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Turkey's 'soap power'

A.Y. 2023-24

Soft power & Diplomacy

Soft power: the ability to **influence** the behavior of others to get desired outcomes one wants (Nye). It derives from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political notions, and policies (power of attraction).

Public diplomacy is a government's diplomatic efforts that **target citizens**, the press, and foreign country **constituencies directly** rather than their governments (Cull).

In an information age, one of the most effective means of public diplomacy is, undoubtedly, **cultural and intellectual exchange** assisted by the new communication technologies (especially small & middle powers).

Cultural diplomacy: the exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their people to foster mutual understanding (Cummings).

High culture (**universities agreements, scientific diplomacy**) and **popular culture products (TV, cinema, music)** are **soft power resources**.

Turkey's «Soap Power»

Turkish series challenge **existing norms**, cultural **values**, socio-political balances in **Muslim world**.

A pillar of Turkish
cultural diplomacy



«SOAP POWER»



1° exported series «**Crazy Heart**» (2003)



The boom (2005-2015)

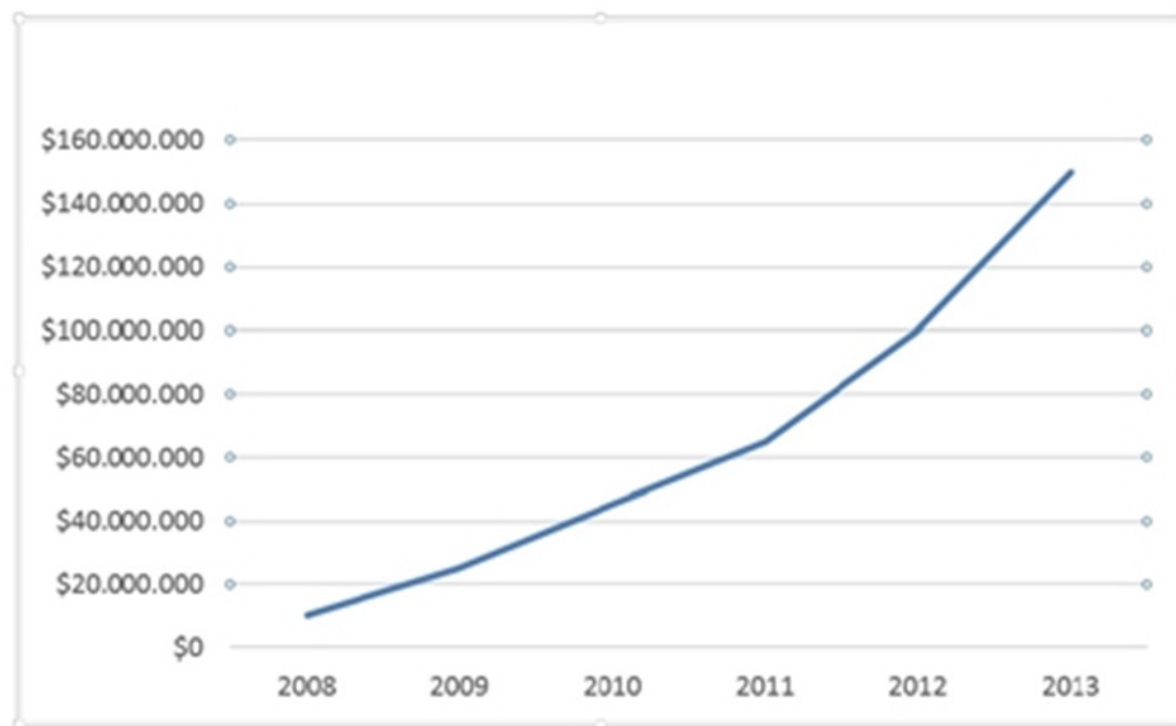
80 TV programs

20 Middle Eastern countries

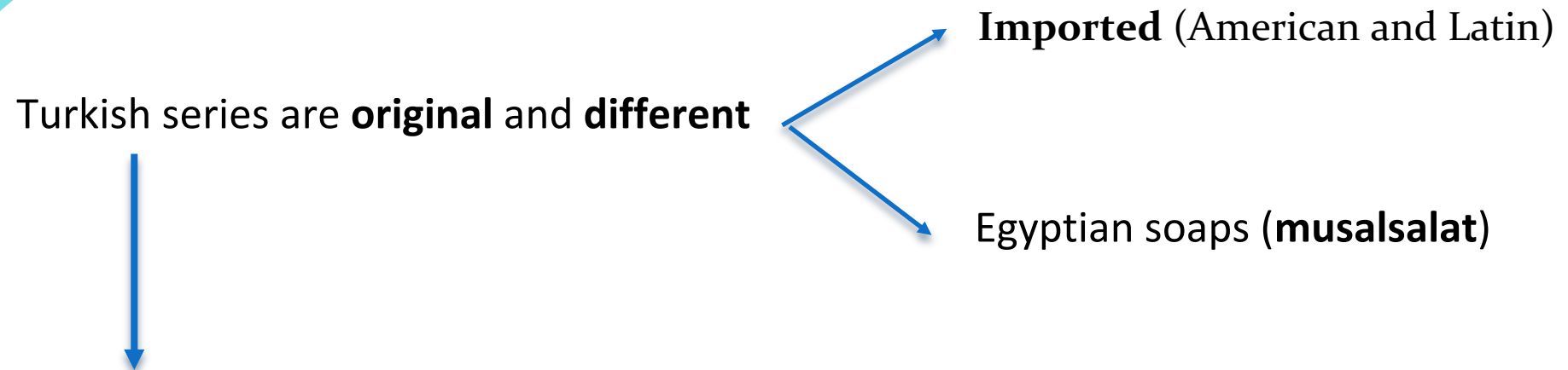
300 milion viewers

**Turkish series have reached the Balkans, Europe,
Africa, Central Asia, Russia, Latin America**

Turkish Series Exports by years



Success in the ME



Deals with **taboo subjects** without forgetting **Turkish Muslim identity**





Turkish way of life: a
**mix of Western
modernity with Islamic
values**





A massive boom in **Arab**
tourism



Walk on the stages of
their idols in **Istanbul**

Youth and Women

Alternative socio-cultural and **spatial possibilities.**

Challenge existing **norms** and **roles** within Arab societies



Storylines

Daily difficulties experienced by anyone:

- **Relationship problems**
 - **Marriage problems**
 - **Love triangles**
 - **Domestic abuse**
 - **Peer pressure**
 - **Substance abuse**



Behind Soaps success

Turkish soaps show what Arab audiences
aspire:

- Muslim with **modern lifestyle**
- **High standard** of living
- More **gender equality**



Charges by conservative Muslim

- For traditional Muslim Turkish soaps show a **corrupted way of life.**
- Turkey acts as agent of **Western immorality** and **cultural imperialism**



Muhteşem Yüzyıl (The Magnificent Century)



Some Remarks

- Turkish soaps as **cultural powerhouse**
- There is a connection between **Turkey's FP** and rising **popularity** of Turkish **fictions**
- **Credibility** is factor in the thriving **popularity**
- Turkey stil is the main **non-Arab influential figure** in ME
- The central role of **women**
- Soap operas as **source of inspiration** in shifting social norms



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