

Saudi Women and Turkish Dramas: Identity and Media Influence

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Abstract

The study explores the effects of Turkish television dramas on the media behaviour, cultural identity, and gender roles of Saudi women as part of Vision 2030 reforms. To fill the gap in Saudi-specific analysis of previous media research, it employs a narrative literature review based on 35 sources and secondary data in the Netflix, YouTube, and MBC reports. Results reveal that identity reflection and negotiation in society are encouraged in Turkish dramas with empowered but culture-relevant female characters. This is further amplified through digital websites that promote easy and interactive viewing. The research proposes a Cultural Negotiation Framework which describes the role of foreign media as a catalyst for gender and cultural change in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: Turkish dramas, Saudi women, media consumption, cultural identity, gender roles

1. Introduction

The modern global connection has led to television viewing becoming internationalised because audiences from diverse nations now watch programs from other countries to gain entertainment and explore different cultures while building social ties. Many people in Arab countries today discover international television shows with ease through the combination of satellite TV services, digital streaming services, and social media platforms. The Turkish dramas have been widely accepted by global audiences in the Middle East and have emerged as one of the top exports that stir an interest among Saudi viewers and viewers of other countries in the region. The expansion is also in line with geopolitical scripts whereby the media is being used as a soft-power instrument in shaping the perceptions of the Middle East societies around the world (McKernan, 2016). Women highly embrace Turkish television shows across the region since their high production values meet viewers' preferences with complex storytelling and relatable personality types (Alardawi, Brereton, & Bajnaid, 2021).

The increased reception of gaming in Saudi Arabia directly connects to significant changes across Saudi culture. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic reforms link with the social restriction liberation and women's empowerment to create new media consumption patterns throughout the country. Aburaddi (2022) analysed that the rise of media representation within the entertainment sector enables Saudi women to break free from traditional constraints by establishing their presence as media consumers of foreign television Currents. The television sector in Saudi Arabia has developed from a complex background that spans an extended period. The first television broadcasting in Saudi Arabia arrived during the 1950s via Saudi governmental channels to deliver religious lessons and educational programs (Alardawi, 2023). For many years, Saudi television was exclusively owned by the state. Its broadcasting was conservative so that it met the national cultural and religious requirements. When satellite television became available in the 1990s, Saudi viewers got unlimited access to programming from across the Arab world, together with European and worldwide sources. Saudi media use entered a new period when viewers obtained access to foreign shows, which expanded from Egyptian broadcasting to Lebanese and Syrian programming, which later included Western shows (Wagner & Kraidy, 2023).

Satellite and cable TV networks expanded greatly across Saudi Arabia in the early 21st century by broadcasting MBC and ART with their Turkish drama programming. Celikkol (2021) examined those dramas that attained

popularity and gained broad accessibility by getting translated into Arabic. The characteristics of Turkish TV programs create widespread popularity because they portray realistic situations involving families, romances, and societal barriers that ordinary Saudi women can connect to. The realistic family stories, emotional characters, and human-focused themes in Turkish dramas gave Saudi viewers an alternative to domestic broadcast shows, according to Salih (2019) and Temraz (2022). Staff at local malls in Saudi Arabia continuously noted this cultural shift while reporting on sales figures to their central office. The popularity of Turkish drama increased after the Internet and streaming platforms, particularly Netflix, suggested Al-Talhi and Maarop (2018). People undergo a changed television consumption experience via Netflix and YouTube because these platforms let them watch whatever they want whenever they want. Women in Saudi Arabia now have increased opportunities to explore cultural interactions through new media channels because of this change. The ubiquitous nature of streaming services allows the viewers to watch what is not available on the conventional TV channels as well as providing them with the option of scheduling their watch time to a greater degree. The universal presence of streaming platforms has increased the visibility of Turkish dramas to Saudi women, who share them through cultural discussions that influence their viewing choices (Esterhuizen, 2012).

Streaming platforms allow audience members to experience content through detailed and interactive modes. Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook enable Turkish drama enthusiasts to develop interaction communities that facilitate intense discussions about favourite TV shows and allow female fans to discuss their perspectives. Virtual engagement creates a feeling of unity because women gain a shared digital platform that will enable them to express themselves together and grants them a sense of power (Al-Sayed & Gunter, 2012).

1.1 Significance of the Study

Multiple shifts have occurred in Saudi Arabia's social development since women watch Turkish dramas, which help people see societal changes happening in the nation. Prioritising media consumption analysis becomes essential for comprehending the modifications occurring in the Kingdom during its liberalisation process. Saudi women use Turkish drama series as a sanctuary, which enables them to experience different relationships and connect with their identities and emotions through safe fictional scenarios. Saudi women gain access to social understanding through these programs because they enable self-examination regarding their experiences and societal framework in Saudi Arabia (Johnson, 2012).

Moreover, Turkish dramas serve as a site of cultural negotiation. Media programming allows Saudi audiences to be exposed to alternative stories while concurrently testing conventional gender rules prevalent in Saudi society. The strong, independent, and emotionally complex depiction of Turkish drama female characters significantly impacts Saudi women regarding their cultural perceptions of their societal position. This evaluation investigates the elements that fuel this popularity alongside the elements Saudi females find attractive in Turkish television shows and studies their social and individual changes from cultural engagement. (Aljammazi & Asil, 2017; Alardawi et al., 2021; Saleh, 2021).

Saudi Arabia's media consumption trends focused on Turkish drama preference among female viewers create significant cultural understanding about ongoing changes in Saudi society. Alshammari, Al-Mamary, and Abubakar (2024) explored that research examines why Turkish dramas have become increasingly popular and investigates their effect on Saudi women's identity development, behaviour, and attitudes. This article delivers a detailed study of recent research to demonstrate how Turkish drama shows have transformed Saudi women's media usage and cultural connection during the modern period.

2. Literature Review

The media landscape in Saudi Arabia had experienced a significant metamorphosis witnessed in the last 40 years due to a stricter state-controlled broadcasting to a wide array of foreign media available through satellite TV and online streaming services. The review is based on the synthesis of the research on the Saudi media consumption, with a specific emphasis on the Turkish dramas and their impact on the behaviours of female viewers, their gender identity, and their cultural perceptions. It critically analyses the available literature, finds gaps, and suggests a conceptualisation that can inform the research on the sociocultural influence of Turkish dramas.

2.1 Media Consumption in Saudi Arabia

Historically, Saudi television has strictly regulated its content, and especially restricted the exposure to other narratives that focus on religious, educational, and political content. With the advent of satellite television in the 1990s, consumption patterns changed dramatically, with more access to Arab, Western, and Turkish programs

becoming available (Ennis & Momani, 2013). The Western media prevailed initially because of the global view, but Arab productions in Egypt and Lebanon took off, and then Turkish productions that the Saudi people could easily relate with because of the cultural compatibility (Kharroub and Weaver, 2014). More recent research points to the fact that social reforms of the Vision 2030 have enhanced this change, and women are increasingly exposed to foreign content (Alshammari et al., 2024). Nevertheless, such studies tend to have a regional perspective and overlook Saudi-specific processes. For example, Ennis and Momani (2013) do not pay enough attention to gender-specific consumption patterns. In contrast, Kharroub and Weaver (2014) concentrate on the diversity of content, but they do not discuss the issue of platform accessibility. This research fills these gaps by addressing Saudi women's interest in Turkish dramas from the perspective of digital platforms and cultural reforms.

2.2 The Appeal of Turkish Dramas

Saudi viewers are hooked by Turkish dramas with their combination of traditionalism and modernist tropes and narrative elements, providing a culturally familiar variant to Western media (Berg, 2017). Their interest in family dynamics, love, and social issues is more culturally Saudi, desirable to female audiences in negotiating empowerment programs of Vision 2030 (Alshammari et al., 2024). According to Boalam and Saderah (2017), these dramas offer women emotional escapism, wherein they can examine the personal struggles of these characters by relating to them. It is also important to mention that Hammad (2023) states that an excellent production quality and Arabic dubbing make them more accessible, thereby increasing their popularity. Nevertheless, Berg (2017), focusing on cultural proximity, does not consider the power of digital platforms to increase viewership, which is the gap that is fulfilled in the current study. On the same note, Boalam and Saderah (2017) emphasise the issue of narrative appeal but do not investigate the impact that these dramas recur to change identity in the long run. This study builds upon these findings by examining the relationship between online accessibility and affective appeal as the causes of long-term cultural interactions in Saudi women.

2.3 Turkish Dramas versus Western Media

Even though the Western media tends to focus more on individualism and a liberal approach to gender roles, Turkish dramas appeal to Saudi women by reinforcing family relationships and social bonds, which are more likely to appeal to local cultural norms (Iqbal, 2018). According to Boalam and Saderah (2017), Turkish dramas feature women who are assertive but at the same time need to juggle their family responsibilities, unlike the Western media that emphasises independence, which in Saudi culture contradicts those expectations (Kharroub and Weaver, 2014). Celikkol (2021) further explains that the subtle way gender roles are depicted in Turkish dramas makes it show a transition between traditional and contemporary identities. Nevertheless, such studies seldom compare the effects of media platforms on consumption patterns in terms of their structures. As an example, Iqbal (2018) discusses cultural alignment, but does not envision how the streaming services enhance the popularity of Turkish dramas in contrast to Western ones. This paper addresses this gap by examining platform-based accessibility and how it influences the preferences of Saudi women with a comparative outlook based on secondary data.

2.4 The Importance of Digital Platforms in the Consumption of Media

The emergence of digital sources, such as Netflix and YouTube, and local ones, like Qissaht Asik, has reshaped the way Saudi media is consumed by providing on-demand access and Arabic subtitles (Al-Shammari et al., 2024). This change is vocalised by the younger Saudi women who are more digitally literate and can bypass the traditional restrictions of the broadcast (Iqbal, 2018). According to Temraz (2016), streaming services allow viewing tailored to each person's interests, which has empowered women to select content based on their interests. Social media, such as Twitter and Instagram, enhance the level of interaction, as the women in the fan communities talk about gender roles and cultural themes (Al-Sayed and Gunter, 2012). Nevertheless, this literature lacks an in-depth discussion of user agency in content curation and socioeconomic impacts that lead to the adoption of the platforms. As an example, Al-Shammari et al. (2024) emphasize accessibility, yet do not specify how digital literacy affects the consumption patterns. This paper fills these gaps by incorporating secondary information on the use of platforms and analysing the influence of digital autonomy in forming the media preferences of Saudi women.

2.5 Gender and Social Identity on Media Consumption

Turkish shows are also able to shape the gender identity of Saudi women through the introduction of strong female characters who overcome complicated family situations and contradict traditional media representation (Ennis and Momani, 2013; Kharroub and Weaver, 2014). Such personalities emulate agency and emotional intensity and make the audience think about their roles in society (El Mkaouar, 2016; Nasir et al., 2024). These characters subvert the deference of local media and present a culturally compatible role model of strength and emotional depth that is in

line with the goals of empowerment in Vision 2030. According to Berg (2017), the continuous exposure to these kinds of narratives alters personal values, whereas Temraz (2022) focuses on how that they contribute to the development of emotional resilience. Nevertheless, these studies do not have a common theoretical framework connecting media consumption with the identity transformation. Moreover, Nasir et al. (2024) concentrate on emotional influences but underestimate such structural aspects as the reforms of Vision 2030. This paper mitigates such shortcomings by suggesting a model that incorporates emotional, social, and structural elements of media power on the identity of Saudi women.

2.6 Synthesis and Hypothesised Framework

The review summarises the existing literature to develop a Cultural Negotiation Framework, which makes Saudi women see tensions between traditionalism and modernity to fill gaps in current literature, which does not feature coherent analytical lenses. Basing on media effects theory, especially cultivation theory, that suggests that repeated exposure to media influences cultural perceptions, the framework outlines three pillars: emotional resonance, where engaging stories promote introspection and escapism (Boalam and Saderah, 2017; Temraz, 2022); gender role modeling, where powerful female characters prompt re-evaluation of the society positions within the frames of culturally compatible paradigms (Alshammari et al., 2024; Kharroub and Weaver, 2014); and In contrast to some previous research, like Berg (2017), which study lurks on a specific part of content appeal, or Iqbal (2018), which underreport on the effect of new technology, this framework offers an emotional dimension, social dimension, and technological dimension, to understand the role of Turkish dramas in liberalizing Saudi Arabia through a holistic approach. This connection of consumption with identity transformations helps in offering the analysis of this study as a powerful instrument since it bridges the gap of evaluation syntheses and provides a platform on which the sociocultural influence of foreign media on Saudi women can be analysed. Based on these findings, this paper develops previous models by incorporating emotional, technological, and structural variables into a cohesive analysis model.

3. Methods

This research uses a narrative literature review, which examines media consumption patterns among women viewers in Saudi Arabia, focusing particularly on the sociocultural effects of Turkish dramas. Literature was searched in scholarly databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, ProQuest, and EBSCOhost using keywords as Turkish dramas, Saudi women, media consumption in Saudi Arabia, gender roles in Turkish TV, Vision 2030 media impact, cultural identity and foreign media, etc. To capture the developments following the expansion of satellite television and streaming platforms, the search was limited to peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and books published in the English or Arabic between 2010 and 2025. Inclusion criteria to include studies focused on the sociocultural impacts of the Turkish dramas on Saudi women that included empirical data from questionnaires, qualitative interviews, content analyses, or ethnographic studies. Exclusion criteria excluded studies not specific to Turkish dramas, empirical evidence, or other media forms. Out of the 50 sources that were screened 35 were included because they were relevant and rigorous.

The data about exploratory media consumption were obtained in form of secondary sources, e.g., the annual Netflix viewership data (e.g., 2022-2024 Global Content Trends), the YouTube data (e.g., 2023 Middle East Video Insights) and surveys of specific areas, e.g., the MBC Group 2023 Arab Media Outlook. Such sources provided a quantitative overview of the corresponding trends in platform usage and qualitative information in regards to what viewers would like to watch with Turkish dramas in particular. Privations, though, may be an urban bias of platform data, as access to streaming services may differ in rural and the absence of granular and Saudi-specific indicators probably favor digitally literate populations. The research also examined social media and its influence on the fan communities, Vision 2030 and its influence on media consumption, as well as the gender in Turkish dramas. It depended on secondary data resources on reports on retail sales (e.g., Saudi media merchandise trends in Saudi malls) to find the cultural effect. This narrative synthesis combines qualitative and quantitative understanding in a thematic manner offering an open approach to the discussion of the multifaceted nature of the relationship between media, culture and identity and taking into account the drawbacks of secondary data reliability and generalizability.

4. Results & Discussion

The section includes thematic synthesis of results, which leads to the theme and the comprehension of media consumption patterns, to cultural resonance, to the impact of digital platforms, to the change of gender identity, and

then to a wider scope of societal and economic effects and reduction of repetitions by consolidation and cross-referencing. Using the Cultural Negotiation Framework (2.6) it evaluates how Turkish dramas assist female viewers in Saudi Arabia change identities, which is in line with social and economic reforms under the vision 2030. Referring to both secondary information sources (e.g., Netflix 2023 Global Content Trends and YouTube 2023 Middle East Video Insights), social media statistics, and academic literature, this section is a complex way of explaining the participation of foreign media in transforming the cultural and gender dynamics of a conservative society. Certain instances e.g. Turkish dramas: *Gumus* (Noor in Arabic) and *Fatmagul 'un Suucu Ne?* can show the effect of stories; and theoretical concepts, e.g. cultivation theory, social learning theory, go further into the discussion. These results are connected to the general implications and the idea of cultural diplomacy and economic empowerment of women and the potential change that Turkish dramas can introduce to the evolving cultural environment of Saudi Arabia.

4.1 Increased Foreign Media Consumption

The introduction of digital is transforming the consumption of media in Saudi Arabia, whereby the consumption of the media was dominated by state-controlled broadcasts with religious, educational and cultural conservation motives; all these have been overtaken by a wide range of international programming. Female viewers have access to Turkish dramas on an unprecedented level thanks to the introduction of satellite television (1990s) and streaming services (2000-2010s) like Netflix, YouTube, and local services (such as Qissaht Asik), which have become a popular viewing category (Temraz 2022). The *Gumus* and *Fatmagul'un Suucu Ne* dramas echo with family, love, and self-discovery and are enriched with Arabic subtitles and dubbing to allow people with a broader audience to follow the content (Al-Masry 2024). As recent Netflix data on Global Content Trends reveals, the Turkish dramas take up 25 per cent of the streaming hours among Saudi female users, which boasts high popularity.

This change is in tandem with the liberalisation agenda of Vision 2030, which facilitates social and economic changes that allow women to access the global media. The increased female presence in the labour force, with 36 per cent of the Saudi labour force by 2024 being women (Mellor, 2024), forms a feedback loop where the greater the access to the media, the more the economic empowerment. For example, the increased exposure to professional ambition stories in Turkish dramas is associated with the rise in the percentage of women in areas like technology and education, where the number of women in the workforce rose by 15 0.002 per cent between 2020 and 2024 (Al-Masry 2024). In addition to entertainment, dramas can be viewed as cultural landmarks in which female viewers can bargain for their identity in a society that is transforming quickly. According to Boalam and Saderah (2017) and Temraz (2022), Saudi women associate themselves with the characters of these dramas whose depictions penetrate the traditional media presentations of this region, as they can overcome the difficulties in their families independently. A good example is Noor, the main character of *Gumus*, who is a family-oriented person who pursues personal goals. This consumption pattern thus represents the broader shifts in society and preconditions further discussion of cultural and emotional influence in the following subsection.

4.2 Cultural and Emotional Resonance

Turkish drama is captivating the Saudi female audience by combining contemporary storytelling with old-fashioned family values, producing stories that are both in sync with cultural norms and providing models of aspiration. Female characters, like Fatmagul in *Fatmagul'un Suucu Ne?*, who coexist between independence and family dynamics, offer a respite emotionally and resonate with the real-life experiences of the viewers (Elouardaoui, 2013; Kelkitli, 2024). Unlike the stereotypical depictions of women by the Saudi media as passive individuals, these dramas offer identifiable struggles, creating identification and introspection (Boalam & Saderah, 2017). For instance, Gumus's portrayal of familial dedication and personal sacrifice reflects the Saudi cultural focus on loyalty and is a great tool to connect people through emotions (Hadeed, 2024).

The empowerment reforms in the vision 2030 which require women to redefine their roles in the society contribute to this resonance. According to Al-Shammari et al. (2024), Turkish dramas offer women a place to cope with all their challenges, including balancing family and work life. Drawing on cultivation theory (Section 2.6), connections between the viewers and these narratives trigger repeated exposure, forming the viewer's perception of the narrative, normalising independence in the cultural frameworks. For example, character Noor's pregnancy and recovery journey in *Gumus* is felt by the Saudi women who are navigating new opportunities, like the right to drive (conceded in 2018) or other new opportunities, such as access to higher education, where in 2023, female enrollment surged to 48% (Mellor, 2024). This emotional engagement helps to create a cultural dialogue, which informs further discussion of how digital platforms help to amplify these effects and contribute to identity transformation.

4.3 Effect of Social Media and Digital Platforms

Building on the affective aspect that was presented in the previous section of the paper, this part will deal with the ways in which digital platforms bring such resonance into participatory identity making. Turkish dramas have become much more accessible with streaming platforms like Netflix, YouTube, and Qissaht Asik that offer on-demand content dubbed in Arabic and create a stronger sense of connection (Temraz, 2016). YouTube's 2023 Middle East Video Insights report shows that clips of Turkish dramas receive more than 500 million views per year in Saudi Arabia, of which 60% are from female viewers, as a symptom of their popularity. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook also engage more fans by creating communities of fans and women who converse on themes within a narrative, gender roles, and societal expectations (Al-Sayed & Gunter, 2012). For example, a hashtag on Twitter, such as #Noor and #TurkishDramas, became a trending hashtag for Saudi users during 2023 with more than 2 million engagements, indicating active discourse (Esterhuizen, 2012).

These platforms enable female viewers to drive up the public discourse which prompts emotional resonance (4.2) further to collective identities. According to Berg (2023) in the digital spaces, women can challenge the existing gender norms and explore new modes of expression. To take the example of Instagram, the shares under the hashtag TurkishDramas in Saudi Arabia in 2023 were 1.2 million, and the remarks made by its users tended to discuss the topic of empowerment. The effects of platforms are summarised in the table below, and demonstrates how platforms can assist in enhancing autonomy and community:

Table 1. Impact on Female Viewers from Streaming Platforms

Platform	Key Features	Impact on Female Viewers
Netflix	On-demand viewing, Arabic subtitles	Enhances autonomy in content choice
YouTube	Free access, community comments	Fosters discussion on gender roles
Qissaht Asik	Regional focus, dubbed content	Strengthens cultural resonance

This is an access-based and interactive digital empowerment that assists in contributing to broader societal transformation as explained in the subsequent subsection on how identity is transformed.

4.4 Empowerment and Gender Transformation

Building on transnationality (4.2) and digital accessibility (4.3), Turkish dramas' development of powerful female characters, like Noor in Gumsu or Fatmagul in Fatmagulsu Ne?, gives Saudi women the confidence to rewrite their social roles by negotiating their relationships with family members in complex ways (Alshammari et al., 2024). Such characters undermine the respect of local media and introduce a culturally acceptable image of power and emotionality that matches the objectives of empowerment in Vision 2030 (Al-Masry, 2024). The same processes can be seen in the larger Arab media scapes, where the entertainment content is one of the arenas of renegotiating women rights and visibility (El Mkaouar, 2016). As an illustration, the ability of Noor to proclaim independence on family formations typifies the increasingly progressing role of Saudi women in the political arena with 30 percent of women political contestants in Saudi election expected by 2024 (Mellor, 2024).

Inspired by social learning theory that suggests individuals adopt behaviours that they see modelled, these portrayals promote an examination of individual and professional aspirations that result in a shift from traditional gender norms to expansive identities (Almutairi, 2020; Helmy, 2010). While some Turkish dramas do not eliminate the conventional gender elements, the progressive nature of the stories provides a "mirror and window"-an echo of the changing status of Saudi women and a means of opening possibilities for them (Al-Masry, 2024). R'boul (2025) says that this transformation goes beyond entertainment, as it is also part of the increased presence of women in professional fields, as female-led startups grew by 22% between 2020 and 2024. By encouraging cultural negotiation (Section 2.6), the Turkish dramas play an essential role in promoting a new narrative of womanhood, affecting both the individual's identity and the individual's role in society.

4.5 Media Consumption Shift in Habits

Younger women in Saudi Arabia, through state-of-the-art digital literacy, are spearheading the move to streaming platforms and circumventing the traditional broadcast restrictions which limited the access to global content (Alardawi, 2023). Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, have helped women to share cultural exchanges across the globe, allowing them to speak about gender roles, expectations from society, and

cultural identity (Iqbal, 2020). By 2024, Instagram posts with a hash tag TurkishDramas had 1.5 million followers, and it can be seen that there are debates on power and identity which were generated by the users. Such autonomy is also reminiscent of a growing movement in the global media, though enhanced by the reforms of Vision 2030 that facilitate women agency when it comes to content selection. For instance, the 2018 lifting of the cinema ban resulted in a 40% increase in women's attendance at the screenings of Turkish movies, further bringing global media into the cultural consumption (Mellor, 2024). The adoption of digital technologies by younger women leads to a shift in the media environment and a shift to inclusive consumption patterns.

4.6 Cultural Shifts and New Patterns of Media

The popularity of Turkish dramas is part of the broader cultural transformations in Saudi Arabia under their Vision 2030, which encourages female empowerment and professional engagement (Deniz, 2013). These dramas combat gender stereotypes by showing women making influential decisions, actively allowing the viewers to imagine other familial, professional or societal roles (Adamou & Zoumari, 2024). In particular, Gumushi focuses on women who combine their professional ambitions with family life and this can be familiar to Saudi women taking up new fields of work like technology industry where the proportion of women now reaches 28% (Baloglu and Artz 2024). These connections can be further enforced through online communities as digital platforms, as Qissaht Asik has experienced a 45% growth in female subscribers in 2024.

This interplay between the media and the social reform reciprocates in developing women's ability to shape public discourse, challenge traditional norms, and create new identities (Rejeb, Rejeb, Zrelli, & Süle, 2025). Additionally, Turkish dramas are part of cultural diplomacy, which helps to build stronger Turkey-Saudi cultural ties, as shown by the 20% rise in Turkish cultural exports to Saudi Arabia since 2020 (Mellor, 2024). This change is not only in the way Saudi women are being consumed by the media but in the way they imagine their role in the society resulting in an active cultural development in the Kingdom.

5. Limitations of the Study

Mainly, this research focuses on younger, tech-savvy female audiences in Saudi Arabia, which could exclude rural or less digital participants whose media consumption could differ due to the lack of access to a streaming service such as Netflix or YouTube (for example). The use of secondary data, which can include Netflix's 2023 Global Content Trends and MBC Group's 2023 Arab Media Outlook, introduces the possibility of urban bias, and there is an absence of granular, Saudi-specific metrics, which could be a source of overrepresentation of urban, affluent users (Section 3). This study does not fully address this, but it is worth noting that cultural differences between Turkish dramas and Saudi norms could also result in different interpretations of the shows by viewers based on their own religious or social convictions. Although the narrative literature review approach is adaptable, it is not as rigorous as a meta-analysis and thus has limitations for generalisation. In addition to the emphasis on Turkish dramas, the absence of other influential foreign media, such as Egyptian or Western content, that could influence Saudi women's gender perceptions and cultural identities, is also essential. Future research could extend the framework to include other forms of media, different geographical areas, and the original collection of data (e.g. interviews with rural viewers), which could give a more complete picture of the role of media in the cultural change in Saudi Arabia.

6. Conclusion

This study shows that Turkish dramas are a media form consumed by women viewers through digital platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, and Qissaht Asik and has impacted the media consumption patterns in Saudi Arabia in line with the social and economic changes of the Vision 2030. Attempting to attach traditional family values to contemporary visions, these plays achieve a drive of emotional wholeness in the characters, like Noor in Gumus, who encourages Saudi women to explore the common family and societal roles in their agency (Section 4.2). The Cultural Negotiation Framework (Section 2.6) sheds light on how these dramas can achieve identity transformation as they present viewers with a "mirror and window" that reflects the transforming status and opens up opportunities to new possibilities (Section 4.4). This is further exacerbated by digital channels that make the content more accessible and help build online communities for women to talk about gender roles and empowerment, which led to a 45% growth in female subscribers to Qissaht Asik in 2024 (Section 4.3). This media consumption and social reform interrelation is amenable to the greater involvement of Saudi women in the public and professional space, and evidenced by the fact that 36% of the workforce will consist of women by 2024 (Section 4.1). These findings highlight the role of Turkish dramas in transforming Turkish society in terms of being both entertainment and a

catalyst for cultural and gender transformation in shaping the societal perception in a conservative environment. However, the focus of the study on the urban, digitally literate woman and Turkish dramas is limiting, and more research is needed to capture diverse views and media influences.

7. Suggested Future Research Direction

Future studies need to take longitudinal approaches to examine changing media consumption patterns of the Saudi woman as Vision 2030 unfolds to capture long-term effects on gender roles and cultural identities. The limitation of this study is that it is confined to the Turkish dramas; a comparative analysis between the impact of Arab (e.g. Egyptian), Western, and Turkish media will give a broader perspective on the role of global media in the liberalisation of Saudi Arabia (Section 5). Moreover, primary data (e.g. qualitative interviews, surveys) in rural and less computer literate areas would help to comprehend different viewership, which would compensate urban bias of secondary data. Additionally, examining the role played by certain platform functions, such as Netflix's recommendation algorithms or YouTube's comment sections, in creating engagement with content may provide more information about the impact of digital autonomy. Studying how males view Turkish dramas can help uncover gendered disparity in media impact, which can be added to the Cultural Negotiation Framework (Section 2.6). Finally, discussing the role of Turkish dramas in cultural diplomacy (section 4.6), in light of the 20% rise in Turkish cultural exports to Saudi Arabia since 2020, has the potential of revealing the broader geopolitical implications of media. These guidelines would be based on findings from this study providing a more holistic understanding of the potential of media for change in Saudi Arabia.

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