

Methods for Studying Non-U.S. Television

Aysehan Julide Etem, *Indiana University*

This paper delineates methods for studying non-U.S. television by investigating the case of the Turkish show, *Magnificent Century* (2011-2014), as a contribution to the roundtable's discussion on the use of digital tools to gain access to foreign media markets. Firstly, it is productive for American and international scholars to collaborate to explore non-U.S. television; while international scholars can offer cultural and language specific analysis, American academics can provide a global perspective. Secondly, several digital tools, including Google, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and Facebook, are great online spaces to expand these collaborations by offering scholars free access to cultural specific information. Furthermore, scholars may initiate both verbal and non-verbal communication (photographs and videos) with creative industry workers, and media consumers using online messaging (e.g., Facebook messenger, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc.) and image sharing platforms. In my own research, I traced the popularity of the Turkish television show *Magnificent Century* via these online platforms. The show is an interpretation of the life of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent who reigned from 1494 to 1566. The primary method for studying the Turkish show is to identify relevant online platforms and international scholars. The secondary method maps the research problem and justifies the use of this digital media approach.

As a first entry into a foreign media market, American scholars should search for international academics to form collaborations. Using *Google Scholar*, one can identify international scholars and their work about non-U.S. television. This type of search may lead toward combining interdisciplinary perspectives as an American scholar can contribute an outsider's perspective and integrate information from different fields. For

example, in the case of the *Magnificent Century*, I identified research about Neo-Ottomanism conducted at the Middle East Media Research Institute and Carnegie Middle East Center. The scholars at these institutes related the current politics in Turkey to the ideology of Ottoman Empire. In my research I combined their findings with my analysis of the show to explore the current Ottoman inspired trends using digital tools.

After reading scholarly work, it is necessary to explore online news media using *Google search*. Newspaper articles, blog entries, tweets, pins, Instagram posts and Facebook pages are great resources to make sense of circulation trends both locally and globally. Such an analysis is supported by John Caldwell's theoretical methodology, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the process of making a TV series by studying the production culture and industry rather than a discourse based on textual analysis. Additionally Michele Hilmes highlights, "Flows of capital, of creative personnel, of program forms, of creative concepts, and of cultural experience, from nation to nation and across the globe" to understand how the show has developed (9). Following the case of *Magnificent Century*, I combined the scholarly articles with an analysis of newspaper articles about the subjects of Ottomania, Turkish unification of the Middle East, global reception of the Turkish TV industry, and interviews with the show's creative workers about the show's global success and related political concerns. The Twitter, Instagram and Facebook accounts associated with both the official show and fan accounts provided visual proof of Ottomania, excessive obsession for Ottoman things. These accounts documented Ottoman style restaurants (Burger King's Sultan meal), candy shops, fashion trends (male haircut styles and beards), outfits (flight-attendant uniforms), jewelry, and Ottoman inspired party themes (henna and bachelor/bachelorette

parties, wedding invitations with Ottoman calligraphy). Thus, the *Magnificent Century* has contributed to the transformation of the Ottoman culture into various kinds of franchising opportunities for entertainment, textile, jewelry and airline industries. These industries hypnotize both local and global consumers and persuade them into buying Ottoman styled products. Thus, the spaces of the *Magnificent Century* have taught both local and global spectators to consume more personal goods with an Ottoman style. Thus, this digital media approach provides a prolific ground to explore the research problem.

In order to excel with this method, one should be an active media user. It is important to investigate all relevant digital tools in order to distinguish useful information from meaningless trash. The difficulty of this method lies in the extensive amount of images, tweets, and posts that are available; thus, one needs to be selective. Another difficulty occurs when there is a lot of replication that might hide important information. At the same time, digital communication tools can aid in this filtering process. American scholars can build a network of non-academic human resources by connecting with fans, creative industry workers and journalists using online resources. Through interviews and guided searches, American scholars can learn about local TV culture and emerging social trends.

In conclusion, I discussed the use of digital tools to explore non-U.S. television. Crucially, these methods utilize online media platforms to facilitate international and interdisciplinary collaborations that access both cultural specific information and global trends. This method is also applicable for many non-U.S. media including cinema, music, and social media trends.