



## Evaluating Turkish Comedy Cinema From the Perspective of a Female Audience

Nergiz Karadaş Toktaş, Yüzüncü Yıl University, [nergizkaradas@gmail.com](mailto:nergizkaradas@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

This study, which examines the role of demographic factors in the reception of Turkish comedy films by female audiences, aims to examine female audiences' perceptions of Turkish comedy cinema in a multidimensional manner, encompassing participant profiles and viewing habits, character traits and representations in films, cultural and national comparisons, humor styles, viewing conditions and social context, film style and technical elements, and semantic and emotional evaluations. It also explores how these evaluations differ based on demographic variables. The absence of a study of this scope and sample size at the national or international level in the literature review strengthens the research's potential to make an original contribution to both the academic field and the Turkish film industry. Within the scope of the research, data were collected from 750 volunteer participants through online and face-to-face methods in 2024 and 699 valid surveys were analyzed by eliminating incomplete or incorrectly completed forms. The reliability of the scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and was found to be highly reliable. The data obtained were analyzed using the Kruskal-Wallis test in SPSS Statistics 28. The findings show that female audiences' preferences, perceptions and evaluations of comedy films differ significantly according to demographic variables such as age, education and income level.

**Keywords:** Turkish cinema; comedy films; female audience; humor perception; Kruskal-Wallis Test



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# Evaluating Turkish Comedy Cinema From the Perspective of a Female Audience

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## Introduction

As a genre with a deep-rooted history in cinematic history, comedy stands out not only for evoking laughter and thus providing relief in the audience, but also for its ability to reflect different dimensions of social life and transformations on a global or local scale. The formal diversity and thematic flexibility of comedy films contribute to the re-interpretation of cultural values, daily habits, and human contradictions through interaction with the audience. In this context, it is observed that comedy cinema is reproduced in different forms in every national cinema, with subgenres ranging from physical comedy to dark humor, from slapstick to romantic comedy. In this respect, it is possible to argue that comedy can be considered a universal form of humor, but the perception of what is "funny" can differ depending on the cultural context (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012, pp. 91-92). In other words, comedy is shaped by the interaction with the values and norms of the social contexts in which it is produced.

Similar to their counterparts around the world, comedy films that interact with society, which emerged in the early years of Turkish cinema and have been followed with interest by a wide audience to this day, have served to make visible the contradictions of daily life, social

transformations and class differences, and in this process, sometimes they distance the audience from daily problems and sometimes they make social problems visible or hide them. When it comes to Turkish comedy cinema, humor, in addition to its function as a social critique, appears to have a function that alters and transforms the character types, representations, and conflicts within films in parallel with the social changes and transformations taking place. Thus, through such representations, comedy films in Turkey not only make processes of social and cultural change visible and open them to discussion but also ensure the continuity of popular culture (Şen, 2019).

In recent years, with digitalization and the ongoing proliferation of online platforms, film production, distribution, exhibition and viewing practices have undergone a significant transformation. In this process, the fact that humor styles from different geographies have become more easily accessible to a large number of audiences has also led to a diversification in the way comedy is perceived. Although this situation increases the importance of audience studies, no comprehensive study on the perception and preferences of Turkish audiences, and especially female audiences, towards comedy films has been found in the relevant literature.

The main problem of this research is to reveal how female audiences' perceptions and evaluations of Turkish comedy cinema differ in terms of demographic variables. In this context,

the study aims to develop an audience-centered perspective on Turkish comedy cinema and to present a holistic evaluation of the ways in which the genre is received by female audiences. In addition, detailed analyses conducted on any film, director or period are excluded from the scope of the study. The study is limited to understanding the attitudes and evaluations of female audiences towards comedy films. It is thought that the study can make an original contribution to the literature related to its scope, to interdisciplinary studies and especially to the cinema industry, which shapes the popular comedy genre largely in line with audience trends.

### Theoretical Foundations and Development of Audience Studies

Audience studies, which examine media audiences' meaning-making processes and the media's effects on individuals and society, have developed within the framework of diverse theoretical approaches since the second half of the 20th century and are shaped by the question of whether the audience is a passive or active recipient. While traditional media theories treat the audience as a passive recipient, approaches such as cultural studies and reception theory argue that the audience actively interprets and reproduces media messages. Frankfurt School theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno (2002) considered mass media as part of the culture industry in terms of the media's effects on the audience. According to this approach, the media passively seizes individuals to reinforce the dominant ideology and ensure the continuity of the existing social order.

Cultural studies, which developed from the 1970s under the leadership of the Birmingham School, introduced a new perspective on the relationship between media and society by viewing audiences not as passive consumers but as individuals who actively make sense of media content within the framework of their social, cultural, and individual experiences. These ongoing changes and transformations have also been reflected in audience studies. In his work, "Three Stages of Reception Studies" (1999), Pertti Alasuutari examined the historical development of audience studies in three stages. As part of the first stage, he addressed Stuart Hall's '*encoding/decoding model*' and David Morley's application of this model in empirical research. In his work titled "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse" (1980), Stuart Hall argues that media texts do not have a single fixed meaning and that audiences may perceive these texts in different ways depending on their individual experiences and socio-cultural contexts. In this framework, the audience in the dominant reading position accepts media messages as they are, in accordance with the dominant ideology. In contrast, viewers in a "negotiating reading" position generally approve of the text's core messages but develop a critical distance at certain points, influenced by their personal experiences or social positions. In a "counter-reading" position, viewers question the hegemonic meanings in the text and produce alternative, often even oppositional, interpretations (Hall, 1980). This approach allows women viewers to be considered not merely as passive recipients of humor in comedy films,

but as active agents who reproduce meaning based on their own socio-cultural positions. David Morley, in his work “*The Nationwide Audience*” (1980), made a significant contribution to reception studies by demonstrating that media texts are not interpreted homogeneously by audiences but rather in diverse ways based on their class, cultural, and socio-economic contexts.

Pertti Alasuutari (1999) states that in the second phase of audience studies, media reception processes began to be addressed with an ethnographic perspective. In this period, how media texts were interpreted by audiences was addressed not only through text-centered analyses but also together with the practices of individuals in the context of daily life. Studies conducted in this period focused on how gender was represented in media texts, through which discourses these forms of representation were shaped, and how female audiences interpreted the presented meanings in line with their daily life experiences (Alasuutari , 1999). In this context, Alasuutari cites the studies of Ang (1985), Hobson (1982), Katz and Liebes (1984), Liebes (1984), and Liebes and Katz (1990) as examples of this approach. In her study “*Watching Dallas*”, Ang (1985) revealed that viewers actively reinterpret popular television series within the framework of their personal experiences and social status, thus emphasizing that media consumption is not a homogeneous process. Similarly, in “*Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera*” (1982), one of the early media ethnographic studies examining how women who watch soap operas make sense of them, Dorothy Hobson argued that women viewers relate

these productions to their own daily lives and attribute social and emotional meaning to them. In their study titled “*Once Upon a Time in Dallas*”, Katz and Liebes (1984), which examined how the TV series Dallas was received by different cultural groups, stated that the process of viewers' making sense of television programs is characterized by cultural and social context rather than being an individual experience. Similarly, Tamar Liebes, in her study “*Ethnocriticism: Israelis of Moroccan Ethnicity Negotiate the Meaning of Dallas*” (1984), which examines the meaning-making practices of viewers of Moroccan origin living in Israel regarding the TV series Dallas, concluded that viewers interpret media texts in line with their own cultural identity and social experiences. In another study titled “*The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas*”, which reveals that different cultures re-interpret television series in line with their own value systems and social structures, Liebes and Katz (1990) stated that media consumption is a dynamic process that changes according to the cultural context.

In the third phase of audience research, the relationship between media and audience began to be addressed on a much broader cultural scale. The audience was viewed not as a fixed social category but as an active subject positioned within social processes through discourses, constantly redefined, and sometimes changing. In this phase, reception studies focused not only on how a particular group reads a text but also on how media discourses are produced and

circulated at the societal level, and how they influence individuals' perceptions of reality. Studies conducted during this period (Grossberg, 1988; Radway, 1984; Allor, 1988; Fiske, 1988/1990; Ang, 1989; Lull, 1988) demonstrated that the audience should be considered not only as an individual reader but also as a subject positioned within cultural, ideological, and historical discourses, subject to change over time (Alasuutari, 1999). This approach is highly functional in understanding how female audiences interpret representations in comedy films. Because the way female audiences read comedy films is often shaped by gender norms, power relations and cultural discourses.

Over time, different theoretical approaches to media consumption and audience meaning production have been developed. A common characteristic of these approaches is that they increasingly consider the audience as an active, contextual, and cultural entity. In this context, Blumler and Katz's (1974) "*Uses and Gratifications*" approach is one of the early approaches that argues that media are consciously, or in other words actively, chosen by individuals to meet certain needs. McQuail (1983) is another name that emphasizes that media consumption is shaped not only by individual preferences but also by social and cultural contexts. One of the studies that brings a historical and social perspective to audience research is Janet Staiger's book "*Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*" (1992). Staiger states that media receptions are not universal and/or fixed processes but are shaped and changed



in line with social structures, economic systems, political environments and ideological frameworks. According to her, factors such as class, gender, sexual orientation and race are among the basic elements in the process of individuals interpreting media content. One of the important studies in the relevant literature that examines the relationship between the audience and media texts from a gender perspective is Jackie Stacey's "*Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*" (1994). Stacey, who analyzed the processes of women's identification with movie stars in England in the 1940s and 1950s, stated that the relationship that female audiences established with Hollywood stars was not simply a matter of admiration, but rather contained different meanings in the context of gender, class and cultural identity. Annette Kuhn, in her work "*An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*" (2002), has addressed the cinema experience from the perspective of individual memory and collective memory. Arguing that viewers' viewing experiences are intertwined with social memory, historical context and cultural heritage, Kuhn emphasizes that cinema is positioned as an effective tool in the identity construction processes of individuals.

Digitalization has been a development that has significantly altered the position of the audience. Jenkins (2006), who argues that the boundaries of the traditional media order are increasingly blurred and that the audience should no longer be viewed merely as a community

consuming content but as an active subject participating in the production processes, explains this through his "Participatory Culture" approach (Jenkins, 2006). Digital platforms have made this transformation particularly visible. Today, audiences can influence the course of content on digital platforms according to their own preferences. When these theoretical approaches are considered together, it becomes clear that the process by which female audiences interpret comedy films has a multilayered structure based not only on personal preferences but also on historical, cultural, and social contexts, changes, and transformations.

Reception studies in Türkiye have increased after 2000. Audience studies in Turkey can be categorized under three main headings which institutional studies, studies examining the cultural functions of media, and studies focusing on audience-media interaction. The general tendency of these studies is to position audiences not only based on their individual preferences but also within their social and cultural contexts. In this context, studies that examine audiences within the dynamics of cultural identity, socialization, and belonging, and that argue that film viewing practices are not merely individual activities but also social spaces where social identities are reproduced (Erdoğan 1993; Akbulut, 2014; Göker, 2018), offer a significant contribution to the literature on Turkish cinema. In recent years, it has been observed that audience studies have been carried out in different areas such as age (Özsoy, 2017/2020; Aydoğdu, 2020), gender (Uybadın, 2019; Güçlü, 2010), audience preferences (Özbulduk Kılıç,

2028), cultural identity and social transformation (Karadaş, 2017/2020), collective memory (Alıcı, 2019; Karabağ Sarı, 2019; Güngör Kılıç, 2020), emotional representations (Baki & Köse, 2022), digitalization and social media (Arısoy, 2020; Sarışın, 2021). When all these studies are evaluated together, it is seen that the audience research literature in Turkey spans a wide spectrum, ranging from individual preferences to cultural identities, from gender representations to digital viewing practices. However, the lack of a comprehensive study examining the perceptions of female audiences towards Turkish comedy cinema in relation to demographic and cultural variables constitutes the unique contribution of the current research.

## Method

This work has been supported by Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit under grant number SYD-2022-9913. Within the scope of the study, ethical approval for the questions prepared to examine audiences' reception of comedy films based on demographic characteristics was obtained from the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University Social and Human Sciences Publication Ethics Committee with the decision dated 03/04/2024 and numbered 2024/07-02. The survey form used in the study consists of three sections and a total of 66 questions. The questionnaire form used in this study consists of three main sections in order to collect information about the participants' demographic information, movie watching habits and perceptions towards comedy films. The first section of the questionnaire includes

seven questions to determine the basic demographic variables of the participants such as age, gender, marital status, region of residence, education level, income level and occupation. The second section includes eleven questions about the frequency of watching movies, cinema going habits, preferences between domestic and foreign movies, the types of movies they prefer to watch and their motivations for watching comedy films. The third and final section includes a scale consisting of forty-eight statements to evaluate the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards comedy.

In this context, a statistical error margin of 5% ( $p < 0.05$ ) was accepted in the analyses, and the Kruskal–Wallis test was applied considering the distributional characteristics of the data. Data were collected between February and March 2024 through face-to-face interviews and online surveys, reaching a total of 750 volunteer participants. After excluding missing responses and forms belonging to male participants, a final sample of 699 female participants was obtained. This sample size is above the lower limits recommended in social sciences (Comrey & Lee, 1992; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Kline, 1994; Nunnally, 1978; Arrindel & Van der Ende, 1985) and is considered sufficient for the analysis. The obtained data were transferred to the IBM SPSS Statistics 25 program, and after data cleaning, a normality test was applied. Since the data did not show a normal distribution, the non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis test was used in the analyses (Clark et al., 1998). The significance level was set at  $p < 0.05$  in all tests. The

reliability of the scale was calculated with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, and  $\alpha=0.948$  was found. This value shows that the scale has a very high internal consistency (Kılıç, 2016; Saruhan & Özdemirci, 2018). This methodological framework offers the opportunity to analyze the ways in which female audiences' evaluations of Turkish comedy cinema differ according to demographic variables, in a reliable and statistically valid manner from the perspective of audience studies.

## Findings

### Participant Profile and Viewing Habits

In this study an analysis of the data obtained from the 699 female viewers who live in Turkey. The age range of participating viewers is between 18 and 65 years old. When looking at the participant profile, it is noteworthy that women, especially those in the young adult and middle-aged groups, are more visible in the study. The fact that the highest participation was between the ages of 25 and 34 suggests that the research provides an up-to-date picture of the adult audience experience. When examining the education levels of female viewers, it is seen that 80.7% have undergraduate or graduate degrees. On the other hand, the proportion of primary school graduates or illiterate individuals is quite low (1.3%). More than half of the female participants live in big cities (50.6%). The proportion of participants living in city centers is 35.2%. Additionally, the proportion of participants living in villages/towns and

districts is 14.2%. This data shows that cinema culture is more prevalent in urban life and that individuals living in big cities have more access to films and therefore the opportunity to watch films.

When the distribution of female audiences is examined according to professional groups, it is seen that individuals working in the public (civil servants, teachers, and freelancers etc.) and private sectors constitute the majority of the participants with a rate of 45.9%. While the proportion of housewives is 7.7%, students constitute 9.4%. The rate of unemployed or unemployed individuals is 4.3%. The majority of the participants (68.4%) are in the income group of 20,001 TL and above. In particular, the participants in the income group of 40,001 TL and above constitute the highest rate with 37.5%.

Data on movie viewing frequency shows that a significant portion of female viewers watch movies regularly. Among the participants, 37.5% reported watching films several times a week while 42.8% stated that they do so several times a month.

Women participating in the study watch comedies the most (45.7%). Trailers were cited as the primary factor influencing a film's choice (29.2%). Casting is also important for viewers (27.9%). The presence of familiar and popular actors increases viewing motivation. Recommendations from close friends are also taken into consideration (16.7%). Professional

evaluation indicators such as critic reviews and ratings have a more limited impact on viewing preferences, suggesting that preferences are shaped by personal taste, marketing experience, and interest in the actors. The very low impact of general popularity (4.3% viewership rates) shows that movies that a lot of people watch don't always get people to watch them unless other things about them appeal to them. In general, the results suggest that women are more likely to watch comedy movies because of how they make them feel, the social context, and how they look, rather than because of formal evaluative criteria.

### Character Traits and Perception of Representations

The research shows that there are significant differences in the evaluations of female audiences regarding the humorous forms in Turkish comedy cinema. Viewers (74.3%) stated that humor in comedy films is mostly established through “verbal expressions, misunderstandings and dialogues between characters.” While this situation, on the one hand, supports the element of exaggeration that forms the basis of humor, on the other hand, it creates an effect that weakens the characters' sense of reality for some viewers. In addition, Kruskal–Wallis test results show that there are significant differences in character perceptions according to age and education level variables (  $p = 0.017$ ). In particular, viewers between the ages of 25 and 34 tended to regard the excessive stereotyping of characters as a factor that diminishes the effectiveness of humor, whereas older age groups perceived such exaggeration as a stylistic

feature consistent with the nature of comedy. Furthermore, the data indicate that higher levels of education are associated with increased critical sensitivity toward character representations ( $p = 0.028$ ).

Responses to the questions on character and gender representations indicate that women viewers consider the gender and age of the main character to be influential factors, and that they tend to laugh more at male characters in comedy films (57%). The results also demonstrate variation in how viewers interpret the physical flaws of characters in comedy films ( $p = 0.000$ ). Participants aged 65 and above display a stronger tendency to laugh at humor based on characters' physical flaws or disabilities. Viewers aged 18–24 are the least likely to laugh at this kind of humor compared to other age groups. Highly educated women are the group most bothered by the use of physical or psychological flaws in film characters as humor. This difference suggests that the parameters of social acceptability in humor differ across audience demographics.

Analysis indicates that older age groups are more critical of humor based on physical imperfections. The tendency to find such content disturbing increases with age. The findings show that viewers do not perceive film characters as simple fictional elements; on the contrary, they approach the representations in films with attention and a questioning perspective. The



high importance given to the depth of story and character in comedy films strengthens this critical attitude. This tendency is in line with reception theories which view the audience as individuals who interpret what they watch, place it into context, and actively contribute to the construction of meaning.

### Humor Styles and Laughter Dynamics

The analyses show that female viewers do not respond to humorous elements in a homogeneous way. The majority of participants (74.3%) stated that comedy in films is created mainly through verbal expressions/dialogues, misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts. This data demonstrates the significant place language-based humor holds in Turkish comedy cinema. At the same time, this finding reveals the historical continuity of humor inspired by traditional Turkish theatre, folk tales, anecdotes, and village plays, and demonstrates that it continues to maintain a lasting connection with this cultural heritage (Makal, 2017, s. 453).

The Kruskal–Wallis test indicates significant differences in viewers' evaluations of humor types based on age ( $p < 0.05$ ), education level ( $p < 0.05$ ), and place of residence ( $p < 0.01$ ). For instance, when participants were asked about the role of verbal humor and wordplay in enriching comedy, their responses differed significantly across age groups ( $p < 0.001$ ). Participants aged 18-24, those with higher education levels, and those living in large cities had a more positive attitude toward witty jokes and irony. Older age groups and those

living in smaller towns were less likely to laugh at this type of humor. Similarly, data indicating that dark humor and irony make comedy films more profound and thought-provoking also showed significant differences by age ( $p < 0.001$ ) and place of residence ( $p < 0.003$ ). Young adults and those living in large cities were more likely to use critical and ironic humor. In addition to these results, significant differences were found between age groups in viewers' tendency to laugh at social and political references in comedies ( $p = 0.010$ ). Younger participants, especially those aged 25-44, were more likely to interpret political and social references as comedic elements. This makes it possible to say that the audiences in this group also tend to interpret comedy films as an indirect means of social criticism.

Significant differences also emerged in viewers' attitudes toward language-based humor ( $p < 0.001$ ). Those over 55 and those living in rural areas were the most likely to laugh at speech imperfections in comedies. However, as education level increases, dark humor and irony are considered preferred humor styles ( $p = 0.031$ ). Viewers also noted that comedies can serve as a form of expression that can raise social awareness. Almost all of the viewers stated that they did not find scenes/films containing swearing, violence and discrimination (ethnicity, gender, race) funny. This finding suggests that female viewers are particularly sensitive to the quality, sense of humor, language use, and ethical boundaries of comedy films. Overall, the findings indicate that female viewers approach comedy films with a critical and conscious mindset.

other words, the data suggests that contemporary comedy audiences are wary of superficial, offensive, and/or stereotypical comedic content. Instead, viewers tend to favor a form of comedy that is socially conscious, intellectually sharp, and grounded in a strong narrative aesthetic.

### Cultural and National Comparisons

The findings of the study show that female viewers tend to prefer national films at a higher rate (national films = 61.4% ; foreign films = 38.6%). The Kruskal–Wallis test indicates that age groups vary significantly in their agreement with the statement “Dialect-based dialogues in comedy films make me laugh” ( $p < 0.001$ ). The response distributions show that humor based on dialects and regional speech patterns is not found funny by younger participants and by viewers living in large cities. In contrast, it is seen that older viewers and those living in rural areas approach such humorous elements more positively. The analyses show that female viewers do not respond to humorous elements in a homogeneous way.

### Viewing Conditions and Social Context

The majority of viewers (69.7%) prefer to watch comedy films with family members and/or friends. This finding suggests that comedy is still seen as a collective viewing practice. However, the viewing experience is increasingly shifting to the home environment. The proliferation of digital platforms, the Covid-19 pandemic, and rising ticket prices are contributing factors to this transformation.

Viewers' evaluations of movie viewing environments differ according to age groups and place of residence ( $p < 0.05$ ). Viewers living in large cities prefer to watch movies in cinema. The limited number of cinema and film in some regions also influences these preferences. Furthermore, viewers aged 18-24 largely prefer digital platforms. Furthermore, participants aged 35 and over prefer to watch movies in theaters. Individual viewing habits increase with increasing education levels. At the same time, the rate of sharing movie opinions on social media also increases.

Analyzing the data show that comedy is not only an aesthetic choice for viewers but also an experience shaped by viewing venues, family relationships, social interactions, and digital access opportunities. While viewing environments have become more individualized with digitalization, the social dimension of creating meaning persists. Even when female viewers watch films alone on online platforms, their evaluations of the film are often shared through social media, family, and friends. This is consistent with audience studies that show that media consumption processes are not limited to individual habits but acquire meaning within a social context.

### Perception of Film Style and Technical Elements

The results of the Kruskal–Wallis test show that there are significant differences in several items related to technical elements depending on education level ( $p < 0.01$ ) and place of

residence ( $p < 0.04$ ). In this context, it is observed that participants living in big city and whose with higher levels of education place greater importance on formal elements such as pacing, visual organization, and narrative coherence. This finding indicates that technical elements are seen by female viewers not merely as a matter of aesthetic preference, but as fundamental components that determine the overall quality of the viewing experience.

A significant difference was also identified in the analyses related to the age variable ( $p < 0.05$ ). The fact that participants in the 25–34 age group provided higher evaluations of technical elements compared to other age groups indicates a clear differentiation in formal preferences across age categories. Although statistically significant, it was found that the variations related to certain items within the income variable had low effect sizes ( $p < 0.05$ ). The tendency of middle and high income viewers to give higher scores especially for visual quality and production design suggests that expectations regarding technical elements may be partially associated with economic and cultural capital.

The overall findings show that the way female viewers evaluate the technical and formal elements in comedy films is connected to their demographic characteristics and cultural habits. It is seen that preferences for the comedy genre are shaped not only by the film's content but

also by its aesthetic and structural features. This indicates that female viewers approach comedy films with a more comprehensive and critical perspective.

### Semantic and Emotional Evaluations

The analyses show that viewers watch comedy films mainly to laugh/have fun (46.8%) and to escape from daily problems (18.9%). However, these motivations differ significantly across age and income groups. According to the findings, viewers over the age of 35 prefer comedy primarily to relax, while for those in the 18–24 age group, socializing constitutes a more important motivation.

In terms of income, viewers in lower income groups appear to be most motivated to watch for socialization. Today, with the influence of developing technologies, the fact that viewers are in a position to intervene in the course of the storytelling further reinforces this feeling of relief and escape and even offers the audience the opportunity to create their own catharsis.

The data obtained in the study indicate that most viewers prefer not to watch films alone; they tend to rewatch their favorite films, recommend them to others, and engage in conversation and discussion about them. At this point, the findings show that the experience of watching movies is not only an entertainment and leisure activity for the audience, but also a means of socializing and expressing themselves and their thoughts. Parameters such as the emotional states presented by the film's narrative, the character traits, conflicts and transformations,

symbolic references, and even the casting choices influence the viewer's relationship with the film's narrative on cognitive and emotional levels, based on their own life experiences. This interaction is indicative of the fact that viewers may interpret the same film differently each time they watch it.

## Conclusion

An analysis of the data obtained from the 699 female viewers with diverse demographic characteristics who constitute the research sample reveals that these viewers not only perceive comedy as a genre based on "making people laugh," but also evaluate the character representations in films, preferred humor styles, cultural elements, technical elements of the films, and their own viewing practices through a multilayered, deliberated analysis based on gender, class, and cultural norms. These evaluations are not homogeneous. These findings are consistent with studies on audiences that characterize the viewer as an active agent within the social context (Hall, 1980; Morley, 1980; Ang, 1985, etc.).

Data obtained from analyses of preferred humor styles in comedy films demonstrate that audiences perceive comedy as a multilayered field of meaning production. The diverse interpretations of verbal humor, irony, critical allusions, and representations of cultural references by viewers with diverse demographic characteristics demonstrate that the comedy genre undergoes a transformational reception process with social diversity, and therefore, a

homogeneous reception is not the case. Another important finding of the study is the demonstration that viewing practices are not limited to individual preferences but are shaped and transformed by social context and digital platform culture. The majority of participating viewers preferred to watch comedy films at home, the films they watched were part of family interactions, and the experience of these films through social media sharing demonstrates that the "collective production of meaning," emphasized in contemporary audience studies, is also valid in the Turkish context.

The findings of the study show that character representations, types of humor, cultural elements, technical features, and viewing habits form an interconnected and multilayered structure. The diversity in the evaluations of characters reveals that representation is shaped by gender codes, class positions, and cultural norms. Therefore, the findings related to character representations do not point only to comedic effect. They also provide important clues about how female viewers interpret cultural meaning. Therefore, the central role of character representations in comedy reception supports the study's main objective. Evaluations of humorous styles are similarly diverse. Verbal humor, irony, social references, and cultural references are interpreted differently by different audience profiles. The answer to one of the study's subquestions, "How do humorous styles differ across audience groups?", is clearly evident in the data obtained: Comedy does not produce a uniform interpretation in Turkey. On



the contrary, there is a process of meaning production that evolves with demographic differences. Furthermore, the multilayered reception of comedy by female audiences highlights the importance of considering gender sensitivity and cultural representation in the production processes of the genre.

Evaluations regarding technical and formal elements show that comedy films which are given meaning together with their content, structure and aesthetic features within the framework of their qualities such as script, stylistic choices, acting performances and production quality. This sensitivity suggests that female audiences are increasingly questioning the technical quality of comedy. It also suggests that their expectations of the genre are becoming more critical and selective.

The data of the research regarding emotional and semantic evaluations show that comedy makes the audience laugh and thus provides a temporary escape from the pressures of daily life, emotional renewal and the opportunity to rethink social reality. In this context, it is seen that comedy fulfills the functions of “emotional compensation,” “collective relief,” and “social negotiation,” and thus the symbolic and emotional reception processes discussed in audience studies find a distinct response in Turkish comedy cinema. Thus, the question of “what does comedy mean to female audiences?”, which is included in the aim of the study, is answered

through a layered structure where emotional, cultural and social levels come together.

The analysis results point to both individual and collective aspects of comedy, while also empirically supporting the influence of film viewing conditions on the meaning-making process of comedies. In other words, all the findings obtained within the scope of the study indicate that the character representations, narrative forms, stylistic preferences, and cultural reflections in films, which have the potential to reach and impact a large number of audiences worldwide through audiovisual means, along with the demographic characteristics and viewing contexts of viewers, create a multilayered, interactive structure in the process of making sense of films. The study indicates that the lack of homogeneity in film preferences and evaluations arises from these intersecting differences. These audience patterns highlight comedy's role in processes of meaning-making, emotional expression, and the negotiation of everyday social dynamics. Furthermore, the data invalidate the reductionist assumption that comedy viewers prefer or do not question light, entertaining, and superficial content. On the contrary, the findings of this study reveal that they tend to prefer and demand more high-quality, more deeply thought-out, and processed narratives.

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