

Using Mood Management Theory to Define The Success of TV Format "O Ses Türkiye"

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Abstract

Music reality TV shows are categorized as performance reality TV and are considered to be the most successful types of TV formats in the recent decades that do not depict fictitious stories with professional actors, but the lives of real people. They promise authentic performances. On one hand they have a real background and on the other hand they have a media-specific construction that is dramatized by editing techniques to boost ratings. In this study, the concept of a music reality TV show, 'O Ses Türkiye,' which is an adapted, Turkish version of the format of 'The Voice' and its commercial success are analyzed. This study attempts to answer the questions of how this show impressed the audience, why 'O Ses Türkiye' has earned high ratings, what are the motivations of the audience and which strategies are used by the producers to attract audiences in light of media-affects perspective. In addition, the media use of 'O Ses Türkiye' is investigated according to Zillmann's basic model of mood management theory, which is one of the most well-known media-psychological theories. The theoretical foundations of mood-management theory are then supplemented by an independently developed questionnaire and concludes that the theoretical foundations of mood-management theory are supported, which leads to an explanation of the media use of reality shows.

Key Words: Mood Management Theory, The Voice, Music Reality TV, O Ses Türkiye

1. Introduction

Due to the increasing demand for reality TV formats since the mid 1990s, there is an increasing enthusiasm by audiences for music reality shows, the main purpose of which is entertainment of the masses. Music reality TV shows have conquered television as a new form of mass media entertainment. Why are audiences impressed by these shows? Why do audiences still watch these shows and why have they not yet reached their peak despite having been broadcast for years? In this study, these questions will be answered with the support of Zillmann's mood management theory which provides explanations and analysis. However, this study of media reception is limited to the example of the current music reality TV format 'O Ses Türkiye', which is an adapted version of the international format of 'The Voice'.

The origin and the concept of music reality TV shows are described in the first part. The second part involves the basic procedure of the show and also refers to the ratings, the audience share and the substantive aspects of 'O Ses Türkiye' and the third part explains mood management theory. The fourth part addresses the questionnaire and the evaluation of the results according to the show's content attributes relevant to mood management theory.

2. Music Reality TV

Music based reality shows are categorized as performance reality TV and have the youth as their target audience. Music reality shows have the basic format of a reality show and have carry characteristics such as a moderator, a fixed plot throughout the show, performers, a well arranged set and costumes, stage setting, lighting, talented panel of judges, voting through SMS, direct audience, selection and elimination rounds and winning prizes. Such formats do not depict fictitious stories with professional actors but lives of real people. They promise authentic performances. On one hand they have a real background and on the other hand they have media-specific dramatic construction. They use editing techniques to dramatize the program and build suspense to boost ratings. These techniques are a fixed repertoire of music reality shows.

Since the *mid*-1990s music based reality shows had drawn *audiences' enthusiastic* approval in many countries around the world. Music reality shows started in Turkey in 2003 with the first series of 'Pop Star Türkiye' which has been broadcast in more than 40 countries all over the world, similar to 'American Idol' in the USA, 'Pop Idol' in Great Britain and 'Idols' in Holland. In all these countries the global Idols format has been adopted to local cultures and production contexts and has received worldwide success and widespread journalistic media coverage. Locally produced versions of the Idols format have been aired in more than 129 series in the world with several stages where contestants go through auditions, eliminations, a groups stage and grand finale.

Fremantlemedia, the television production company, part of RTL group entertainment companies has developed Idols into one of the most successful global format franchises. (Fremantlemedia, 2009) Fremantlemedia is one of the largest international creators and producers of entertainment brands in the world, with leading primetime dramas, serial dramas, entertainment and reality entertainment programs in 43 television territories globally.

Senior manager of Fremantlemedia argued: *'Idols is not a singing contest ... the genius of Idols as a format is that is about finding stories and following contestants on their journey. The sheer duration of an Idols series and the number of stages you go through means that you can follow the characters and get a lot of their life's story. You can trace their development throughout the series and can see a rough diamond being toned towards the end of the journey into a pop star.'*

'Popstar Türkiye' the Turkish version of Idols, was very well-received by audiences and continued its journey in different private networks with the titles of 'Türkstar', 'Akademi Türkiye', 'Popstar Alaturka'. All these Turkish music talent shows had been very popular with high ratings and became a television phenomenon and glued Turkish audiences to the screen.

3. O Ses Türkiye

"O Ses Türkiye" is a adapted Turkish version of the original format of 'the Voice' which was created by Dutch television producer John de Mol who is the owner of the production company Talpa. As a singing competition television series, 'The Voice' started in the Netherlands in 2010 and earned incredible success. Although this format is a low budget production like most of Talpa-productions which is among the five top distributors for TV formats in the world, it has been sold to a number of countries and regions with high license fee and has been adapted into local versions, including Turkey.

'O Ses Türkiye' – the Voice of Turkey's first season began in 2011-2012 on Star TV and has become Turkey's most popular TV program. This music talent show consists of three phases: a Blind Audition, a Battle Phase, and Live performance shows. The series consists of 5 rounds. In the first round, four coaches which currently consists of two males and a young famous female pop musician and a very popular award-winning film actress choose teams of contestants through a blind audition process - with their back to the performers so they can judge on the voice alone. Each coach has the length of the contestant's performance to decide if he or she wants that singer on his or her team; if two or more judges want the same singer then the singer gets to choose which coach they want to work with. The second round is also called "duello" in which each coach has 18 members and will have two of their team members' battle against each other by singing the same song, with the coach choosing which team member will advance to the next stage. In the third stage, the remaining 3 or 4 contestants from each team will compete against each other in live broadcasts. The television audience with their SMS will help to decide who moves on. When one team member remains for each coach, the contestants will compete against each other in the finale. The third round is the live performance round, where the power is split between the coaches and the television audience. The television audience will vote to save their favorite contestant, leaving the coach to decide, live, who they want to save and who will be going home from the contestants leftover. At the series close, each coach will have one contestant left to compete against the other finalists and the audience votes and selects the winner together with the coaches. (http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/O_Ses_T%C3%BCrkiye, 05/03/2013)

The winner of "O Ses Türkiye" in the first season was a 16-year-old boy who received a new car as a prize which he then sold to help finance his education. Furthermore he was awarded a scholarship to Berklee University in Boston, sponsored by a private university in Istanbul. Additionally he joined his coach on tour.

After years of talent shows like 'Idols', 'The Voice' has proved a ratings success. One of the reasons to explain the appeal of 'The Voice' is the warm tone of the judges who are also musicians themselves and do not judge contestants on their looks and instead focus more on their voice due to the "blind" audition format in which judges sit with their backs to contestants, turning around once they have committed to putting them through to the next round. This format does not let the judges be influenced by the way the performers look. Other positive elements have included acts being allowed to finish their performances, rather than being interrupted and forced to leave the stage after a few minutes as they are on other music talent shows.

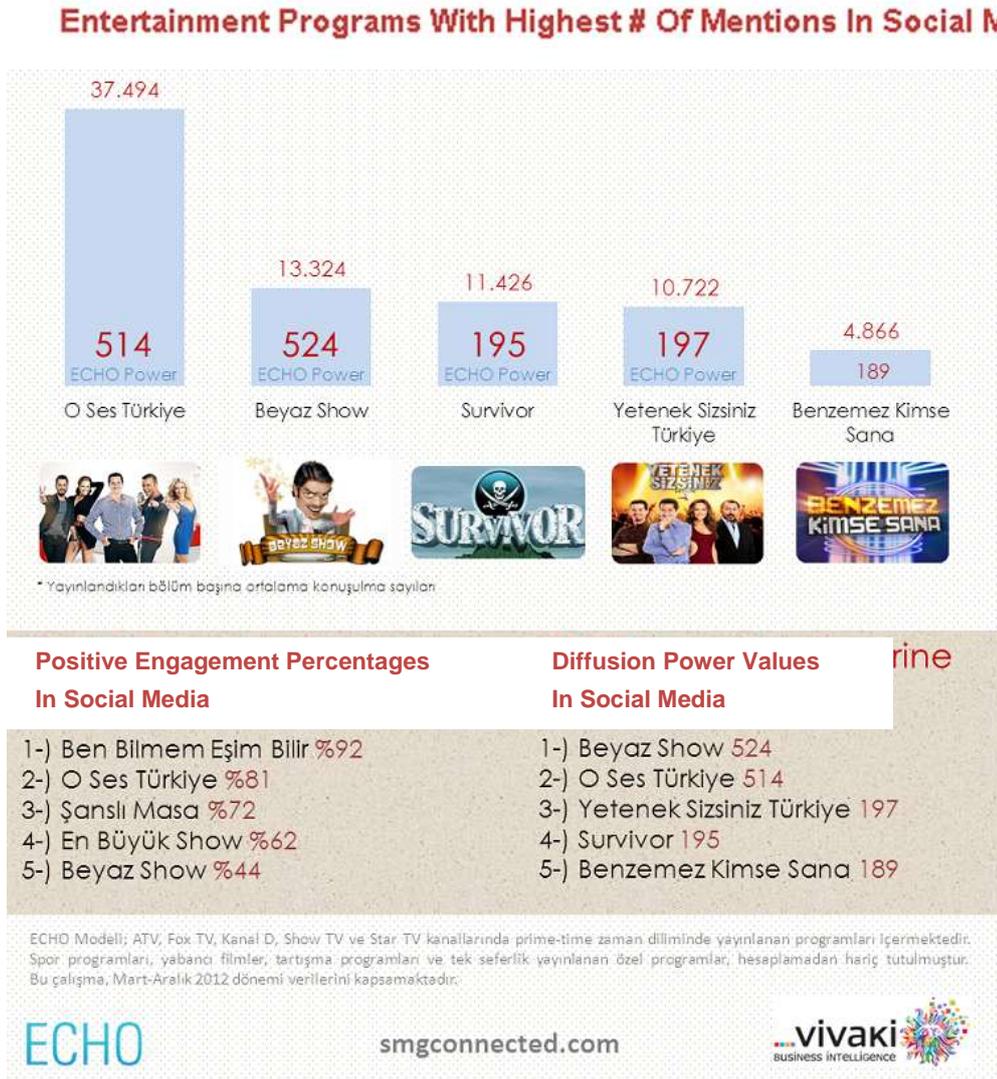
'The Voice' like the earlier music reality shows, earns a lot of money through advertising and tele-voting. The local main sponsor Turkcell that provides tele-voting to the

audience with SMS, saw this potential and has used product placement and has explicitly placed logos on the screen.

Acun Ilıcalı, in addition to 'the Voice', also produces and moderates the formats 'Got Talent' and 'Survivor' on Show TV channel, with his 120 co-workers of his 'Acun Media Production' company. His production company brought Show TV network on average 1 million TL in ad sales from weekly shows, not including for sales of product placement and sponsors' advertisements with 130 shows in one season. These 3 formats earned approximately 150 million TL in total revenue for Show TV network in 2012.

On the list published by Forbes, as a producer of popular reality TV series, he reached the highest advertisement sales in the TV entertainment sector. However, the sales of Ilıcalı achieved in the same period were 90 million pounds which is 20 percent more than the sales of Kerem Çatay who is the most popular and highest earning producer of TV drama series in Turkey. Although TV drama series are believed to be the main component that keeps the TV wheel turning in Turkey, his financial results indicate the success of TV reality shows. Moreover, production costs of his TV reality shows per episode is much less than the production cost of TV series. Therefore, his profit margin is much higher than the producers of TV series. (<http://www.haberturk.com/medya/haber/772065-acun-ekonomisi>, 28/03/2013)

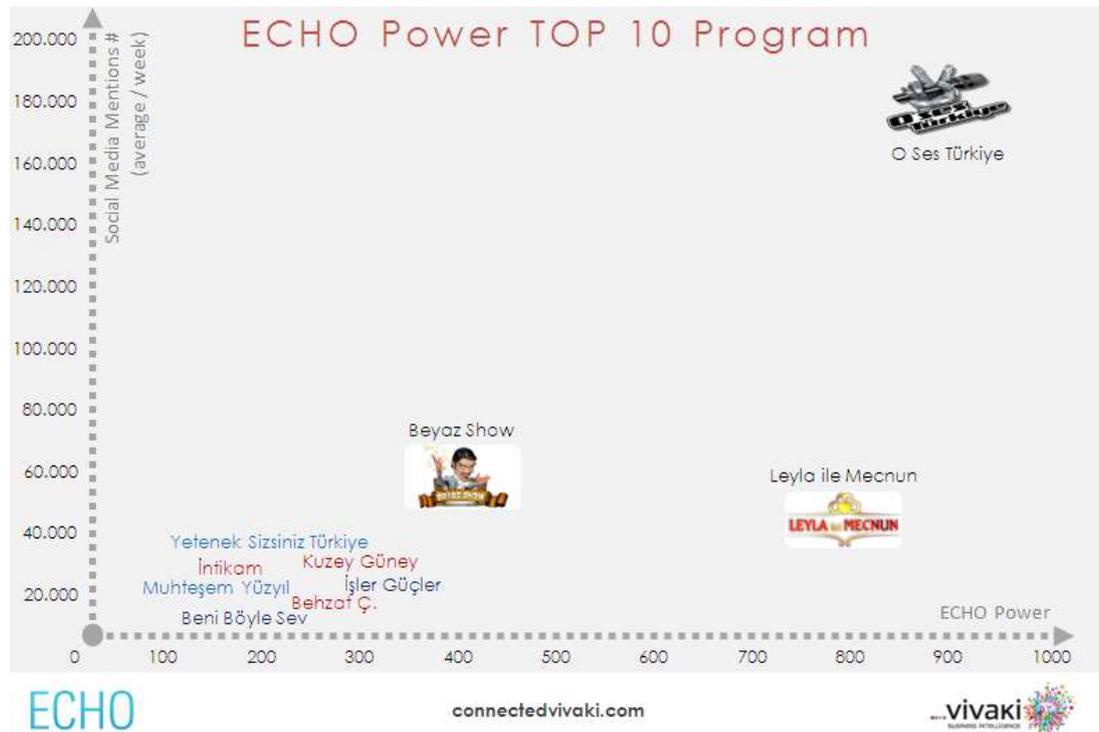
Figure 1: number of social media mentions, diffusion power rate of entertainment programs in 2012



(<http://www.connectedvivaki.com/2012-yilinin-en-sosyal-yerli-dizileri-ve-eglenme-programlari>, 25/03/2013)

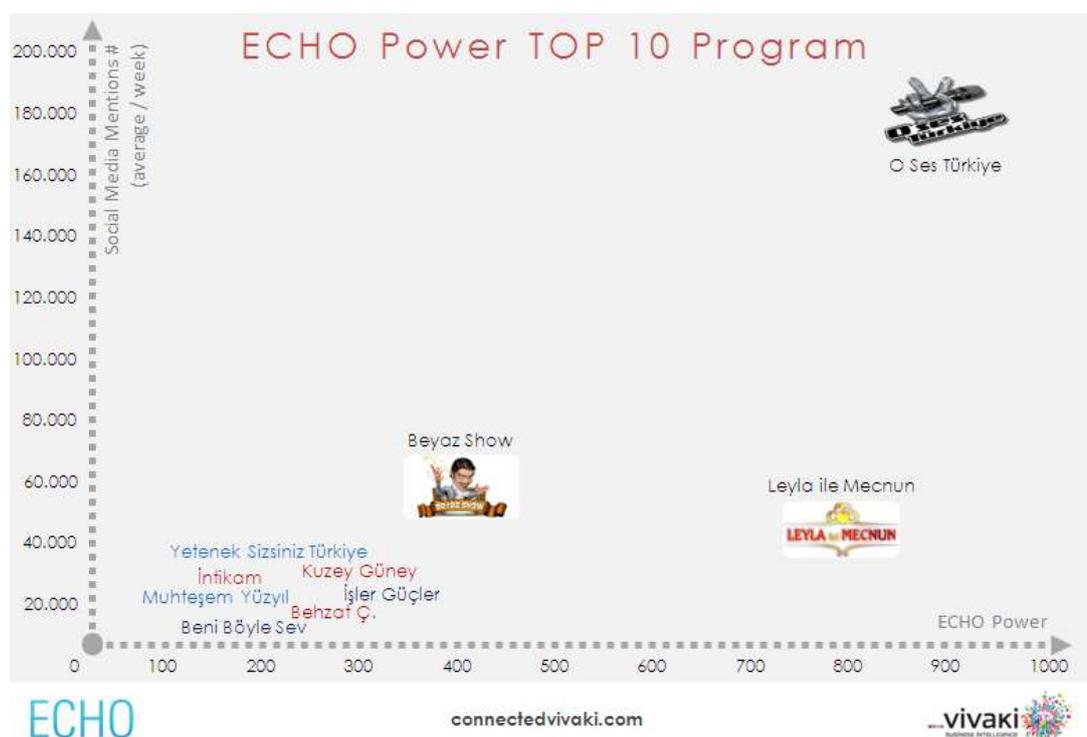
In Figure 1, with 37,494 mentions, "O Ses Türkiye" has the highest number and with values of 524, the second highest diffusion power rate, with 81 the second highest percent of positive engagement in social media among entertainment programs in Turkish television according to the ECHO model which has been developed by VivaKi Intelligence Business. Figure 2 and 3, 'O Ses Türkiye' has the highest number of mentions and diffusion power rate in social media during its finale in January and February of 2013 accordingly.

Fig 2: number of mentions and diffusion power rate in social media in February 2013



(<http://www.connectedvivaki.com/o-ses-turkiye-subat-ayinda-sosyal-medyayi-salladi>, 12/03/2013)

Fig 3: number of mentions and diffusion power rate in social media in January 2013



(<http://www.connectedvivaki.com/sosyal-medyanin-ocak-ayi-lideri-o-ses-turkiye-oldu>, 10/03/2013)

During the live shows phase in January and early February 2013, 'O Ses Türkiye' was by far the most viewed Turkish TV program in prime time.

Table 1: Rating Values of 'O Ses Türkiye'

O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	6,79	15,92	2	21 Jan.2013
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	6,48	15,13	4	14 Jan.2013
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	7,09	16,29	2	7 Jan.2013
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	12,79	32,34	1	31 Dec.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	5,58	13,74	3	31 Dec.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	6,61	15,23	2	24 Dec.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	7,50	17,51	2	17 Dec.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	9,49	22,29	2	10 Dec.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	10,62	24,92	1	3 Dec.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	11,22	25,40	1	26 Nov.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	11,27	26,50	1	19 Nov.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	9,59	22,10	2	12 Nov.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	8,42	19,20	2	5 Nov.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	8,61	21,80	1	29 Oct.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	8,92	21,60	1	22 Oct.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	7,74	20,58	1	15 Oct.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	7,37	18,20	2	8 Oct.2012
O Ses Türkiye	Star TV	7,06	18,30	2	1 Oct.2012

(<http://www.o-ses.info/O-Ses-Turkiye-Reytingleri-14-y.htm>, 22/03/2013)

AMR % = (AMA / TGT) x 100 where: AMR% = Average rating per minute,

AMA = Average audience per minute, TGT = Total of individuals or target.

SHR % is the proportion of average audience of a channel in percentage contrasted with the audience of total television in percentage.

4. Mood Management

The main idea of mood management theory is that individuals use entertainment in order to moderate or control their mood. In 1986 Zillmann formulated mood management theory about mood regulation through media offerings. Since then he has expanded and elaborated upon the intricacies of the theory.

According to the mood management theory, media does not only convey information but also modifies emotion, which does not occur arbitrarily but is based on the mechanism of operand conditioning. Individuals look for a specific program through which they have already had positive experiences. Media offerings constitute artificial, engaging environments that are easily controlled by individuals and more readily manipulated for purposes of mood management than alternative environments. Positive experiences occur through media first by improving their negative emotional state or reinforcing the positive emotional state. The more a person makes this experience, the higher is the probability that they select that program once again to minimize the bad mood or to maximize the good mood. The influence of media on mood depends on factors such as the duration of media use, its intensity and the cumulative experience of the recipient with the media. Additionally, the amount of invested mental effort, how similar the content of the program with the situation of the recipient and whether suspense, excitement or relaxation is achieved through the program are also factors that should be considered. Negative mood caused by lower stimulation, such as boredom may be reduced effectively by the use of exciting and entertaining stimuli or caused by over-stimulation like stress may be reduced by relaxing and watching entertainment music shows. (Zillmann, 1986)

According to Knobloch-Westerwick(2006), there are four types of media content attributes relevant to mood management: *excitatory potential*, *absorption potential*, *semantic affinity*, and *hedonic valence*. Excitatory potential describes the ability of content to arouse or calm emotion. Absorption potential explains the ability of content to distract from things that cause a negative mood and toward other things that cause positive feelings. Semantic affinity is about the degree to which content consists of characteristics that are similar to the aspects that are causing a bad mood. Hedonic valence describes the potential that content causes positive feelings. According to this aspect, individuals tend to minimize negative moods and maximize the positive moods. Every time a person minimize the negative and maximize the positive moods, it leaves a memory trace which influences the person to watch a certain program again in the future. The more this behavior is repeated, the higher the chance they will select the same program later which is based on the mechanism of operand conditioning. This conditioning takes place unconsciously.

5. Study on 'O Ses Türkiye'

5.1. Description of sample

An informal interview of questions regarding the TV watching habits was conducted. The interview consisted of an independently developed questionnaire. The questionnaire involved four questions and 30 participants between the ages of 18-55 years old. 19 of them were females and 11 males. The questions were prepared using the 4-likert scale which has a format of 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. In addition, the participants were asked for follow up details. It should be also noted that the study is not representative but nevertheless a tendency is observable.

5.2. Research questions and hypotheses

The research questions were:

Q1. Are you watching 'O Ses Türkiye' in the background, selected by chance,?

Q2. Are you watching 'O Ses Türkiye' because it shows real people with real problems?

Q3. Are you motivated to watch 'O Ses Türkiye' because of the next show?

Q4. Are you watching 'O Ses Türkiye' because your mood becomes more positive after watching it?

The hypotheses were:

H1: The participants are distracted from their daily lives.

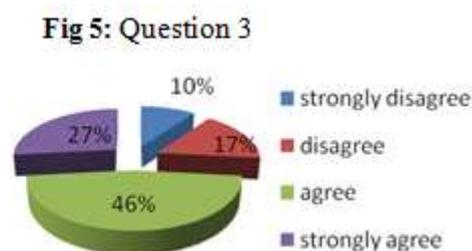
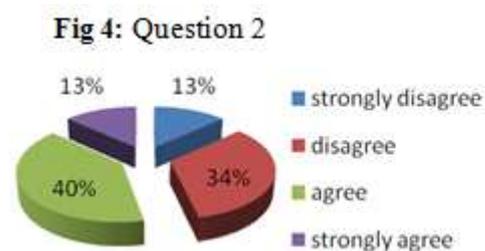
H2: The participants identify with the contestants of the show.

H3: The participants experience excitement.

H4: The participants regulate their mood.

5.3. Evaluation

In Fig. 4, 40 percent of the participants agree and 13 percent strongly agree that performances are authentic and not planned and that the contestants are real, ordinary people just like them and therefore they feel a part of the show. As a result, they tend to identify with the contestants and sympathize with them, which is related to *semantic affinity* content attributes. In Fig.5, 46 percent of the participants agree and 27 percent strongly agree that they watch the show because they are interested in the next show. They are rooting for a certain contestant, they follow the improvement of the contestants and watch how the dialogs and conflicts develop in the next show. In addition, they are motivated by the constant change of their favorite and talentless contestant which helps to reshape the expectations of the participants of the questionnaire and keep the tension going every week. Due to the show's serial nature, there is always a surprise element in the show and seventy three percent of the participants view the show because of its *excitatory potential* content attributes that are relevant to mood management theory.



In Fig. 6, 32 percent of the participants agree and 13 percent strongly agree, which is less than half of the participants, that they are distracted from the difficulties of their life and problems. This show is a background program for these participants. However 55 percent of the participants may not watch the show because of the *absorption potential* content attributes. In Fig.7, 50 percent of the participants agree and 17 percent strongly agree that the show changes their mood positively. This show's content attribute of *hedonic valance* is relevant to the mood management theory.

Fig 6: Question 1

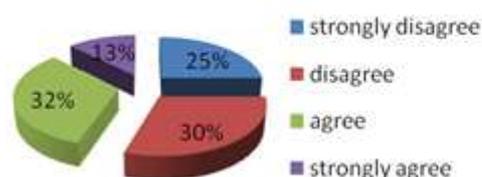
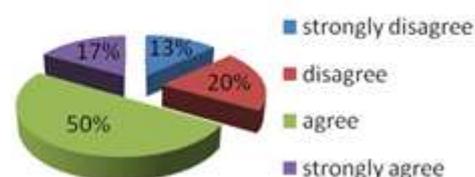


Fig 7: Question 4



6. Analysis

The question of why people watch music reality TV shows addressed in this study used the approach of mood management theory. The strategies of such shows are also explained in addition to the media-psychological perspective of media use.

Countless music reality shows have been broadcast in various formats with little format changes such as 'Idols', 'Pop Star' and 'Star Search', for years on TV and still boost high ratings. The diversity of such formats is a key point for their popularity and can explain this long lasting success. According to Berlyne(1974), individuals become indifferent to TV programs when such shows are too familiar or too sophisticated for them. However, a relatively slight change in familiar stimulus patterns that offers well-balanced might attract attention. Shows that are familiar to the audience are easily accessible to them and do not demand much to view them. The format of 'The Voice' has few differences compared to other music talent shows like 'Idols' and 'Popstar'. Despite the slight changes in its format, 'The Voice', as a music talent show has still not reached its saturation point.

Through the serial character of such shows the audience is bound to the contestants and the resulting intimacy is perceived as pleasure by the audience who are interested in the individual stories and characters and follow their developments. These talent shows present a contestant's life story and follow it from the auditions to the final round, thereby involving the audience in the center of the format. Celebrity juries on the show often create scandals or make controversial and scandalous comments. The conflicts and polarization between the juries and the contestants are also excitatory factors. The juries create their storyline dramas and each jury has their own personality or persona to boost ratings and attract media attention to the show.

Individuals view music reality TV shows in order to distract themselves from daily life or for relaxation. They indulge in the entertainment show and usually do not think much about the content afterwards and observe the developments of the individual contestants during the season of the show. The audience simmer with excitement for their favorite contestant and hope that their opponent will not make it to the next show. The audience tunes into the show on a regular basis to see the progress of each contestant.

As these shows are very ratings-oriented, the celebrity judges consider not only vocal talent but also their physical attributes and the stage presence of the candidates. In other words, they judge the candidates overall potential to become a complete artist. However, in the end, audience interaction through SMS votes is decisive in the success of the contestants. Controlling and manipulating the contestants through their votes gives the viewers the power and an indescribable feeling of gratification. Therefore, success is attributed to the entertainment that the contestants provide to the audience, which becomes the deciding factor of the contest. For instance, one particularly talented contestant with a physical disability was eliminated by the judges in the auditions in 'Popstar Türkiye', but after significant audience pressure, producers of the show decided to include him in later stages. In this way, the audience acts as the grand jury responsible for determining each contestant's fate as a bond with the contestants is achieved. In addition to tele-voting, fans of each candidates use social

media by creating facebook accounts or sending tweets to support each candidate. For example, with twitter there is 'the hash tag strategy' worked into the show with the '#OSesTurkiye' hash tag prominently displayed on the screen, as rivalry tweets between coaches and messages of support for both contestants and those who fail to make it.

Although talent shows claim that they give people a chance to showcase their talent, they also allow them to receive exposure. Such programs claim to be song contest, however juries' comments of contestants about their clothing and behavior on the stage, the conflicts between the juries and contestants, and the messages they give to the audience reveal that such song contests are more like entertainment programs. Cover songs are chosen and the contestants do not compose their own songs in the show and these popular, well-known songs can be mastered by most people after a lot of practice. The imitation of popular music does not make these performers stand out on their own because there is lack of originality. Cover songs also do not imprint an original memory on to viewers. If people hear a song for the first time, they remember it and a positive or negative response is imprinted on viewers. Therefore, these shows do not measure creative talent but are rather elaborate karaoke contests.

While the candidates have only 4 to 5 minutes to sing their songs on the stage, they prefer to choose their repertoire from among the songs that are familiar to the youngest and oldest viewers because they cast their telephone votes to well-known and popular songs. Through permanent emotionalization, personalization and scandalization during a season of music reality shows, emotional and parasocial bonds of the viewers are achieved. Viewers through SMS-voting determine the fate of the contestant and, in this way, intervene interactively. The viewers are persuaded to have a pseudo-affinity for their favorite contestants as well as influence them, additionally the serial (episodic) character of the music reality shows reinforces this bond. Emotional potential is more important than musical potential for becoming a star in music reality shows. The contestants who can express their feelings directly, and move the viewers more easily are more successful. In most cases, the success formula of emotionalization is explicitly encouraged by the program's producers. However, in the end neither musical nor emotional potential is mediated authentically. The contestants offer nothing musically new, distinct or genuine to the audience, but instead have to focus on the highest possible emotionalization. Therefore, it is for this reason that music reality shows' winners are forgotten after the end of the shows. Their success is attributed to the fun the contestants give the audience, which becomes the decision maker of the contest. Afterwards the show loses this function. The sold product of the show is the production, not the produced contestants. Despite the fact that the aim of such shows is to find talented young people and support them as stars with mega events, in reality they install synthetic, singing marionettes for immediate consumption. Their fame is not intended to be sustained beyond the show's end, unless they engage in further publicly. (Schramm H. p.62)

In order to gain respect from the audience and help the community, the producer of 'O Ses Türkiye' used a fund-raising campaign for the victims of the earthquake disaster in Van, Turkey as a social gesture which was very effective because it appealed to the collective giving of Turkish culture and the generosity inherent and embedded typical in Turkish audience's sympathies. Highly regarded news channels gave the show's fund-raising campaign exposure. The show uses a public relations strategy in order to be featured on the news and, therefore gain more exposure and, as a result the audience sympathizes with him.

The success of these types of TV shows can also be seen in a negative way. "These talent shows stimulate celebrity mania. And that becomes problematic when people start to think that they can become famous without working for it."(Lindner, 2012) In one of the interviews that was conducted with the candidates, they said that their only wish was to appeal to the masses and to experience their dreams.

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