

Slow Watching in the Age of Binge and Reels: Young Audiences of Turkish TV Dramas

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journals.sagepub.com/home/tvn**Özge Özyılmaz¹ and Ipek A. Celik Rappas^{2,3}** 

Abstract

This article explores how young audiences in Turkey engage with the slow temporality of Turkish TV dramas (*dizis*) amid an era dominated by binge-watching and short-form video culture. While streaming platforms promote fast-paced, compressed narratives, Turkish dramas retain exceptionally long episodes—often exceeding 150 minutes. Drawing on focus groups with university students, the study examines how young viewers negotiate these extended durations. Rather than dismissing linear television as outdated, participants integrate slow-paced series into daily routines, family rituals, and nostalgic attachments, turning them into temporal infrastructures of care and belonging. The article argues that slow watching functions as both a mode of attention and a cultural practice that reclaims time from the acceleration of digital media, positioning *dizi* viewing as a form of shared affect, continuity, and subtle cultural resistance against the moralism and homogeneity of contemporary Turkish television.

Keywords

Turkish TV dramas, young audiences, slow watching, media temporality, TV and nostalgia, media and multitasking

Social media platforms such as TikTok and YouTube privilege short-form videos that reward rapid consumption, while SVOD services promote compressed, suspense-driven serial narratives. Against this dual acceleration of screen culture, the temporality and

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narrative pacing of Turkish television dramas (*dizi*) appear strikingly slow and long. Television series broadcast in prime time each evening typically have an average run-time of 150 minutes, including advertisements and recap segments from previous episodes. This temporality has a clear impact on the labor conditions of screen media professionals, from scriptwriters to art directors who must produce a film-length episode per week, which forces them to work fast and long hours under stress. Diametrically opposed to the hasty temporality of production, that of *dizi* consumption is extremely elongated. Partly because of this temporality, *dizi* spectatorship is often associated in popular discourse with older viewers, who are presumed to have more time to follow evening prime-time broadcasts and daytime reruns.

In this audience research, we focus on a younger, social media-savvy demographic who follow Turkish *dizis* across multiple platforms—including national broadcast television, digital streaming services, and networks' YouTube channels, where episodes are typically made available shortly after their initial broadcast—and who actively engage with these series via TikTok and online comment cultures. This study examines how young audiences engage with the slow temporality and comparatively less compressed and suspenseful narratives of Turkish television dramas. We investigate why young viewers remain committed to these series and how they describe their long-term attachments to characters that unfold across years of weekly viewing. Rather than dismissing linear television as outdated, we explore how its distinctive pacing becomes woven into everyday routines, offering emotional anchoring and, at times, subtle forms of cultural resistance. To address these issues, we conducted five focus groups with university students aged 19 to 28 in Istanbul, bringing together participants from different campuses and living arrangements who follow *dizis* across broadcast television, YouTube uploads, and social media discussion spaces.

Scholarship on algorithmically curated short videos describes continuously updating feeds and the accelerated attentional rhythms they cultivate (Liang 2022; Schellewald 2022). In parallel, contemporary work on streaming and internet-distributed television examines how on-demand “portals” and platform infrastructures reorganize access and viewing protocols (Jenner 2018; Lotz 2017). Within this literature, while on-demand viewing is often positioned as a deliberate, self-scheduled alternative to linear television, binge-watching is frequently discussed in relation to “quality” and “cult” seriality with narrative structures that encourage focused and time-compressed consumption (Jenner 2017). Audience studies foreground intensive viewing sessions of university students who define binge-watching as watching suspenseful dramatic content for three to four hours in one sitting (Panda and Pandey 2017; Rubenking et al. 2018). While this scholarship does not make universal claims about youth preferences, its operational definitions nonetheless tend to privilege a model of social media-savvy viewership oriented toward tightly plotted narratives and compressed attention spans.

Hence, popular and youth viewing practices are often linked to binge-watching and short-form feeds. Slow viewing, on the other hand, is typically associated with slow pacing of art cinema (Zawadka 2022) or with alternative broadcasting practices such as slow television (Irving 2017). Yet slow-paced engagement also occurs within youth

and popular culture, as seen in long-format Turkish dramas. In opposition to the emphasis on acceleration and compression, Turkish *dizis* make visible a different temporal regime—one organized around film-length episodes, weekly scheduling, and storyworlds that unfold over years. Rather than positioning this as the opposite of platform viewing, we examine how platform-savvy young audiences *negotiate* elongated seriality across broadcast television, network YouTube uploads, and social media discussion spaces, developing practical tactics to accommodate, reshape, or selectively engage with slow pacing. Scholarship on soap opera and serial melodrama has long examined extended television narratives and the ways viewers weave them into everyday life (Allen 1985; Feuer 1984; Harrington and Bielby 1995; Levine 2020; Newcomb and Hirsch 1983). Putting this scholarship on everyday media use and long-form television seriality in conversation with debates on streaming acceleration, this article shows how multi-screen and extended viewing becomes embedded in routines, family and intergenerational connections, and nostalgic attachments. In doing so, we highlight forms of routine-based, relational spectatorship that can be sidelined when contemporary television debates foreground platform logics and time-compressed engagements.

Situating the Study

Since the 1990s, TV series production in Turkey has expanded rapidly, supported by strong domestic demand and the rise of private television channels. Despite regulatory pressures and the growing availability of content on streaming and pirate platforms, linear television continues to command a large audience. According to the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK 2018), the average daily TV viewing time in Turkey is 3.5 hours per person.

Each week, approximately 400 hours of Turkish TV dramas are broadcast. The content spans a wide range, from period dramas [*Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent Century, 2011–2014)*] to romantic [*Kiralık Aşk (Love for Rent, 2015–2017)*] and mafia series [*Çukur (The Pit, 2017–2021)*], as well as hybrid productions [*Son Yaz (Last Summer, 2021)*, *Bahar (2024–)*]. With eighty-five production companies and profits of \$195 million for the top ten firms, TV drama production has secured a central role in Turkey's creative industries (Deloitte 2014). Broadcast episodes are commonly scheduled in roughly three-hour prime-time slots, typically comprising around two hours of scripted content and one hour of advertising, and they are often re-broadcast during daytime off-peak slots. *Dizis* often follow a multi-window release pattern: episodes premiere on free-to-air broadcast channels in prime time, full episodes are uploaded to the network's official YouTube channel shortly after broadcast, and circulation is further extended through official recaps/highlights and user-generated clips that travel across TikTok, Instagram Reels, and comment spaces. This staged availability enables viewers to combine "liveness" (watching during broadcast) with catch-up viewing, selective rewatching, and clip-based engagement across platforms.

Their international circulation has also become highly profitable. Earlier indicators already pointed to rapid growth: according to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and

Tourism, Turkey exported 36,000 hours of television to 76 countries between 2005 and 2011, and export revenues were reported at around US\$100 million at the time (Yeşil 2015, 44). More recent trade and industry reporting places Türkiye among the top exporters of scripted television—described as third after the United States and the United Kingdom (The Economist 2024). In 2024, the sector reportedly exported more than 300 productions and generated export revenues exceeding \$500 million (Anadolu Agency 2025).

Research on Turkish *dizis* examined narratives in relation to contemporary social and political issues such as the problematic representation of women, gendered violence, and neo-Ottomanism (Bulut and İleri 2019; Gençoğlu Onbaşı and Coşar 2016; Kesirli Unur 2020; Lüküslü 2018). Alongside debates on content, a growing body of work address production, focusing on precarious labor conditions that arise from the ballooning running times of episodes—from 90 to eventually 140 minutes—which compromise script quality and create widespread health and safety violations by compelling crews to work overtime (Balçı Gülpınar 2023; Bulut 2016; Celik-Rappas 2025; Öztürkmen 2022; Yanardağoğlu and Turhallı 2020).

Another strand of scholarship focused on reception by transnational audiences, *dizis*' role in foreign politics, and contribution to screen tourism (Berg 2020; Kantarci et al. 2017; Rakhmani and Zakiah 2020; Yanardağoğlu and Karam 2013; Yanardağoğlu and Turhallı 2020; Yörük and Vatikiotis 2013). Extending this conversation, Bilge Yeşil situates audience reception within the industrial and cultural dynamics of long-form seriality, showing how regional popularity emerged from the convergence of political-economic forces and local–global market imperatives (Yeşil 2015). Other recent studies explore the political economy of remakes and adaptations, and the affective investments of local audiences (Algan and Kaptan 2020; Behlil 2023; Öztürkmen 2022). Öztürkmen (2022) argues that these dramas must be understood not only as entertainment but also as sites that interweave individual recollections and collective histories, shaping cultural identity and political belonging while being embedded in the everyday routines of domestic and national life. Examining their national impact further, Algan and Kaptan (2020, 45–68) show how Turkish television has been deeply shaped by the political economy of the AKP era, with dramas functioning simultaneously as cultural products and as tools of hegemony. They also stress how domestic audiences experience these dramas as sites of belonging and cultural identity (Algan and Kaptan 2020, 155–72).

These perspectives underscore why Turkish series should be analyzed in relation to both global media temporalities and local cultural practices. Such recent accounts illuminate the role of dramas in Turkey's domestic and international soft power strategies and their significance for domestic audiences, who often are connected to them both emotionally and culturally. Yet, comparatively less attention has been paid to the tastes, habits, and evaluations of local TV audiences (Ildır and Celik Rappas 2022), despite the existence of valuable longitudinal media ethnographies (Türkoğlu 2020). So far, limited studies of Turkish *dizi* audiences focused on older women (Arun et al. 2017). Our research suggests that viewership extends well beyond this commonly assumed demographic.

Television scholars have long examined audiences' affective attachments to series. Ang's (1985) notion of emotional realism emphasizes that viewers connect with narratives not because they are factually realistic, but because they feel emotionally true. These emotional connections are not only personal but also social and collective. Similarly, Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) theorized the concept of parasocial intimacy—a sense of relationship with media figures shared across audiences—which has been revisited in recent scholarship on digital fandom and streaming audiences (e.g., Bond 2018; Click et al. 2013). Such shared attachments help explain why viewers persist with long-running series despite narrative fatigue. Yet these accounts of attachment are not always connected to discussions of platform temporality and the routine-based commitments associated with long-format broadcast serials.

Within television studies, serial melodrama scholarship offers a long-standing account of how elongated serial forms generate attachment through repetition, delay, and the promise of continuation, and how viewers fold these programs into domestic routines and everyday conversation (Allen 1985; Feuer 1984; Harrington and Bielby 1995; Levine 2020). Newcomb and Hirsch's (1983) "cultural forum" model likewise treats television storytelling as an ongoing site of shared talk and evaluation rather than a bounded text. Reading *dizi* watching through these lenses points to a popular tradition of slow, long-form seriality in which viewers modulate attention, return week after week, and use serial worlds as resources for everyday sociability.

Bringing these strands together also helps specify what is distinctive about the Turkish case: industrially extreme runtimes, weekly scheduling, and multi-window circulation. Situating our findings within these debates highlights how Turkish dramas complicate shorthand oppositions that align youth viewing with acceleration and compression. Often discussed in global circulation debates as "soap operas or telenovelas," Turkish *dizis* provide a useful case for bringing long-form seriality into conversation with platform temporality. Our research positions Turkish long-format dramas within both national and global discussions, highlighting overlap and divergence while addressing gaps in each strand of literature. The study examines how young viewers' nostalgia and critique are embedded within a broader industrial landscape. By integrating these perspectives, we extend TV audience research into the contemporary Turkish context, showing how the everyday viewing practices of young audiences both resonate with and diverge from international accounts of media temporality and audience engagement.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative audience research design centered on focus group methodology, widely used for exploring shared cultural practices (Krueger and Casey 2015; Morgan 1997). We conducted five focus groups with students aged 19 to 28 in Istanbul, drawn from Koç University and İstanbul Kent University, comprising a total of twenty-eight participants (fourteen self-identified as women and fourteen as men). In terms of socio-economic background, the majority described their families as middle or upper-middle class. Ten participants had relocated to Istanbul from other cities

to pursue their university education. We also sought diversity in living arrangements, including students residing in dormitories, with their families, or independently. To protect participants' privacy, all names used in this article are pseudonyms. All participants provided informed consent; focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed, and identifying details were removed during transcription.

The focus groups that explored quotidian *dizi* spectatorship were guided by semi-structured questions addressing four key areas: viewing practices, temporality, emotional engagement, and social interaction. Participants were asked how, where, and on which platforms they watch television series, whether they watch alone or with others, and how advertising, recaps, or multitasking shape their viewing experience. We explored perceived differences between broadcast television and digital platform series in terms of duration, narrative structure, pacing, and production values. Particular attention was given to temporality, including ideal episode and season lengths, comparisons with binge-watching, and practices such as pausing, rewatching, or consuming clips on social media. We also examined emotional attachment to characters, reasons for continuing or abandoning series, and the role of serial television in participants' daily routines and social relationships. The discussions concluded with reflections on the series that had most affected them and what makes a series either compelling or disengaging.

Focus groups are particularly suitable for this project because they capture the interactional dynamics of meaning-making rather than relying on isolated individual accounts. As Kitzinger (1995) explains, focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method, encouraging participants to talk to one another, exchange anecdotes, and comment on each other's experiences and points of view. Since, as our participants noted, watching *dizis* is often perceived as a "cringe" activity among young urban university students, they valued the opportunity for collective discussion in the focus groups, and several mentioned that they had previously formed friendships around this shared "guilty pleasure." After the focus group sessions, participants continued their animated discussions in the corridors, sharing stories about favorite series and viewing habits.

In the next stage of analysis, transcripts were analyzed thematically—identifying and interpreting recurring patterns and themes across the transcripts. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), after familiarization, we generated, reviewed, and refined themes, then defined and named them before producing the report. This approach is consistent with qualitative audience research, which emphasizes systematic yet contextual interpretation of patterns across accounts (Ang 1985; Livingstone 1998).

In line with qualitative audience studies, our sample size was guided by thematic saturation; the five focus groups ($n=28$) were sufficient to identify recurring patterns of meaning in our dataset. As with any qualitative research, there are limitations. The focus on university students, mostly from film and media studies, means that our findings cannot be generalized to all young viewers. Participants' accounts revealed recurring patterns, which we present in the following sections.

Findings and Discussion: Young Spectators' Engagement With Turkish TV Dramas

Multi-Tasking: Series as Background and Everyday Companion

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the focus groups was the use of television series as an accompaniment to everyday tasks. Many students described watching while studying, cooking, doing housework, or even gaming. Hande, a sophomore from İzmir, living away from home, described these moments as private time spent with her favorite star: "I have a pretty good idea of how the script will unfold. Still, it helps me pass the time. Having it on in the background while I'm doing a chore makes me happy. It's like someone is there with me. For example, watching Çağatay [Ulusoy] gives me joy." For Hande and others, television series do not require careful attention since the scripts are predictable, especially for veteran audiences. This familiarity with scripts and actors makes background viewing easier: having a series on while doing chores eases loneliness and makes mundane tasks more bearable.

Producers of TV series are cognizant of and actively engage with the concept of multitasking and accompaniment. Fatih Aksoy, founder and owner of Medyapim, a major production company, notes that long, uneventful scenes foster a relaxed viewing environment, allowing family members to chat and viewers to engage with their second screens (Behlil 2023, 8). The repetition of narrative beats, long pauses, drawn-out scenes, and the tendency to convey situations or feelings through dialog or monolog that reiterates what already happens in the action allow viewers to drift in and out without losing track of the story.

Unlike traditional television spectatorship tied to a fixed screen, our participants watch dramas on laptops, tablets, or phones. Thanks to mobile screens, media consumption occurs alongside household tasks rather than serving as an escape from them—undermining the promise of popular culture as "domestic evasion" described by Radway (1984). With mobile and dual screens, this form of escape is constrained, and leisure is intertwined with ongoing domestic responsibilities as simultaneous engagement.

Esra, a first-year student, described how *dizis* play in the background while she washes dishes or folds laundry. Like Hande, she treats actors on screen as companions for housework. "Having a routine is nice," she explains. "I enjoy watching a series while doing housework." Although she weaves serial viewing into the rhythm of her daily life, she expresses frustration because her husband plays computer games when they watch *dizis* together, while she prefers to watch her favorite shows in an undistracted manner. Esra's account illustrates that while these dramas are not always consumed as tightly plotted narratives demanding undivided attention, audiences remain attentive to plot and character development.

Other participants described different multitasking dynamics, however, that do not necessarily involve mundane house chores. Some students watch TV series as part of their morning routine, while putting on makeup. Kaan, a junior from Antalya, turns on the long-finished sit-com *Yalan Dünya* (*The World of Lies*, 2012–2014) while he plays

games, re-watching episodes multiple times: “I put *Yalan Dünya* on as background noise. When I come home tired in the evening, it works well because it’s both comedic and doesn’t require much focus. While it plays in the background, I can play games or do other things.” Sevgi, a junior from Istanbul, knits while watching *dizis*. She notes that the shows’ easy-to-follow and predictable plotlines allow her to use them as dual entertainment—she can partially attend while relaxing, without needing full focus.

Experienced through multitasking and background viewing, *dizis* provide a sense of continuity and domestic intimacy. This dynamic resonates with scholarship on television as companionship (Silverstone 1994) and on ambient media use, which shows how television becomes a companionable presence rather than an object of focal attention. Silverstone’s observation that television offers both “stimulation and disturbance, peace and reassurance” within everyday routines (19) is especially apt here. Our findings also resonate with soap opera scholarship, where serial forms are designed to accommodate everyday interruptions, distractions, and domestic routines (Allen 1985; Harrington and Bielby 1995). Extending these insights, our participants reveal that long-format dramas sustain this companionship role through extended temporality of *dizis*, repeated script patterns, and star personas.

Our participants also suggest that series serve distinct functions depending on the activity: they provide comfort and companionship not only while completing mundane tasks but also during other entertaining or relaxing tasks, while acting as supplementary, flexible entertainment during more engaging or creative pursuits. It helps young viewers unwind at the end of their day or provides a sense of energy as they begin it. As Hande’s attachment to the star Çağatay Ulusoy shows, this sense of personal relaxation is also tied to viewers’ emotional connections with stars, characters, and themes of the series.

Multitasking during TV viewing does not necessarily signal inattentiveness; rather, participants articulated clear narrative expectations and organized their personal spaces around their favorite *dizis*, underscoring how ambient viewing can coexist with sustained emotional and narrative engagement. In this sense, the dramas function simultaneously as routineized background media and as immersive narrative worlds. Hence, they prefer to be immersed in these worlds without interruptions from others, at their personal pace and space. In other words, attention is not simply present or absent: viewers modulate it across episodes, scenes, and activities, moving between an ambient, companionable mode and moments of narrative immersion. For deeper affective connections, however, they often resort to older TV series. Hande explains, “There are very few shows that I sit down and watch without doing anything else; I only do that for series that truly make me think and move me.”

Affective Connections, Nostalgia, and Watching Older Series

A further theme to emerge was the affective bonds participants formed with characters and story worlds. Viewers often spoke of characters as if they were friends or family members, integrating them into their own emotional lives. Melis, who joined our focus group a bit late, a junior from Ankara, was initially shy. She smiled and immediately

started to contribute to the conversation when Hande talked about her attachment to Çağatay Ulusoy. She added, “It’s a bit like developing a friendship. When I watch *İstanbul Gelin* (*The Bride from Istanbul*, 2017–19), I feel like I’m part of that household.” Serra also joined in the conversation, explaining, “It’s the feeling of having someone there with you, and the chance to chat with family. There’s also the comfort of knowing how things will unfold. I need to be mentally prepared for action-packed shows, so I prefer series with familiar plots.” It was the familiarity of the storylines combined with emotional attachment to the characters that motivated viewers to watch and return to these extended narratives.

When Melis mentioned watching *İstanbul Gelin*, we were surprised, as it is a relatively older series. The show, a rich-man–poor-woman melodrama, follows Süreyya, who moves to a new city after marrying Faruk and struggles to connect with his family and build a life in unfamiliar surroundings. As we explored our students’ interest in older series further, we found that many frequently rewatched shows from their childhood, or even from before they were born, especially when alone. This tendency to watch nostalgic series in solitude offers insight into how viewing choices vary according to context and emotional state. This aligns with growing scholarship on voluntary reconsumption, which links rewatching to comfort, regulation of affect, and the pleasures of familiarity (Shackleford et al. 2026).

Their choice of the older series is not merely about revisiting the past; it is also deeply intertwined with their current experiences of university life in a big city, often away from family, staying in dorms or shared housing. As Serra, a sophomore from Ordu, now living in a dorm, explains: “Older shows bring back childhood memories. For instance, when I was in elementary school, I used to watch *Melekler Korusun* (*Angels Bless You*, 2009–2010) and really liked these young women who went off to university. . . Now I’m at university myself. When I watch it again, I both revisit the past and relate to their struggles. Watching it takes me back to my past while giving me a sense of comfort.”

Serra’s reflection suggests that these series act as emotional bridges between past aspirations and present realities. Rewatching them allows students to reinhabit earlier dreams while finding comfort in familiar characters and storylines that both mirror their own journeys toward independence while giving a sense of belonging. As Pinar puts it, “Re-watching *Avrupa Yakası* (*European Side*, 2004–2009) or *Aşk-ı Memnu* (*Forbidden Love*, 2008–2010) makes me feel good, it’s like going back to a different time.” In this sense, older television dramas become affective anchors, mediums through which young viewers negotiate identity, continuity, and change across different stages of life. Returning to older Turkish series becomes a way of reinterpreting their present circumstances. At the same time, participants rewatch familiar series for comfort, humor, and a sense of stability.

Pinar’s comment also reveals a desire to escape the present and imaginatively return to another time, showing how nostalgia blends emotional realism with temporal displacement. Nostalgia on television is never a simple yearning for the past but a mode of rearticulating the present through mediated memories (Holdsworth 2011). It is structured both as an industrial strategy of “safe returns,” recycling familiar formats

to ensure audience loyalty, and as an affective practice in which viewers reconstruct the past from the standpoint of present loss and uncertainty (Holdsworth 2011, 97–99). Our participants' accounts echo this dynamic. Revisiting older dramas was less about recovering a stable past than about negotiating absence and distance.

A study of *The Sopranos* shows that younger audiences often turn to older series as sites of childhood nostalgia and sources of renewed pleasure (Beare 2024). For the young viewers we interviewed, however, the repeated return to older Turkish series—such as *Avrupa Yakası*, *Melekler Korusun*, and *Yabancı Damat* (*The Foreign Groom*, 2004–2007)—is not merely an act of sentimental recall. These shows evoke lifestyles that are deeply contested within Turkey's increasingly polarized political climate and uncertain economic landscape—blending traditional family values with modern relationships and forms of education that enable independent careers.

Hilal, a sophomore from Antalya, remarked that hearing characters in *Yabancı Damat*—a series based on the marriage of a Turkish woman and a Greek man—discuss “an imminent EU accession,” she felt “strangely moved.” Now that EU membership is no longer a serious political goal assumed by the current government, we all smiled at the irony. Such moments of communal nostalgia are deeply entangled with Turkey's current sociopolitical climate. In a context marked by authoritarian drift, moral conservatism, a pervasive sense of futurelessness, and a recurring desire to emigrate to Europe—imagined as a more liberal space—youth viewers' return to earlier series is not only for comfort but also a quiet form of cultural resistance. These revisitations function as an affective refuge through which young audiences negotiate the constraints of the present.

Rewatching older series is also a response to the perceived decline in narrative complexity and the rise of moral conservatism in contemporary television. As Kaan explained, “I really enjoy watching series from the 2000s because today's shows feel too monotonous to me—the stories from that period just seem more interesting.” Women participants voiced frustration with the way women are represented in *dizis* today, comparing current comedies unfavorably to earlier series such as *Avrupa Yakası*, whose humor and quality they found unmatched in contemporary programming. Several participants expressed disappointment with *Bahar*, a recent series in which the main character—a woman who, after years of being confined to her role as a housewife and mother under the authority of her husband and mother-in-law—finally rebels and resumes her career as a doctor. Pınar recounted her frustration, explaining that she stopped watching the series because “she started out really strong, but then they kept weakening her.” Cemre, a senior from Istanbul, also gave up on *Bahar*. She added, “It's frustrating to see how her storyline, which began as empowering, lost its strength over time.”

For these young viewers, *Bahar* could no longer serve as a role model; instead, the character's regression into dependency felt like a betrayal. This sense of loss also feeds into their nostalgia—not merely as a sentimental longing for the past, but as a reflective nostalgia that combines cultural memory with critique of the present. Drawing on Svetlana Boym (2008), reflexive nostalgia—expressing critical reflection, distinct from restorative nostalgia that seeks to reconstruct a lost home—captures how young

viewers recall past representations with acceptance of loss and critical awareness. Watching characters like Bahar lose their agency evokes a yearning for earlier, more progressive portrayals, cultivating a critical nostalgia that encompasses both older series and earlier moments within ongoing narratives. The disappointment with *Bahar* thus reflects the interplay of mediated memory and contemporary critique: nostalgia and character attachment become ways of articulating dissatisfaction with present representations. In this sense, audiences' affective engagement sustains not just emotional investment but also reflexive critique, as viewers negotiate cultural memory and social change through their everyday viewing practices. While most reject watching *Bahar* altogether, others continue to do so with their families, out of habit.

Family Rituals and Intergenerational Watching

Nostalgic and intergenerational viewing practices diverge in notable ways. Younger viewers often return to older comedies and dramas, such as *Yabancı Damat* or *Avrupa Yakası*. Often in the solitude of dorm rooms or shared student apartments—especially when feeling lonely or disconnected—they find comfort in the familiar humor and affective worlds of these series. By contrast, current dramas like *Bahar* are typically watched together with family members, most often with mothers, as part of a shared domestic rhythm. Many participants described these viewing moments as central to everyday family life, organizing routines of cooking, eating, and unwinding. Samet, a junior from Istanbul, captures this rhythm vividly in our conversation:

When watching a Turkish TV series, it's not so much about focusing on the plot and understanding it right away, but more about chatting and commenting as it goes on. I ask my mom about the parts I missed. Usually, we start watching while preparing dinner, continue at the dinner table, and then watch a bit more while smoking together afterwards. For example, on Fridays we watch *Kızıl Goncalar* [*Red Buds*, 2023–2025]. If I haven't seen the previous episode but my mom has, I still put it on just to join her. It's a bit like getting spoilers, but it doesn't matter.

For Samet and his mother, the series structures the time they share together—preparing food, eating, and lingering afterward with a cigarette. The aim is not only to watch but to be together and engage in conversation about what they see on screen. Similarly, Arda, a sophomore from Diyarbakir, watches series with his father, turning the experience into a movie-like, entertaining event not centered on concentration but socialization: “I usually grab some snacks while watching. When there are historical scenes, my father and I make comments together. Sometimes what the show depicts differs from what's written in history books, and that's when we start debating.” Arda admits that he especially enjoys these moments with his father; they talk about the characters, and such discussions often lead to his father sharing moral lessons about how one should (or shouldn't) behave. *Dizis* sustain familial sociability, intimacy, and conversation. The accounts of Samet and Arda highlight how these shows serve both as background and bridges—accompanying shared moments and fostering intergenerational connection within the flow of everyday life.

While these communal viewing practices sometimes take place with friends (especially during the finales of popular series), participants emphasized that, daily, they occur most often with family. Participants join parents in the living room out of habit or obligation and soon find themselves drawn into the narrative. As Nihal, a junior from Istanbul, puts it, “Even if I didn’t plan to watch, once I sit with my parents, I end up following the story and caring about the characters.” Such accounts illustrate how family viewing produces both obligation and intimacy, reinforcing intergenerational ties and positioning television dramas at the heart of everyday sociability. These habits demonstrate how televised dramas extend the notion of “the family hearth,” a metaphor elaborated by Spigel (1992) in her analysis of television’s role in constructing the postwar domestic ideal and later expanded by Silverstone (1994) to describe television’s everyday centrality to home life.

Today, that “hearth” has migrated into transnational and digital spaces, allowing families to maintain shared rituals across distances and sustaining bonds through shared emotional investment. The sense of connection and routine around family viewing can unfold both face-to-face and online, extending across national borders and multiple screens. As Zehra, a sophomore from Mugla, explains, “I live in a dorm but still watch the same series at the same time with my mother back home, and we text each other while watching.” Ekrem, a sophomore from Istanbul, laughs at Zehra’s comment, adding that their circle of viewers also includes his sister living abroad: “We watch together with my sister who lives abroad. Then, during the commercials, we call each other to discuss the scenes.” Family members living in distant locations join this ritual through FaceTime or similar platforms. Several participants described their family rituals as such: “We text each other as we watch, gossiping about the characters and recent plot twists.” Focus group participants consistently emphasized the role of social media in shaping their television experiences, though in diverse ways.

Dizi Fandom and Social Media

Several participants argued that Bahar’s evolution from a strong, independent woman to a weak and clumsy personality is also connected to what fans impose through social media commentaries. Their awareness that scripts are becoming more market-oriented helps explain why younger viewers often compare contemporary series to older ones and prefer the latter. Nostalgia and critique arise not only from personal memory but also from an awareness of shifting industrial logics, such as the growing prevalence of remakes and production strategies that privilege certain characters, genres, and themes catering to global audiences over local ones (Ildır and Celik Rappas 2022).

Although most older series are available on streaming platforms such as Disney+ or Netflix, students prefer to watch them on YouTube. This choice is not only due to free access but also to the fan culture it fosters—through compilation videos, comment sections, and other participatory forms. Faruk, a freshman from Istanbul, explains, “Sometimes I watch *Avrupa Yakası*. Especially the compilation videos on YouTube—New Year’s scenes, special sketches.” His words highlight the fan labor involved in editing and curating these videos, which assemble favorite moments from different episodes. Participants

emphasize that comment sections beneath clips are integral to their viewing experience. Nihal remarks: “One of the most enjoyable parts is reading the comments. It’s part of the viewing experience.” Other students add reflections, turning comment threads into participatory extensions of the series.

YouTube, TikTok, and similar platforms thus extend the viewing experience, transforming spectatorship into a shared, interactive practice. Watching, commenting, and exchanging reactions online mirror earlier collective viewing within the household. Social platforms become a “virtual lounge room” that amplifies audience activity and reinforces synchronicity in television viewing (Highfield et al. 2013, 402–4). Social media interaction during programs, as Deller (2011) notes, underscores the continuing importance of liveness and communal conversation—even when viewing shifts to on-demand digital spaces.

Several participants described relying on TikTok edits to keep up with storylines or join a series mid-season. Elif, a freshman from Istanbul, explains, “Sometimes I can start a series mid-season because TikTok edits summarize the whole plot in fifteen minutes.” Encountering a clip on TikTok does not distance the participants from a *dizi* but draws them in. Students often began watching series they had never heard of after discovering TikTok edits or used short summaries to catch up when they missed episodes. Elif’s account shows how TikTok operates not only as a tool for narrative compression but also as a gateway into sustained engagement.

Siles and Valerio-Alfaro (2025) help clarify this dynamic. Their study of TikTok shows how television clips generate “co-programmed flow”—a hybrid form shaped by algorithmic recommendations and user practices—and how these clips foster “uncommitted attention”: fleeting yet emotionally engaging forms of spectatorship (2–9). TikTok integrates televisual texts and paratexts into a continuous, algorithmically managed flow. This resonates strongly with our participants’ reliance on edits to access and engage with Turkish *dizis*.

This engagement can be ambivalent. Participants expressed mixed feelings about watching Turkish series, aware of the stigma that surrounds them. Several admitted that following *dizis* is perceived as “cringe” among peers, yet for them it is a form of sociability. This attitude resonates with Alexander’s (2021) argument on binge-watching, where she urges media scholars to move beyond discourses of guilty pleasure and addiction and instead consider binge-watching as a mode of survival and everyday engagement with fictional worlds—one that accommodates diverse social contexts and practices, from boredom and co-watching to healing and labor. Nida, a junior from Istanbul, explains that although she found Turkish dramas “too slow” and full of repeated tropes, she still enjoys watching them with her mother or while scrolling through TikTok memes that mock the same tropes. Similarly, Kenan, a sophomore from Istanbul, watches *Kızılıcak Şerbeti* clips “to laugh at how predictable it gets,” but then finds himself reading the comment sections and joining conversations about the characters. Kenan and Nida describe watching mainstream dramas ironically, making jokes about clichés or exaggerated performances while still following the stories. By contrast, Nihal and Serra approached *dizi*-related social media as a space of belonging, using comment sections, memes, and group chats to share reactions and feel part of a

dispersed viewing community. Serra describes how following *Melekler Korusun* edits on TikTok allowed her to connect with others who shared her affection for the characters, creating a sense of warmth and shared nostalgia. These examples show that ironic distance and affective attachment coexist within the same digital spaces, producing complex modes of engagement blending critique, humor, and belonging.

Social media enables a virtual form of sociability even as it exposes viewers to judgments of being “cringe” and to self-critique. TikTok recaps, YouTube comment threads, and the ambivalent dynamics of “cringe” and stigma illustrate how social media extends and complicates television’s cultural functions. Viewing now unfolds within a networked environment of constant commentary, recapping, and negotiation—where entertainment, self-presentation, and social belonging intersect across platforms.

Another reason for reliance on YouTube and Reels is the length of the series. Participants repeatedly reflect on the extraordinary length and pacing of *dizis*. Episodes stretching to 150-180 minutes were described as both exhausting and comforting. To manage these durations, students employed different strategies. Several admitted to watching in accelerated modes— $1.25\times$ or $1.5\times$ speed—or by skipping repetitive scenes. Elif explains, “Sometimes I just jump forward, especially if it’s clear what will happen.” Others rely on TikTok summaries or YouTube clips to condense the narrative, consuming a three-hour drama in a fraction of the time. They voice impatience with long pauses and repetitive dialogs, especially in more recent series. Faruk notes that “a single look between two characters can stretch for twenty seconds,” while Hilal observes that storylines become predictable and drawn out.

At the same time, this duration produces a sense of routine and moral investment. As Samet explains, “I finish every series I start because leaving it halfway feels wrong to me.” Long episodes cultivate habits of continuity and emotional commitment. Despite these practices of compression and acceleration, many participants still value the weekly rhythm of live broadcasting. Melis emphasizes, “If I miss a line or a facial expression, I go back and replay it. Everyone should watch carefully.” For her, fast-forwarding diminishes the experience. Faruk enjoys the collective pleasure of watching on broadcast TV, knowing that “everyone is watching at the same moment” on a particular night.

Such accounts reveal how viewers both resist and embrace extended temporality. They critique the fatigue of drawn-out pacing while valuing the predictability, sociability, and shared ritual it enables. By adopting tactics such as speeding up playback, skipping scenes, or relying on TikTok summaries, young viewers negotiate the elongated temporality of *dizis* with that of digital life. Negotiating length and pace is central to how young viewers adapt Turkish dramas to their everyday rhythms while preserving communal and affective rituals.

Conclusion

This study examines how young audiences engage with the extended temporality of Turkish television dramas. Focusing on university students’ everyday practices, we show that these series function both as immersive serial narratives and as temporal infrastructures that organize background routines, intergenerational rituals, and

affective attachments. Placing studies of everyday media use and long-form seriality alongside debates on accelerated streaming, this article shows how extended, multi-screen viewing becomes part of domestic rhythms, intergenerational bonds, and nostalgic affect. In doing so, it draws attention to relational, routine-centered spectatorship that tends to disappear in discussions dominated by platform imperatives and compressed viewing habits.

Our participants consistently describe *dizis* as practices woven into daily life. They use dramas as everyday companions that enable multitasking and comfort across domestic and mobile settings, and they treat weekly episodes as anchors for family time, sustaining rituals that can extend transnationally through digital communication. Social media both compresses and expands these engagements—through comment threads, recaps, and edits—while attachments to characters and series mobilize nostalgia as a way of linking current viewing to longer histories of Turkish television and articulating critique of contemporary programming.

Young viewers negotiate extreme episode lengths through impatience, acceleration, and ritual appreciation, balancing temporal fatigue with comfort in repetition. These findings complicate the tendencies to equate younger audiences with short-form or bingeable content. Turkish dramas exemplify a counter-temporal mode of engagement that endures because viewers adapt them to their own rhythms and embed them within everyday life. They generate not only entertainment but also cultural belonging, emotional stability, and subtle critiques of social and industrial change.

While Turkish dramas differ from slow cinema, their industrially driven duration and repetition produce effects akin to what scholars of slow media identify: attention drift, comfort in monotony, and new forms of engagement. Boredom can act as stimulation, reshaping spectatorship (Zawadka 2022). Participants' accounts of multitasking, partial attention, and affective comfort suggest that Turkish dramas mobilize boredom similarly, transforming it into immersion shaped by habit rather than narrative urgency. In this sense, *dizis* blur the boundary often drawn between accelerated platform viewing and "slow" media esthetics. Situating these findings within debates on slow media shows how Turkish dramas unsettle the global binary between bingeable short-form and esthetically "slow" media, offering a counter-temporality rooted in industrial excess and everyday adaptation. Even multitasking practices can be read as dispersed attention that sustains long-term attachments, reflecting how slow temporality operates through recurrent, affective rhythms. In this light, Silverstone's notion of television as "reassurance" and "disturbance" (1994, 19) can be reinterpreted within a slow viewing framework, where slow seriality functions as an affective infrastructure—producing comfort and subtle disquiet that anchor viewers' routines while extending their emotional engagement across time. Rather than a resistance to speed, young audiences' slow watching emerges as a negotiated temporal practice that reclaims leisure within rhythms of study, work, and digital distraction.

Beyond personal motivations, our findings point to the broader social functions that *dizi* watching serves in young people's lives. Shared viewing preferences often facilitate new friendships, while others experience stigma for watching national TV—revealing how viewing practices both bridge and mark social boundaries. The appeal

of older series, often rewatched on YouTube, is not only nostalgic but reflective: participants revisit stories from childhood to reassess them through adult experience, identifying with characters who navigate urban migration, family tensions, or a polarizing moral and political landscape. Dissatisfaction with current programming—its conservative tone and lack of diversity—fuels return to earlier series, which become subtle acts of resistance against the moralism and homogeneity of contemporary Turkish television. This return, however, is not collective: nostalgic rewatching often unfolds in solitude, whereas communal viewing tends to form around more current, popular series. These contrasting practices—solitary and communal—reveal how young audiences navigate between the personal and the social, the past and the present, crafting their own rhythms of belonging within Turkey’s evolving television culture.

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Both authors contributed equally to the conceptualization, analysis, and writing of this article.

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Ethical Approval

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