The Commodification of Nostalgia: Tracing the Past in Streaming Services

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ABSTRACT

The concept of nostalgia, whose origins date back to the 17th century, was initially defined within the discipline of psychiatry to describe an intense longing for the past. Over time, nostalgia has alternately been the subject of criticism and interest within the scientific community. In the digital age, screens have emerged as one of the most prominent agents in reflecting feelings of nostalgia to society. In Türkiye, the strong emotional bond that audiences have formed with television and cinema productions has, in the 21st century, merged with digital platforms, and interest in works produced in the past has continued. This study focuses on Yeşilçam production companies that actively use YouTube as a screening medium, aiming to examine viewers' nostalgic tendencies. In the first phase of the analysis, the quantitative parameters of the productions were taken into account: a total of sixty films—comprising the twenty most popular films from each channel—were categorized by genre. Among these, the three most popular were analysed using content analysis. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, and statistical data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. It was found that 70% of the most-viewed productions belonged to the comedy genre, followed by drama (13.3%), adventure (11.7%), and action (5%). It was observed that productions reflecting the past elicited a positive and reflective sense of nostalgia among viewers; the cast and content genre were identified as significant factors influencing viewership. Ultimately, the study concludes that prominent production companies of the period have transformed elements of collective memory into nostalgic commodities by utilising digital means.

Keywords: Nostalgia, Digital Culture, New Communication Technologies, Yeşilçam, YouTube, Audience

ÖZ

Kökenleri 17. yüzyıla dayanan nostalji kavramı, geçmişe duyulan baskın bir özlem duygusunu ifade etmek amacıyla psikiyatri disiplini öncülüğünde tanımlanmıştır. Nostalji kavramı bilimsel alanda kimi zaman eleştirilmiş, kimi zaman da ilgi odağı olmuştur. Dijital çağda ekranlar, nostalji duygusunu topluma yansıtmada en önemli aktörlerden biri haline gelmiştir. Türkiye'de izleyicilerin televizyon ve sinema eserleri ile kurduğu yakın bağ 21. yüzyılda dijital platformlarla bütünleşmiş, geçmişte üretilen eserlere yönelik ilginin de sürdüğü gözlemlenmiştir. Araştırmada YouTube platformunu aktif bir gösterim mecrası olarak kullanan Yeşilçam yapım şirketlerine odaklanılmış, izleyicilerin nostaljik eğilimlerini incelemek amaçlanmıştır. İncelemelerde öncelikle yapımların nicel parametreleri göz önüne alınmış, her kanalın en popüler yirmi filmi olmak üzere toplamda altmış film türlerine göre kategorilendirilmiştir. Bu filmlerden en popüler olan üçü içerik analizi yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Karma yöntem benimsenen araştırmanın istatistiki verilerinin sunumunda IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 programı kullanılmıştır. İzlenme oranı en yüksek yapımların %70 oranla komedi türüne ait olduğu tespit edilmiş, bunu %13,3 ile dram, %11,7 ile macera ve %5 ile aksiyon türleri izlemiştir. Geçmişi yansıtan eserlerin izleyiciler tarafından pozitif, reflektif bir nostaljik duygulanımla karşılandığı görülmüş; oyuncu kadrosu ve içerik türünün izlenme oranlarına önemli etkisi olduğu saptanmıştır. Dönemin önde gelen yapım şirketlerinin dijital olanakları kullanarak kolektif belleğe ilişkin unsurları nostaljik metalara dönüştürdüğü sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nostalji, Dijital Kültür, Yeni İletişim Teknolojileri, Yeşilçam, YouTube, İzleyici

1. Introduction

The feeling of nostalgia, which was mentioned by Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer in the 17th century to describe an overwhelming sense of longing for the past, was regarded as a phenomenon potentially leading to various symptoms when the concept first emerged. Described in the *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia, oder Heimwehe*, the feeling of nostalgia was applied to the spiritual pain experienced by Swiss mercenaries caused by their separation from home, and this understanding of the concept persisted until the 19th century (Margalit, 2011).

The boundaries of the concept, which is characterised by a longing to return to memories, places, and times, have been expanded particularly by researchers in the social sciences; in this way, nostalgia has evolved beyond being a concept limited to the health sciences literature to encompass its association with social practices. One such connection has been established with the mass media industry, which significantly influences the social sphere as a whole.

Technological revolutions, and especially the integration of art and society within digital media through internet technology, have created a need for new definitions; the representation of the past within digital domains has heightened interest in the concept of nostalgia. The modern technologies of mass communication, which establish the digital bridge between art and society, have also been among the phenomena facilitating the presentation of nostalgia in digital spaces. One significant domain that redefined the concept of nostalgia through its integration with mass communication is undoubtedly the cinema and television industry.

The strong bond between Turkish society and the cinema and television industry ensured that the works produced between 1945 and 1980 retained their significance. This period, known as the Yeşilçam era, was when the Turkish cinema-television industry developed its own identity and narrative patterns and fostered a positive perception of the industry among audiences. The association of Yeşilçam cinema with positive notions such as innocence, genuineness, and sincerity in the minds of Turkish audiences has fostered a positive and reflective sense of nostalgia for the works of the past. One of the reasons why these works have not been forgotten, despite the considerable time that has elapsed since their initial release, is the producers' adoption of strategies to adapt to the evolving practices in the publishing field. Production companies of the Yeşilçam era initially distributed their works through conventional television broadcasting and later transitioned to streaming services, making these works a part of the audience's memory.

Technological advancements have profoundly transformed the cinema-television industry, and the interactive nature of internet technology enabling video sharing has led to an unprecedented transformation in the viewing experience. Prominent production companies of Yeşilçam responded actively to the industry's evolving landscape, and the works instrumental in shaping the narrative patterns and identity of Turkish cinema were subsequently transferred to streaming services after their television debut. One of these platforms was YouTube, a dominant platform in shaping global viewing habits, which establishes an ecosystem driven by advertising revenue while empowering each user to also act as a producer.

In the study, the activities of the production companies associated with the Yeşilçam era of Turkish cinema on the YouTube platform, alongside quantitative data from the channels, were analysed through the content analysis method. The findings from the analyses revealed that the production companies in the

sample maintained the strong connection between Yeşilçam and the Turkish audience via a streaming service. In the light of these analyses and the literature on the concept of nostalgia, it was concluded that Arzu Film, Erler Film, and Erman Film companies have transformed their productions into nostalgic commodities; Yeşilçam audiences tend to engage with these works through a positive and reflective nostalgic lens; and the companies have updated their revenue models by leveraging digital opportunities.

2. Conceptual Framework: An Overview of the Concept of Nostalgia

The concept of nostalgia, defined by Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer in the 17th century in his *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia, oder Heimwehe*, came to be understood as the act of longing for the past, with particular attention given to it by psychiatry and the psychological sciences. After the publication of Hofer's thesis, numerous articles on the subject were authored by medical practitioners. In 1688, Johannes Hofer, a medical student seeking a term to describe the emotional and mental symptoms observed in Swiss mercenaries serving far from home, coined the term nostalgia, derived from the Greek words *nosos* (return to the homeland) and *algos* (pain or sorrow), as a counterpart to the German term *Heimweh*. This term denoted a spiritual pain linked to a psychiatric disorder caused by forced separation from one's social and geographical environment during childhood and adolescence (De Diego & Ots, 2014; Hofer, 1934) Hofer stated that nostalgia could cause symptoms such as persistent thoughts of returning home, melancholy, insomnia, loss of appetite, thirst, weakness, anxiety, heart palpitations, a feeling of suffocation, drowsiness, and fever. He believed that nostalgia was more common in the autumn-winter seasons, as yellowing leaves, hazy sunlight, dormant plants, and other elements symbolising winter evoke feelings of sadness. At the time the concept was introduced, nostalgia was considered a treatable disease, and Swiss medical practitioners believed that opium and leeches could alleviate the symptoms of nostalgia (McCann, 1941, pp. 165-166; Boym, 2007). The concept, which has been widely used to describe the grief stemming from an intense yet unfulfilled desire to return home, did not undergo any semantic change for two centuries after its emergence. Nostalgia, at one point regarded as an occupational disease of sailors and soldiers, retained its medical significance in the medical field until the 19th century as a condition believed to cause various mental and physical health issues[1] (Sullivan, 2010, p. 585).

Most researchers have attributed the origin of the concept not to a longing for a lost past, but to a geographical yearning for one's homeland, and emphasised that it should be framed within medical discourse as a disease rather than being attributed an aesthetic or philosophical meaning (Davis, 2017, p. 17). Studies challenging common assumptions about nostalgia emerged particularly in the second century following the introduction of the concept. The first of the two main arguments about the concept is that nostalgia has consistently been used to express the innocence, sincerity, and naivety of the past. The second is its widespread use to describe a past that is perceived as preferable to the present. According to Howard (2012, p. 645), while nostalgia can indeed be associated with a longing for the past linked to good memories, it is mistaken to identify the concept solely with good memories. According to Margalit (2011, p. 271), unconditionally idealising the past and equating it with concepts evoking positive connotations, such as innocence, purity, and cleanliness, can have dangerous consequences, potentially leading to social moral degeneration. For this reason, nostalgia cannot be reduced solely to the idealisation of the longed-for past, and attitudes towards the concept have evolved over time within scientific and philosophical perspectives.

At various times, nostalgia has been perceived as the conceptual opposite of progress and modernisation and has been dismissed as embodying regressive, sentimental, and melancholic connotations (Pickering & Keightley, 2006, p. 919). Criticism of nostalgia is often dismissive, linking the concept to the dominant conservative paradigm in society. Some researchers argue that nostalgia holds significance for all social groups and should be regarded as a lens through which to approach the past (Tannock, 1995, p. 453). Some researchers have also suggested that nostalgia fosters optimism and motivation, arguing that it can enhance the desire to alter compulsive behaviours by engaging the inner or authentic self (Sedikides &

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[1] Since the concept is mostly associated with psychiatry in the field of health sciences, the term 'medical sciences' is preferred over 'health sciences'.

Wildschut, 2023, p. 275). For this reason, it is possible to talk about the strong effects of nostalgia, which is an emotion expressing longing for the past, on individuals' life, emotional state, view of the "moment" and imagination of the future.

The interest in the concept of nostalgia has a long history in the social sciences and is closely tied to the transition from traditional to modern society[2]. With the establishment of sociology as a distinct discipline, the relationship between the concept and the social sciences has deepened; the foundations of this relationship have been particularly significant for the field of communication sciences, which draws heavily from sociological literature. Although the concept of nostalgia is not directly tied to the discipline of sociology, in recent years sociologists have started to view it as a suitable framework for understanding contemporary societies' connections to the past. For instance, prominent figures in the field, such as Svetlana Boym, Janelle L. Wilson, and Zygmunt Bauman, have attempted to conceptualise the social presence, meaning, and evolving significance of nostalgia, particularly from a socio-political perspective. Many social scientists have also proposed ideas for examining nostalgia within specific sociological research fields (Jacobsen, 2023; Jones, 2008, p. 164). Sociological interest in nostalgia has centred on issues such as the formation and maintenance of the self, as well as the central role it plays in shaping society's sense of collective identity. These efforts, which have established a connection between nostalgia and memory, have extended the concept to the dynamic disciplines of the social sciences. Communication sciences, with its dynamic nature, has shifted the focus of the concept to the mass media industry.

In the field of social sciences, numerous studies focusing on the concept of nostalgia and the cinema-television industry have been conducted, yielding significant findings that contribute to the field. *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* has become a prominent source by examining the works of contemporary directors such as Martin Scorsese, Kathryn Bigelow, Todd Haynes, and Wong Kar-wai within the framework of nostalgia, incorporating discussions on cinema's role in mediating history through memory and nostalgia (Cook, 2004; Avlar, 2022). The cinema-television industry and the concept of nostalgia have frequently been juxtaposed; researchers have explored topics involving strong sociological debates, including memory, popular culture, masculinity, digitalisation, Queer theory, sexual politics, identity, aesthetics, and diaspora. These influential studies in the literature have particularly emphasised the relationship between memory and nostalgia while simultaneously drawing sharp distinctions between history and nostalgia. Researchers have argued that history is concrete, material, emotionless, factual, chronological, systematic, representational, realistic, collective, and unique, whereas nostalgia is emotional, social, psychic, fictional, surreal, relational, conditional, epic, representational, and melancholic. For this reason, by underscoring the stronger connection between memory and nostalgia, they have concentrated on examining the cinema-television industry and structured their research within this framework (Cook, 2004; Acar, 2023; Falkowska, 2006; Fu, 2001; Lee, 2008; Özkent, 2020; Padva, 2014; Powrie, 1997; Raj & Suresh, 2024; Sielke, 2019; Sperb, 2019).

The relationship between the cinema-television industry and the concept of nostalgia has been frequently discussed in Türkiye. These discussions have emphasised interpreting the cultural and social values of Turkish society and the concept of nostalgia from a relational perspective. Studies have established the connection between nostalgia and the cinema-television industry within the framework of themes such as memory, digitalisation, love, audience reception, historicisation, space, popular culture, international communication, and destination marketing. Researchers have reported significant findings regarding the reproduction of Turkish culture on screen through cinema-television productions, the positive

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[2] Nostalgia, which is defined as 'emotion' in medical sciences, finds expression as 'concept' in social sciences. In this study, the literature on nostalgia is analysed by considering these two distinctions.

effects of the international circulation of these works on the country's promotion, the use of music as a trigger for nostalgia, and the re-historicisation of sociological themes such as poverty, marginalisation, and labour exploitation through cinematic and television narratives. In studies focusing on the relationship between nostalgia and the cinema-television industry in Türkiye, it has been observed that TV series exploring the Ottoman period or epic narratives from Turkish history are particularly prominent. These studies have examined the reconstruction of the past on screen through nostalgic narratives incorporating Turkish cultural motifs, the role of productions in intercultural communication, and the relationship between nostalgia and the cinematic arts (Aker, 2021; Aslan, 2019; Avcı, 2019; Avlar, 2024; Çağlar, 2018; Koçer & Gürer, 2021; Kaya, 2011; Öztürk, 2015; Özyürek, 2006; Şavk, 2023; Yavuz, 2020)

Interest in the concept of nostalgia in communication sciences has also grown, particularly in examining its effect on consumer and user behaviour (Havlena & Holak, 1991, p. 323). The establishment of the relationship between nostalgia, regarded as a social phenomenon in communication sciences, and consumer culture has further strengthened the link between social sciences and the concept. Subsequently, academic interest in the positive and negative aspects of nostalgia's role in consumer behaviour—including advertising, TV series, cinema, consumption, and product selection—has grown. Moreover, the impact of presenting nostalgic products as commodities has been recognised and increasingly examined (Weingarten & Wei, 2023, p. 101555). Studies focusing on music, TV series, films, movie stars, and fashion products have shown that items popular during a consumer's youth can influence their lifelong preferences. Additionally, research has indicated that the nostalgic effects of consumer products may vary across genders and generations. At this point, the metafication of nostalgia has become a crucial topic of discussion. The commodification of nostalgia has primarily occurred through the recognition that products can be reintroduced for consumption with the aid of mass media. The re-presentation of products that evoke a longing for the past and the realisation that similar emotions can be stimulated in millions of people have been key factors in the commodification of nostalgia (Panelas, 1982, p. 1425). The commodification of nostalgia is a phenomenon deeply embedded in the cultural mechanisms of Western societies. Various manifestations of this process can be observed in almost every individual. It is characterised by the consumption of products that evoke nostalgic feelings and emotions—typically positive—about the past (Jeziński & Wojtkowski, 2016, p. 96).

Focusing on the subject in light of the aforementioned literature, it becomes evident that each discipline must establish its own definition due to the profound meaning and variable nature of the concept beyond what is visible (Schindler & Holbrook, 2003, p. 275). One such definition has been developed in the field of art, which is inherently intertwined with the cinema-television industry. While artefacts presented to society for consumption through mass communication products are commodities, artistic artefacts are not always commodified. The relationship between art and nostalgia differs from that between nostalgia and the mass media industry, necessitating a distinct definition in the field of art and the classification of nostalgia into various types.

2.1. Approaches to the Classification of the Concept of Nostalgia

The feeling of nostalgia, associated with an emotional longing for the past, remains a prominent theme in artistic works across various disciplines. Nostalgia, which holds significance in cultural, social, and artistic contexts, profoundly influences both the creative process of artworks and the way they are perceived by audiences. Originally rooted in medical sciences, the concept shifted in the 20th century from the dominance of medical discourse to becoming a subject of social sciences and artistic expression (Boym, 2008). The relationship between nostalgia and artistic creation has secured a privileged place in literature and visual arts. Nostalgic elements, which serve as mediators in the recollection of memories, have built bridges between the present and the past through artistic creation.

Some studies on the concept of nostalgia have classified it into various categories, which have played a significant role in examining its origins within communication sciences and art. One of the most prominent classifications was introduced by Svetlana Boym (Boym, 2008). Focusing on how nostalgia

functions in global culture, Boym divided the concept into *restorative* and *reflective* nostalgia. According to Boym, *restorative nostalgia* represents the desire or intention to reconstruct the past, rebuild history, and return to it. The past is characterised by harmony, peace, happiness, and virtue—an idealised golden age that, despite being distant from present conditions, is longed for as something worth reclaiming. *Restorative nostalgia*, in this sense, often involves a comparison between the past and the perceived shortcomings of the present, favouring the former as the superior era. It frequently entails an effort to establish one as superior to the other (Boym, 2007; Horvath, 2018, p. 151).

Reflective nostalgia refers to a process in which one is aware that the past cannot be reversed. According to this perspective, rather than attempting to reconstruct the past, the individual seeks to satisfy their longing for it by reinterpreting it in light of present conditions. *Reflective nostalgia* recognises the selective and transformative mechanisms of memory (including collective memory) and does not fully trust the images constructed about the past. The act of idealising 'moments' is absent in *reflective nostalgia*; instead, it involves the satisfaction of desire (Boym, 2008; Horvath, 2018, p. 151). The concept of *reflective nostalgia* is frequently encountered in the artistic field, where works of art serve as significant products in fulfilling nostalgic longing.

Another classification of nostalgia divides the concept into *positive* and *negative* nostalgia. *Positive nostalgia* is associated with past memories that evoke happy, uplifting emotions and is generally linked to feelings of warmth, sincerity, happiness, and comfort. *Negative nostalgia*, on the other hand, refers to the recollection of bittersweet or even painful memories from the past. It is commonly associated with emotions such as longing, regret, sadness, and the negative aspects of memories (Newman & Sachs, 2020, p. 2185; Abeyta et al., 2020, p. 1219; Putri, et al., 2023; Sedikides et al., 2008).

Nostalgia, a powerful emotion frequently found in the works of influential artists, not only evokes a longing for the past or sentimentality but also facilitates strong connections between artistic creations and both individual and collective memories. Artists such as Amber-Jane Raab and Steve Rawlings consciously incorporate visual elements, colour tones, and design features reminiscent of past eras to re-present emotions and memories from the past. Nostalgic artworks often aim to evoke a desire to return to a specific moment by recalling popular cultural and artistic products from a particular period. Such reminiscence may include symbols, musical works, the fashion industry, and film or television productions that hold a special place in collective culture (Rare, 2023). Although the emergence and widespread use of the concept of nostalgia are strongly linked to modernity and popular culture, the concept has not been directly utilised in artistic creation. The field of literature, in particular, has played a pioneering role in incorporating nostalgia into its works (Salmose & Sandberg, 2024, p. 70). Nostalgia also occupies a significant space in the visual arts and the mass media industry. At this point, some artists and producers have concentrated on maximising the benefits they can achieve through the commercialisation of nostalgia. Lowenthal's *The Past Is a Foreign Country* examines how societies engage with and interpret the past, arguing that people's perceptions of and responses to the past are shaped by specific underlying principles (Lowenthal, 2015; Murphy et al., 2017, p. 201).

Humans, by nature, possess a sense of longing for the past, which holds significant importance for artistic expression. The passage of time not only signifies the process of maturation for human beings but also serves as a reminder of the irretrievable past and the finitude of life. Artists often draw on their personal past and experiences as sources for the creation of nostalgic artworks. These artefacts re-present events within the framework of the artist's economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital, mediating the

establishment of a connection between the receiver and the period in question[3]. Moreover, by addressing timeless, spaceless, and universal themes, artists can connect with the nostalgic orientation of the receiver, evoking shared experiences such as childhood, love, and innocence. These forms of expression in artworks facilitate individuals' recollection of their past, their assimilation of the passage of time, and sometimes the complex affect of joy and melancholy, or even the devaluation of the present. Nostalgia can also be tied to specific cultural or social movements, with artists reinterpreting these movements from an artistic perspective to convey the feelings, sounds, images, and memories of the past. In these ways, nostalgic elements serve as powerful tools for establishing an emotional connection between the artwork and its receiver (Boym, 2008; Köse & Aydın, 2020, p. 757; Rare, 2023; Satır, 2021, p. 116).

The concept of nostalgia and all products associated with it significantly shape the production and consumption practices of works of art (Hindelang & Radwan, 2023, p. 121). In the visual arts, cinema and television productions hold a privileged place in the presentation of nostalgia. Since their inception, cinema and television have become tools that rapidly integrated into daily life and influenced the social sphere. Scholars studying cinema and television conduct both empirical and theoretical research, emphasising their inseparability from social structures and artistic textures in material and symbolic terms (Kay et al., 2017). Cinema and television productions, whose consumption channels have been transformed by the digitalised mass media industry, have created the need for new avenues of research.

3. Digital Culture, Memory, and the Digitalisation of the Past

It has been frequently emphasised in the academic field that historically significant events have reshaped the social practices of human life. Additionally, it has been noted that the technological revolution centred around information technologies has rapidly transformed the material basis of society (Castells & Blackwell, 1998, p. 631). With technological advancements, economic structures across the globe have become increasingly interdependent, leading to the emergence of new and unprecedented forms of interaction in the social sphere. Undoubtedly, one of the main drivers of this process was the Industrial Revolution, which laid the foundations of a world built on organised, hierarchical structures. This period was characterised by a rapid modernisation process and transformative changes in areas with significant social impact, including urbanisation, trade, consumption, communication, and war (Ryan, 2010).

Technological innovations, which gained momentum with the Industrial Revolution, became increasingly visible in the social sphere by the end of the 20th century, making many technologies more accessible. The process leading to the development of communication and information technologies has irreversibly transformed how societies establish social, cultural, and economic relations on a global scale. All practices associated with a new technological revolution based on information and communication technologies have been shaped according to the evolving needs of society. The rise of digital culture has been analysed from a relational perspective, focusing on issues such as information, entertainment, production, and consumption. According to Castells, the new technological paradigm has created a social structure referred to as the 'network society' (Castells, 2009). Viewing digitalisation and digital culture as integral components of the network society, Castells particularly emphasised the transformative impact of the Internet on societies. He argued that the world has undergone a paradigm shift during this structural transformation, with its most significant effects being felt on the social plane. Technological revolutions, which deeply influence social life and necessitate the redefinition of social phenomena, have facilitated the formation and rise of digital culture (Castells & Gustavo, 2005).

The term *digital culture* has been used to describe one of the most significant transformation processes of the modern era, encompassing various concepts such as the internet, algorithms, machine learning, artificial intelligence, information theory, and computer science. Undoubtedly, one of the primary drivers of digital transformation has been advancements in internet technologies (Giannini & Bowen, 2019,

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[3] The concept of capital was introduced into the literature by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and has become a crucial framework in the social sciences for understanding individuals' social positions. Bourdieu developed the concept based on his field research and empirical scientific data (Bourdieu, 2018).

p. 3). Innovations such as the interactive structure of Web 2.0 technology and its capability to facilitate video transfer have necessitated a reconsideration of everyday life practices, which are central research areas in psychology, sociology, and communication sciences. These innovations have altered entertainment and information consumption, while digitalisation processes have redefined both production models and consumption patterns (Başer & Söğütlüler, 2023). This shift has also impacted the cinema-television industry, where video-on-demand (VOD[4]) platforms have allowed viewers to consume content from the comfort of their homes, free from the constraints of time and space.

One of the platforms that radically transformed the act of watching in the rising digital culture was YouTube (YouTube, 2024; Söğütlüler & Başer, 2023). Founded in 2005, the platform, which now operates under Alphabet Inc., laid the foundations of the interactive video-sharing process with its structure that enables users to upload their own amateur or professional content and created an ecosystem based on advertising and subscription revenue.

The YouTube platform has come to the forefront by offering its users the opportunity not only to watch content but also to produce it, enabling each viewer to become a potential broadcaster. In addition, viewers can comment on the content, express their likes or dislikes through buttons, and share it with others via their preferred channels. This dynamic contributes to the transformation of a digital culture centred on the act of watching, while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between viewers and content producers (Akgöl & Aydın, 2023).

The YouTube platform, which constitutes the research field of this study, serves as a medium where the works from the golden era of Turkish cinema, known as Yeşilçam, are re-presented. Considering the close connection between Turkish society and the Turkish cinema-television industry, alongside the radical transformations in modern audience tendencies driven by internet technology, this research holds significant importance. An examination of Yeşilçam cinema's position in the memory of modern Turkish audiences reveals a focus on period productions imbued with a sense of nostalgia and a positive nostalgic affect. As part of the digital culture, Yeşilçam production companies have chosen to re-present their works on the YouTube platform to cater to this sentiment. This research centres on this phenomenon, examining the activities of key production companies in the Turkish cinema-television industry on the YouTube platform. The research design, detailed in the following section, investigates the audience tendencies of viewers of nostalgic Yeşilçam works, focusing on their motivations for watching, liking, and commenting.

3.1. Research Aims, Questions, and Hypotheses

The research is grounded in the idea that there is a close connection between Yeşilçam and Turkish society (Aytekin, 2019), and that the works of this period evoke a sense of longing in the audience, thereby maintaining their popular position in streaming services. The aim of the research is to examine how modern Turkish audiences utilise digital opportunities to experience nostalgic affect and to reveal the attitudes of production companies. The research sought to address the following hypotheses and research questions.

RQ1: How do Yeşilçam films on streaming services affect viewers' perception of nostalgia?

RQ2: How do the genres of Yeşilçam films affect their popularity on streaming services?

RQ3: How do production companies develop commercial models by offering nostalgic content on streaming services?

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[4] Video-on-demand (VOD) services are systems that enable users to access a vast library of videos and watch them at any time (Manifold, 2023).

H1: Yeşilçam films receive higher engagement from viewers by evoking a sense of nostalgia on streaming services.

H2: Yeşilçam films in the comedy genre have higher viewership rates on streaming services compared to other genres.

H3: Production companies broadcasting Yeşilçam films on streaming services diversify their revenue models by commodifying this nostalgic content.

3.2. Study Information

Within the scope of this research, the YouTube channels of production companies operating in Yeşilçam were analysed. It was determined that while some of the well-known production companies of the period did not actively operate on YouTube, others used the platform as an active medium. To determine the sample, the digital activities of production companies such as Akün Film, Arzu Film, Erler Film, Erman Film, İpek Film, Lale Film, Özen Film, and Uzman Filmcilik were examined. It was observed that Arzu Film, Erler Film, and Erman Film continue to present their works to society through the YouTube platform. Accordingly, the YouTube channels of these production companies were deemed appropriate to include in the sample. Basic information about these companies is provided below.

Arzu Film was established in 1963 as a partnership between Ertem Eğilmez and Nahit Ataman. The company is recognised as a prominent producer of cult films in Turkish cinema (ArzuFilm, 2024). It has produced iconic films such as *Hababam Sınıfı*, *Şaban Oğlu Şaban*, and *Çöpçüler Kralı*, which are significant milestones in the Turkish cinema industry.

Erler Film A.Ş. was founded in 1960 by Türker İnanoğlu and has been a major contributor to both the Turkish cinema and television industries (ErlerFilm, 2024). Erler Film is one of Türkiye's most notable production companies, transitioning from black-and-white to colour productions. The company has produced influential works such as *Yumurcak*, *Talih Kuşu*, *Vahşi Gelin*, and has played a key role in launching many actors' careers in Turkish cinema.

Erman Film is one of Türkiye's oldest production companies and has been a witness to the rise of Turkish cinema. Founded in 1946 by Hürrem Erman, the company continues its operations today as a distributor under the management of its founder's son (ErmanFilm, 2024). Erman Film is renowned for productions such as *Petrol Kralları*, *Aslan Bacanak*, and *Güler misin Ağlar mısın?*, and has contributed significantly to the stardom of many key actors.

3.3. Methodology

Content analysis is a well-established research technique that has been utilised in the leading disciplines of social sciences for more than half a century. Having expanded its scope through studies in social and behavioural sciences, content analysis has evolved into a rich research method by integrating with various approaches since the 1970s. The publication of studies using this method in important journals has further facilitated its acceptance in the academic field (Neuendorf, 2017).

The content analysis method offers a flexible structure that can be used for various research purposes, providing researchers with significant adaptability regarding their subject matter. While the method allows flexibility, it also offers a practical framework by requiring the creation of specific categories and ensuring that the researched themes are systematically addressed. This research method necessitates focusing on the subject by establishing qualitative, quantitative, or sometimes mixed research frameworks, as well as classifying and interpreting data in a systematic order (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 342). Content analysis is grounded in adopting diverse approaches and applying scientific procedures to examine texts. Key considerations when applying the method include determining what qualifies as data and how to evaluate observations scientifically (Krippendorff, 2018). Accordingly, qualitative content analysis can be

characterised as an analytical procedure that requires researchers to follow predefined steps tailored to the research goals (Mayring, 2015, p. 365).

Content analysis is regarded as a method for managing and summarising large amounts of information and drawing meaningful conclusions. The method facilitates collaboration with other research methods by providing historical, cultural, and social insights into the problems of interest. It allows researchers to identify and understand changes in specific phenomena over time and to uncover patterns or commonalities by analysing data systematically.

One of the key features of content analysis is that it requires a systematic analytical process. The method involves selecting the research area, creating categories to be analysed, coding thematic elements, and systematically explaining the results (Badzinski et al., 2021, p. 180). In this study, established approaches to content analysis were adopted, with themes determined based on the relevant literature, leading to the creation of a coding scheme (Zinderen, 2020; Waters & Jones, 2011; Bärtl, 2018; Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021; Parabhoi et al., 2021; Boğa & Sağlam, 2021, p. 643).

The coding scheme included main categories such as the number of subscribers on the YouTube channels of the production companies, the total number of views, the number of views for popular content, the number of likes for popular content, the type of popular content, and its subtypes. At this stage, quantitative data related to the channels were utilised.

Table 1: Content Analysis Coding Scheme

Production Company	Subscribers	Number of Contents	Total Views	Views of Popular Content	Likes for Popular Content	Popular Content Genre, Subgenre, and Restoration
Arzu Film	1,74 Mn	2.445	1.603.121.900	Şaban Oğlu Şaban (1977) 70 Mn	Şaban Oğlu Şaban 255 B	Comedy Restored
				Hababam Sınıfı (1975) 57 Mn	Hababam Sınıfı 259 B	Comedy Restored
				Hababam Sınıfı Uyanıyor (1976) 55 Mn	Hababam Sınıfı Uyanıyor 217 B	Comedy Restored
Erler Film A.Ş.	624 B	1.768	518.961.322	Yumurcak Köprü Altı Çocuğu (1970) 16 Mn	Yumurcak Köprü Altı Çocuğu 56 B	Drama Restored
				Talih Kuşu (1989) 11 Mn	Talih Kuşu 38 B	Comedy Restored
				Yumurcağın Tatlı Rüyaları (1971) 9 Mn	Yumurcağın Tatlı Rüyaları 34 B	Comedy Restored

Erman Film	170 B	1.210	135.537.615	Petrol Kralları (1979) 8,2 Mn	Petrol Kralları 21 B	Comedy Restored
				Aslan Bacanak (1977) 7,3 Mn	Aslan Bacanak 19 B	Comedy Restored
				Güler misin Ağlar mısın? (1975) 5,2 Mn	Güler misin Ağlar mısın? 13 B	Comedy Restored

4. Findings and Discussion

For Turkish society, Yeşilçam cinema has secured a place in daily entertainment consumption as an embodiment of the concepts of innocence, sincerity, and authenticity, with the production companies in the sample playing a significant role in this phenomenon. During the golden era of Yeşilçam cinema, Turkish society viewed cinema and television as tools for socialisation, with practices such as collectively watching productions and exchanging ideas about the works becoming commonplace in daily life. Turkish cinema, which had a profound impact on social life, especially between the 1960s and 1980s, transitioned into a medium that reflected society and brought social and cultural elements to the screen.

Although the three production companies in the sample have played a pivotal role in incorporating cinema into the daily lives of Turkish society, relatively few studies have focused on this subject. Research on Yeşilçam cinema has generally concentrated on analysing the works themselves, which has led to the production companies, as the creators of these works, being marginalised as a subject of research. This study addresses the commodification of nostalgic elements by production companies, which bridge the gap between Turkish society and cinema, integrating it into everyday life. This is achieved through the use of the YouTube platform, with a particular focus on the tendencies of viewers to engage with nostalgic works.

In line with this objective, the field was surveyed, and the production companies to be included in the sample were determined. It was decided to include Arzu Film, Erler Film, and Erman Film in the sample, as these companies produce significant works of Yeşilçam cinema and are currently active on YouTube. These production companies have created works that have shaped the narrative patterns of Yeşilçam cinema while also successfully bringing Turkish society to the screen. Over time, these productions have facilitated the development of an emotional bond between the audience and the characters. This bond, identified as parasocial interaction[5] in psychiatry, was observed in Turkish society, which established parasocial relationships with the stars of the cinema and television industry of the period, influencing the consumption industry in response to this dynamic (Söğütlüler, 2025). Yeşilçam cinema is perceived by Turkish society as a representation of innocence, purity, simplicity, and warmth, both through the production policies adopted by the aforementioned companies and because these works evoke a sense of nostalgia for the past. For Turkish society, Yeşilçam productions have remained significant as a cultural tradition that allows for both critical reflection on the past and occasional idealisation. When the twenty most popular works on the YouTube channels of the selected production companies were analysed, it was found that those with comedic elements ranked first (70.00%; M=16.85), followed by those in the drama genre in second place (13.33%; M=4.1). It was observed that narratives in which the comedy element is conveyed through the naturalness, innocence, and purity of the characters have gained popularity. The audience tends to consume these works with a positive, reflective nostalgic sentiment.

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[5] The concept of parasocial interaction describes the one-way, emotional bond between the audience and the figures presented by the mass media. The concept was introduced to academic discussion in 1956 with the publication of the article titled *Mass Communication and Parasocial Interaction* by Donald Horton and Richard Wohl in the journal *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes* (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

When the YouTube channel of Arzu Film was examined, it was found that the membership process began on 18 March 2015, marking its integration into digital culture. As of the date of the study, the production company, which has been operating for 9 years, has view rates that are notably high compared to other production companies. The total number of views for the three most popular productions is 182 million, while the total number of views for all channel content is 1,603,121,900. Arzu Film gained popularity on YouTube with the *Şaban Oğlu Şaban* and *Hababam Sınıfı* series, and all of its most popular content falls within the comedy genre. It has been observed that Arzu Film stands out due to its strong cast, featuring prominent Turkish cinema actors such as Kemal Sunal, Şener Şen, Halit Akçatepe, Adile Naşit, Tarık Akan, and Münir Özkul. Arzu Film created characters described as 'good people' and it has been determined that the company successfully transformed its productions into nostalgic commodities. The table below illustrates the distribution of viewing rates by genre.

Table 2: Distribution of the Twenty Most Popular Films of Arzu Film by Genre

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Action	0	0
	Drama	0	0
	Comedy	20	100,0
	Adventure	0	0
	Total	20	100,0

When the activities of Erler Film A.Ş. on the YouTube platform were examined, it was found that the company became active on YouTube on 5 July 2016, with the aim of integrating into digital culture. The company's key productions broadcast on the YouTube platform include the *Yumurcak* series and the film *Talih Kuşu*. The total number of views for the company's three most popular productions is 36 million, while the total number of views for all channel content is 518,961,322. An analysis of the popular productions of the company on YouTube reveals that actors such as Kemal Sunal, Cüneyt Arkın, Filiz Akın, İlker İnanoğlu, and Kadir İnanır are prominently featured. The productions, which were created with the stars who shaped Yeşilçam cinema, have been re-presented on YouTube and transformed into nostalgic products. The table below illustrates the distribution of viewing rates by genre.

Table 3: Distribution of the Twenty Most Popular Films of Erler Film by Genre

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Action	1	5,0
	Drama	3	15,0
	Comedy	10	50,0
	Adventure	6	30,0
	Total	20	100,0

When the activities of Erman Film on the YouTube platform were examined, it was found that the company became a member on 10 November 2015, taking a step towards integrating into digital culture. An analysis of the company's YouTube platform revealed that the productions *Petrol Kralları*, *Aslan Bacanak*, and *Güler misin Ağlar mısın?* were particularly popular. The total number of views for the three most watched contents was 20,700,000, while the total number of views for all channel content was 135,537,615. The common factor among these contents is that they feature the duo of Metin Akpınar and Zeki Alasya, who were pivotal figures in Turkish cinema. The productions featuring this duo have become

memorable to Turkish society, and they predominantly include the comedy element. In this context, it was found that Erman Film transformed its productions into nostalgic commodities by re-presenting them to evoke positive, reflective nostalgic feelings. The table below illustrates the distribution of viewing rates by genre.

Table 4: Distribution of the Twenty Most Popular Films of Erman Film by Genre

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Action	2	10,0
	Drama	5	25,0
	Comedy	12	60,0
	Adventure	1	5,0
	Total	20	100,0

The three production companies in question have integrated Yeşilçam cinema into digital culture, capturing the warmth, sincerity, and innocence of Turkish society's longing for the past. Undoubtedly, these works can now be enjoyed without the constraints of time and space, thanks to digital affordances. This situation, facilitated by new digital broadcasting systems, has increased viewing rates by allowing Yeşilçam films to be consumed on portable devices such as mobile phones and tablets. Eight out of the nine most popular works from the three production companies are in the comedy genre, while only one is in the drama genre. An analysis of the top twenty most popular films released by the production companies reveals that all of Arzu Film's films are in the comedy genre; the top eleven films from Erler Film are predominantly in the comedy genre (eleven), followed by four in the adventure genre, two in the drama genre, and one in the action genre; Erman Film's top twelve films are also mostly in the comedy genre (twelve), with two in the action genre, five in the drama genre, and one in the adventure genre. The table below illustrates the percentage distribution of film genres.

Table 5: Distribution of the Sixty Most Popular Films Published by Three Production Companies on the YouTube Platform by Genre

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Action	3	5,0
	Drama	8	13,3
	Comedy	42	70,0
	Adventure	7	11,7
	Total	60	100,0

The fact that the works previously presented by the production companies, which brought the audience to the screen, have reached a high number of views through their re-publication on the YouTube platform further supports the hypothesis of this study. All three production companies actively use YouTube Shorts and increase interaction rates by re-presenting sections of their popular productions. The descriptive statistics below show the averages across genres and the number of views.

Table 6: View Rates and Averages of the Sixty Most Popular Films Published by Three Production Companies on the YouTube Platform

Genre	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Action	3	2.000.000	6.100.000	3.76
Drama	8	1.500.000	16.000.000	4.1
Comedy	42	1.000.000	70.000.000	16.85
Adventure	7	1.600.000	6.700.000	4.31

When the viewing rates are analysed, it is evident that there is significant interest in the comedy genre. Taking all these factors into consideration, it can be concluded that the Turkish audience watches Yeşilçam works with a reflexive nostalgic feeling, while the production companies transform their products into nostalgic commodities.

5. CONCLUSION

The feeling of nostalgia, first mentioned by Johannes Hofer in his *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia, oder Heimwehe*, has been included in the literature as the act of longing for the past. Although nostalgia was initially used to describe a psychiatric disorder involving the longing to return home, which was observed in Swiss mercenaries during wartime, the scope of the concept expanded in the 19th century. Originally introduced within medical sciences, the concept gradually began to be used across various fields of social sciences. The association between sociology, communication sciences, and nostalgia with social phenomena has facilitated the explanation of various aspects of social practices through the concept.

As the concept of nostalgia developed and its framework broadened within social sciences, it became necessary to reconsider the concept in light of the digital revolutions that affect all levels of the social sphere. New approaches to nostalgia pioneered efforts to explain artefacts in relation to the concept and established a link with the mass media industry.

The emergence of digital consumption models with technological revolutions has shown that individuals can now satisfy their sense of nostalgia in new areas. The YouTube platform, which allows the re-presentation of past artworks, has facilitated the establishment of an intergenerational partnership by taking works beyond the period in which they were first presented. The possibilities offered by the internet and the ability to watch content on mobile devices, free from temporal and spatial limitations, have also increased the interest in nostalgic works.

In light of the theoretical framework on the concept of nostalgia and research methods, this study focuses on Yeşilçam productions. The activities and channel data of Arzu Film, Erman Film, and Erler Film—key production companies from the period when Turkish cinema's narrative patterns and identity were established—were examined on the YouTube platform using the content analysis method. The analysis revealed that productions which hold a place in the memory of Turkish society are re-presented in the digital realm, and the positive sentiments of Turkish audiences towards Yeşilçam productions are reinforced through these works.

As of the date when the data for this study were collected, the three most popular productions on the YouTube channel of Arzu Film had a total of 182 million views, with the total number of views for the channel being 1,603,121,900. An analysis of Erler Film A.Ş.'s YouTube channel showed that the total views for the three most popular productions amounted to 36 million, with the total views for the channel's content being 518,961,322. The three most popular productions of Erman Film, another major production company included in the sample, had a total of 20,700,000 views, with the total number of views for the content on the channel reaching 135,537,615. The high number of views suggests that Turkish viewers are highly motivated to engage with the content produced by the companies in the sample.

When the three most popular pieces of content from the three production companies in the sample were analysed, it was found that the comedy genre ranked first with eight films, followed by the drama genre in second place with one film. An analysis of the distribution of the top twenty films on the production companies' channels by genre revealed that the most popular content consisted of comedy (70.00%; 42 films, M = 16.85), drama (13.33%; 8 films, M = 4.10), adventure (11.67%; 7 films, M = 4.31), and action (5.00%; 3 films, M = 3.76).

This finding demonstrates a strong connection between the concept of nostalgia and Turkish cinema, allowing for the interpretation that viewers are trying to associate the Yeşilçam period with the element of laughter. Upon examining the most popular content from the production companies in the sample, it became evident that the involvement of prominent actors from the Turkish film and television industry increased viewer motivation, and the inclusion of stars from the period positively contributed to the number of views and likes. It has been determined that all three production companies actively use the YouTube Shorts feature and aim to achieve high interaction numbers in the digital space by publishing excerpts from their popular productions.

It was observed that the production dates of the three most popular pieces of content from these companies corresponded to the twenty-year period between 1970 and 1989. These findings led to the conclusion that the works from this period were approached with a positive, reflective sense of nostalgia, thereby confirming the research assumptions. The study also revealed that digitalisation has been employed as a response to the search for concepts such as innocence, sincerity, and purity in the audience's memory of Yeşilçam cinema. To this end, it was found that production companies have transformed their works into commodities on the YouTube platform, thereby updating their revenue models. It has been concluded that the Turkish Yeşilçam audience is highly motivated to watch these works with a positive, reflective sense of nostalgia.

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Extended Abstract

The feeling of nostalgia, first defined by Johannes Hofer in his *Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia, oder Heimwehe* in the 17th century, was initially regarded as a health issue linked to longing for the past, accompanied by various symptoms. This perspective shifted in the 19th century as pioneering disciplines within the social sciences began to interpret nostalgia as a means of understanding social practices. Fields such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and communication studies have since engaged with nostalgia, using it to explore various aspects of social life.

Many researchers focusing on the concept of nostalgia have argued that the feeling does not arise from a longing for a lost past, but rather expresses a sense of geographical longing for the lands where individuals were born and live. Various approaches to the concept have sought to investigate the reasons behind the emergence of the feeling of nostalgia by categorising it. The first of two key assumptions about the concept is that nostalgia is always used to express innocence, sincerity, and naivety in the past. The second approach defines nostalgia as a longing for the past, which is preferred over the present. According to some thinkers, the concept, used to describe a general yearning for the positive memories individuals hold, has been critiqued as an erroneous approach by certain scholars.

Some researchers focusing on the concept of nostalgia have argued that it would be erroneous to limit nostalgia solely to good memories, innocence, and purity. They contend that nostalgia is not merely an idealisation of the longed-for past and that attitudes towards this concept have evolved throughout history. Nostalgia has sometimes been seen as the conceptual opposite of progress and modernisation, with some critics attempting to belittle the concept by associating it with dominant conservative paradigms in society.

Certain approaches to the concept of nostalgia have suggested that it should be understood through various classifications. Svetlana Boym analysed how nostalgia functions in global culture, dividing the concept into two categories: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia refers to the desire to rebuild the past and reconstruct history, while reflective nostalgia is used to express a longing for a past that is understood to be beyond current conditions but is still viewed as desirable. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, expresses an emotional longing with the awareness that the past cannot be reversed, and it has become a frequently encountered concept in the artistic field. Another classification of the concept of nostalgia is positive and negative nostalgia. While positive nostalgia is used to describe memories of the past that evoke happy, positive emotions, negative nostalgia is characterised by its expression of bittersweet and even painful memories of the past.

Global technological innovations, which have profoundly influenced social life and transformed daily practices, have expanded the scope of nostalgia, enabling its exploration in the digital age. This shift towards digital socialisation has driven many industries, particularly mass media, to innovate. One notable transformation has occurred in the film and television industry, where art, as a reflection of society, has embraced technological advancements by redefining the mediums through which audiences engage with it, offering a renewed and dynamic sense of nostalgia.

The strong bond between Turkish audiences and Yeşilçam cinema has been a key factor in sustaining the popularity of these works over the years. Production companies in the formative years of Turkish cinema had a deep understanding of their audiences and infused their films with elements that motivated viewers, establishing a lasting connection between Yeşilçam and Turkish society. Since their original release, Yeşilçam films have evoked concepts of innocence, authenticity, and warmth, creating positive associations in the audience's collective memory. Leveraging this connection, production companies have reintroduced these works to new audiences by bringing them to streaming services —an area examined in this research.

In this study, the YouTube channels of Arzu Film, Erler Film, and Erman Film—production companies that had a significant impact on Turkish cinema between 1945 and 1980—were examined using qualitative content analysis and a quantitative, mixed-method approach. The positive associations created

by Yeşilçam cinema in Turkish society, along with the re-presentation of popular works in the digital space, are linked to nostalgia. The data obtained in the study revealed that the Turkish audience prefers productions that include comedy and laughter elements.

When the twenty most popular pieces of content from each production company on the YouTube platform, and a total of sixty pieces of content, were analysed, it was found that the most-watched genres were comedy (70.00%; M=16.85), drama (13.33%; M=4.1), adventure (11.67%; M=4.31), and action (5.00%; M=3.76), respectively. The results indicated that Turkish audiences have a strong sense of nostalgia for Yeşilçam cinema and the period during which these works were created, and they engage with these works through a positive and reflective sense of nostalgia. The study concludes that production companies transform these works into nostalgic commodities by making them available digitally, thereby updating their revenue models.