainly used Netflix as a fundamental platform for media consumption; hence, it can be said that the availability of international content rather than local content influenced the consumption of media via SVoD.

Recently, Netflix has offered content from a variety of countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, US, Europe, and the Middle East. Over half of the respondents reported that although they had tried content outside of Europe and America, they tended not to prefer them. For example, one participant claimed: *“If I heard from someone that it is good, then I will watch it, but I would not watch them randomly”*. Therefore, despite having access to a large number of international productions, the audience was still more likely to consume Western and European content. Even within Europe they highlighted language and preferred consuming media in English. Therefore, the preference for the American and English language productions from the West, which they developed at an early age, still remained for the audience, although they encountered content from all over the world. These results are in alignment with the studies of Balı (2002) and Üstüner and Holt (2010), which stated that Western influence can strongly be felt in cultural systems and Western and American lifestyle and media are equated with higher status and taste in Turkey. It can thus be suggested that the investigated in this study mainly consumed foreign productions, especially American and Western content, in order to form a cosmopolitan taste in cultural consumption that enabled them to elevate their status.

Through the consumption of foreign productions on the platforms, participants formed a cosmopolitan taste which influenced how they formed an identity that took pleasure from

foreign cultures' media and how they learned, understood, and valued these cultures. In order to assess how the audience perceived the impact of the platforms, a selection of sentences was provided and participants were asked to select three that most described what Netflix and Amazon Prime had enabled in their lives. At least one of every four participants selected a sentence related to cosmopolitanism among other 10 phrases (in which they could have chosen only three best suit them.) (Figure 5-5).

Figure 5-5 The number of cosmopolitanism category sentences selected for the question “Netflix/Amazon Prime enables me to...”



These findings also align with Elkins's (2019) claim that the audience of the platforms gather around the cosmopolitan ideals that enable them to brand themselves as cosmopolitans outside of their national identity and as “the citizens of the world” (Ong, 2009, p.450) that signify other cultures and interact with cross-cultural lifestyles. Hence, some of the participants reported immersing themselves in diverse cultural productions and forming a cosmopolitan identity through their consumption and perception of the platforms. However, although some of the respondents associated themselves with cosmopolitan values, the interviews indicated that consumption practice regarding foreign productions was more related to constructing a cosmopolitan taste than building an identity. As it is seen that (Figure 5-5) watching foreign content still gets ahead of obtaining a view on the world and becoming a cosmopolitan person. Therefore, in spite of becoming a person who has a

cosmopolitan identity, developing a cosmopolitan taste especially related to the Western and American is encouraging the consumption on digital platforms.

5.5. Cosmopolitan cultural capital

During the interviews, the interviewees mainly stated that the platforms could not be used as alternatives to other art and cultural activities that are the main source of highbrow culture. However, one interviewee stated that *“if the person is not already spending quality time or engaging with some other arts and cultural activities, at least they can spend time on Netflix and get benefits instead of watching YouTube or scrolling on social media”*. Similarly, the majority of the participants reflected that they learned about other cultures through watching content on Netflix, and that getting to know other cultures can make a person more cultured. At this point it is important to understand how the interviewees actually defined culture. The common expressions used to define what it is to be cultured were “openness to constant learning”, “having a good sense about the world”, “having a cumulative knowledge”, “openness to other cultures, beliefs, lifestyles”, and “learning about other countries and cultures”. These findings demonstrate that learning about other cultures, countries, and world was significant to the participants’ definition of being cultured; therefore, consuming media on the platforms became a different form of legitimate culture to the one proposed by Bourdieu (1984), since it enabled the audience to learn about and engage with other countries and cultures. This aligns Prieur and Savage’s (2013) argument that cultural capital can exist in other cultural forms than highbrow culture. The definition of culture by the audience also demonstrated that culture can be measured by how much a person is open to learning about other cultures and knowing about other countries, which falls under Ong’s (2009, p.456) definition of instrumental cosmopolitanism as the “use of one’s knowledge of the world to promote oneself”. Therefore, the audience formed a social status and a cultural capital through this cosmopolitan definition of culture and their consumption

of foreign productions (Saran and Kalliny, 2012). This newly-emerging cultural capital was defined by Prieur and Savage (2013) as cosmopolitan cultural capital. According to Savage et al. (2010) and Prieur and Savage (2013), some media forms, such as the American and Western productions on the SVoD platforms, enable an audience to construct a cosmopolitan taste. Savage *et al.* (2010) argued that this formation is especially seen among younger generations. In Turkey, this formation of cosmopolitan taste and eventually cosmopolitan cultural capital has become widespread through the international digital platforms that offer foreign cultural forms, and also among the sample in this study, who were the audience aged between 25 and 34 years old.

These behaviours of the Turkish media audience aged between 25 and 34 indicate that the audience is trying to form a cosmopolitan cultural capital that is different from the traditional cultural capital defined by Bourdieu (1984). That is, consuming culture more recently legitimized and based on the external, distant world which is also acknowledged as exclusive and quality is more interesting for this audience than consuming local cultural forms or other legitimate art and cultural forms inside the country. Hence, the media audience in this study sample sought to acquire cosmopolitan culture and taste as another manifestation of social status in Turkish society.

6 Conclusion

This research investigated the reasons for the consumption of media using SVoD platforms in Turkey by the audience aged between 25 and 34. To do so, a conceptual framework was used to analyse the empirical findings that were collected through mixed methods — surveys and interviews. The research mainly adopted Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) concept of cultural capital and also considered other related concepts such as conspicuous consumption and cosmopolitan cultural capital to analyse how media consumption in Turkey is related to social status and cultural capital making through cosmopolitan taste and identity formation.

The survey provided both qualitative and quantitative data, and the interviews enabled the researcher to collect in-depth qualitative data. The findings were analysed using thematic analysis and coding.

The results showed that the audience in the sample preferred to subscribe to Netflix (the most used platform in the sample) due to convenience. The audience emphasized how easy use of interface, ad-free features, and usability on multiple devices were significant reasons for them to first choose Netflix and then continue to use it. In addition, the motivation for using the platforms generally was influenced by the television content offered in Turkey. The audience did not enjoy the television broadcasts in Turkey, and explained that lack of sufficient and diverse content prompted them to use other platforms for media consumption. Therefore, the availability of a large number of diverse contents on Netflix attracted the audience and was identified as one of the main reasons for subscription to the platform. However, the quality of the platforms' content was not given as one of the main reasons to stay on the platforms. Although the audience found the quality of the platforms' content better than that of television, they still perceived the overall quality as not very high, particularly on Netflix.

On the other hand, social dynamics encouraged participants to use the platforms, mainly because their friends and people in their social environment used and recommended the platforms and daily discussions were formed around the platform consumption. Moreover, the platforms themselves were perceived to be of high quality, in contrast to the perception of content quality. This indicates that quality and elite image and the perceived image of the platform audience functions as a social status marker for users, through which they can separate themselves from others.

Cultural capital did not play statistically significant role in the decisions made by the audience investigated. On the contrary, the audience believed that they could form embodied cultural capital and habitus, or deterritorialized cultural capital (Üstüner and Holt, 2010), through their consumption. However, such formation can only happen through strategic and conscious consumption; hence, not every audience's media consumption will be motivated by this reason.

On the other hand, the audience significantly engaged with foreign productions and preferred them over Turkish content. Through their consumption, they tried to develop a cosmopolitan taste, especially gathered around American and Western content consumption. The consumption of the culture of distant other has historically been regarded as a crucial status marker and cultural capital acquisition tool in Turkey, as demonstrated by the media consumption of the study participants (Üstüner and Holt, 2010). Thus, the audience formed a cosmopolitan cultural capital that rooted in other forms of cultural consumption focused around foreign content, in contrast to Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital.

The most important limitation of this research is the fact that the results are not generalizable to Turkey or the given age range, since a non-probability sampling method was used to select participants. Notwithstanding these limitations, this research was able to reach a reasonable sample size that could generate in-depth understanding of this group's media consumption.

This study contributes to understanding media consumption motivation in Turkey by combining it with the concept of cultural capital. Therefore, it may lay the groundwork for future research into the overall audience in Turkey or some other age groups such as Generation Z, which has significantly different consumption habits. Hence, a further study

should include a larger sample. The cultural capital and SVoD consumption relationship would be a fruitful area for further work in media studies in Turkey.



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Appendix

Appendix 1. Ethical Approval

Research Ethics
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05/06/2020

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Understanding media audience in Turkey: Constructing identity and cultural capital through digital platforms

Thank you for submitting your Minimal Risk Self-Registration Form. This letter acknowledges confirmation of your registration; your registration confirmation reference number is MRSU-19/20-19461

IMPORTANT CORONAVIRUS UPDATE: In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the College Research Ethics Committee has temporarily suspended all primary data collection involving face to face participant interactions, unless the data collection fall under one of the exemptions and fulfils the criteria outlined by CREC at the link below:

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/ethics/applications/COVID-19-Update-for-Researchers>

Ethical clearance for this project is granted. However, the clearance outlined in the attached letter is contingent on your adherence to the latest College measures when conducting your research. Please do not commence data collection until you have carefully reviewed the update and made any necessary project changes.

Ethical clearance is granted for a period of **one year** from today's date and you may now commence data collection. However, it is important that you have read through the information provided below before commencing data collection:

As the Minimal Risk Registration Process is based on self-registration, your form has not been reviewed by the College Research Ethics Committee. It is therefore your responsibility to ensure that your project adheres to the [Minimal Risk Guiding Principles](#) and the agreed protocol does not fall outside of the criteria for Minimal Risk Registration. Your project may be subject to audit by the College Research Ethics Committee and any instances in which the registration process is deemed to have been used inappropriately will be handled as a breach of good practice and investigated accordingly.

Record Keeping:

Please be sure to keep a record of your registration number and include it in any materials associated with this research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that any other permissions or approvals (i.e. R&D, gatekeepers, etc.) relevant to their research are in place, prior to conducting the research.

In addition, you are expected to keep records of your process of informed consent and the dates and relevant details of research covered by this application. For example, depending on the type of research that you are doing, you might keep:

- A record record of all data collected and all mechanisms of disseminated results.
- Documentation of your informed consent process. This may include written information sheets or in cases where it is not appropriate to provide written information, the verbal script, or introductory material provided at the start of an online survey.
Please note: For projects involving the use of an Information Sheet and Consent Form for recruitment purposes, please ensure that you use the KCL GDPR compliant [Information Sheet & Consent Form Templates](#)
- Where appropriate, records of consent, e.g. copies of signed consent forms or emails where participants agree to be interviewed.

Audit:

You may be selected for an audit, to see how researchers are implementing this process. If audited, you and your Supervisor will be asked to attend a short meeting where you will be expected to explain how your research meets the eligibility criteria of the minimal risk process and how the project abides by the general principles of ethical research. In particular, you will be expected to provide a general summary of your review of the possible risks involved in your research, as well as to provide basic research records (as above in Record Keeping) and to describe the process by which participants agreed to participate in your research.

Remember that if you at any point have any questions about the ethical conduct of your research, or believe you may have gained the incorrect level of ethical clearance, please contact your supervisor or the Research Ethics Office.

We wish you every success with your project moving forward.
With best wishes,

The Research Ethics Office

On behalf of the College Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 2. Sample of Survey Questions and Categorisation

2. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, the degree will be received.	Multiple Choice No schooling completed Nursery school to 8th-grade High school graduate Bachelor's degree Master's degree Ph.D. degree and Higher	Cultural capital measurement
4. Which languages are you capable of speaking fluently?	Multiple Choice English Spanish Arabic French German Italian Mandarin Other None	Cultural capital measurement
7. For the TV shows and series on terrestrial TV...	Strongly agree - Moderately Agree- Undecided- Moderately Disagree - Strongly Disagree I like watching them. There is enough content for everyone. The quality of the contents is good. They are only made for rating, not for quality. There are some very good ones but the majority are very low quality. The audience is generally from high culture. The audience is generally from the subculture. None of the people in my work or classroom watch them. I watch them secretly.	Views on TV content Views on TV content Views on TV content quality Views on TV content quality Views on TV content quality Views on TV audience / Status Consumption Views on TV audience / Status Consumption Views on TV audience / Status Consumption Status Consumption
10. What describes your reasons to subscribe to digital platforms?	Strongly agree - Moderately Agree- Undecided- Moderately Disagree - Strongly Disagree Availability of a high number of contents Availability of local contents Availability of international content The quality of the content compared to TV is better. Easy and convenient use of interfaces On-demand use (available whenever you want). Using via multiple devices Fee is affordable All my friends use it All people in my workplace/class use it People that I admire (influencers or celebrities or highbrow) use it	Views on SVoD content Views on SVoD content / Cosmopolitanism Views on SVoD content / Cosmopolitanism Views on SVoD content Views on SVoD convenience Views on SVoD convenience Views on SVoD convenience Status Consumption Status Consumption Status Consumption
12. Can you write three words that come to your mind about the platform that you use (Netflix, Amazon Prime, or Blu TV)?	Open Ended	Views on SVoD
13. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Strongly agree - Moderately Agree- Undecided- Moderately Disagree - Strongly Disagree Any production on platforms are better than traditional TV. The production country and language of the TV shows and films are important for me. I prefer watching foreign content rather than local content on Netflix and Amazon Prime. I would watch any content on the platform because it is on that platform.	Views on SVoD content Views on SVoD Content / Cosmopolitanism Cosmopolitanism Views on SVoD content
14. Netflix or Amazon Prime enables me to...	Choose the best three.. Think more about worldwide problems Feel close to other cultures Respect other people's lifestyles Feel belong to a wider community Develop my own understanding of the world and culture Watch more foreign productions. Develop intellectually. Acquire me ability to enjoy arts and other cultural activities. Advance my social status Feel cultured	Cosmopolitanism Cosmopolitanism Cosmopolitanism Cosmopolitanism Cultural Capital Formation Cosmopolitanism Cultural Capital Formation Cultural Capital Formation Cultural Capital Formation Cultural Capital Formation

16. How much do the statements are given describe you?	Scale - Like me to Not Like me	Cultural Capital Measurement
	I frequently visit museums, theatres, or attend concerts.	
	I frequently borrow/buy books.	
	As a child, my parents regularly encouraged me to read books.	
	I used to take art /music classes outside of school.	
	We have lots of books at home.	
17. About how many books were there in your home when you were 16 years old?	Multiple Choice	Cultural Capital Measurement
	10 books or less	
	11 to 25 books	
	26 to 100 books	
	101 to 200 books	
	201 to 500 books	
18. How often do your parents...	Strongly agree - Moderately Agree- Undecided- Moderately Disagree - Strongly Disagree	Cultural Capital Measurement
	Watch entertainment shows on TV	
	Read novels	
	Read nonfiction	
	Go theatres and concerts	
	Go art galleries and museums	
	Play an instrument	
	Discuss (with you) art	
	Discuss (with you) books and films.	
	Discuss (with you) politics and religion	
	Discuss (with you) science	

Appendix 3. Interview Questions

Section 1- TV and Media consumption	1. How would you define yourself as a media consumer/user?
	2. Can you describe your daily media consumption routine? Let say you came from work, decide to watch something, how does this process evolve?
	3. Do you follow a specific channel or show on tv?
	4. How do you decide to watch on a content on tv?
	5. What is the benchmark of the quality for you?
	6. How do you think about the Turkish television and fil sector in général?
Section 2- Digital platforms and reasons for consumption	1. For how long have you been subscribing the platform?
	2. What are the reasons initiating your decision?
	3. How did you feel when you first started using the platforms?
	4. Have your opinions towards the platform changed?
	5. Outside of the COVID-19 period, how is you consumption altered after you subscribe to the platform?
	6. How do you find the quality of the contents on the platforms?
	7. Why Netflix, but not Blu TV?
	8. Is there any person or social dynamic that influenced your preferences?
	9. What is the image of Netflix?
	10. Would you accept Netflix as a quality measurement standard for a show or film?
Section 3- Cultural Capital/ Culture	(This section has included the questions given below, but the discussion is moderated according to the flow and some other questions were added during the interview to understand the participants mind set.)
	1. (Explain Straubhaar et al. (2019)'s idea on audience) Do you agree with his view on the audience and cultural capital? How would you comment on this in terms of Turkey?
	2. How would you define the culture, and being cultured?
	3. How do you think that Netflix or other platforms impacted your taste for tv shows and films?
	4. Is there any impact on taste for art or other cultural activities?
	5. Would you see any person who subscribe a platform as having a better taste and capital on culture?
Section 4 – Cosmopolitanism	1. While consuming a film or tv show what are your preferences among local and foreign contents? And Why?
	2. How do you feel different due to your decision?
	3. Which one does the most reflect your identity and cultural taste?
	4. Do you have a country preference?
	5. Do you watch content from Asia or middle east? Why?
	6. Why do you think you have such a tendency?
	7. How do you think about the western productions?