

**T.C.
GALATASARAY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF RADIO, TELEVISION AND CINEMA**

***‘LEYLA İLE MECNUN’ FANDOM:
ITS MODUS OPERANDI ON FACEBOOK***



DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Arzu ŞAHİN

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Michel Bourse

March 2022

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To my grandfather...

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	: Justice and Development Party
AOL	: America Online
FIAWOL	: Fandom-Is-a-Way-of-Life
FIJAGH	: Fandom-Is-Just-a-Goddamned-Hobby
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
LCD	: Liquid Crystal Display
L&M	: Leyla ile Mecnun
LÖSEV	: Lösemili Çocuklar Vakfı
RTÜK	: Radio and Television Supreme Council
TRT	: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation
TV	: Television
UGT	: Uses and Gratification Theory



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RESUME

Avec les innovations apportées par les technologies Internet au 21^e siècle, de grands progrès ont été réalisés dans les activités de fans, les fanworks (conceptions artistiques produites par des fans pour d'autres fans) et les études de fandom. Les fans et les fanworks, qui étaient auparavant ignorés, sont devenus plus visibles et efficaces grâce aux opportunités que les nouvelles technologies médiatiques offrent à leurs utilisateurs. Des études de fandom ont révélé des informations importantes sur les fans, l'activité des fans, le travail artistique des fans, la culture des fans, le tourisme des fans et les communautés de fans au cours des deux dernières décennies.

L'évolution des études de communication a montré que l'influence des médias sur les audiences est limitée. Combinées à des méthodes de recherche qualitative et à la théorie de la réponse des lecteurs, les analyses de réception ont montré que les publics sont sélectifs et ne regardent pas tout à la télévision (Deacon & Keightley, 2011). D'autres études dans le domaine de la communication indiquent également que le sens n'est fixé par l'expéditeur, que le public n'est pas un récepteur passif des messages et que chacun d'eux filtre le texte envoyé par les filtres comme la race, la classe et le sexe (Hall, 1980 ; Bird & Godwin, 2006). Il a été étudié par de nombreux chercheurs dans le cadre de différents échantillons que le public est actif lors de la réception de textes culturels. Dans ce contexte, David Morley (1980) a déclaré que si les significations attribuées par l'auditoire à une émission de télévision sont homogènes au sein des groupes, elles diffèrent entre les groupes; Janice Radway (1991) affirme qu'un groupe de femmes, en lisant des romans d'amour, s'approprient ce qu'elles lisent de différentes manières, que chacune est à la recherche de choses différentes et qu'elles interprètent ce qu'elles lisent à leur manière; Mary Ellen Brown (1994), d'autre part, souligne que le processus de regarder des séries télévisées est aussi important que ce que les femmes comprennent lorsqu'elles parlent de la série entre elles.

Les fans, considérés comme des malades mentaux, exclus de la société et ayant eu une mauvaise impression dans la presse jusque dans les années 90, ont commencé à se purifier de l'étiquette de « déviant » grâce aux études académiques sur les fans au début des années 90 et sont devenus un sujet digne pour enquêter (Jenkins, 1992; Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992; Coppa, 2014). Il existe de nombreuses activités de fans dans le monde. L'activité de fan-fiction, basée sur la création de différents événements et mondes dans lesquels le texte ou les personnages du texte sont intensément admirés, est populaire. Outre la création d'histoires, il est également courant de créer des vidéos, des clips vidéo, des objets liés à des personnages et d'autres produits artistiques. Les fans interagissent en formant des communautés, organisent des fan meetings autour des séries, et si nécessaire, ils peuvent obtenir leurs souhaits par la création d'un pouvoir civique (changer le scénario de la série, refaire la série, etc.). Les études de fandom ont été étudiées dans des contextes tels que les interactions des fans entre eux, les œuvres artistiques produites dans le cadre de leur admiration, les fan fictions dans lesquelles ils réécrivent le texte qu'ils admirent, le tourisme des fans, les réunions de fans, les communautés de fans et les cultures de fans. Deux revues académiques traitent de différents aspects des fandom continuent de paraître: La revue *Transformative Works and Cultures*, qui a commencé sa publication en 2008, et le *Journal of Fandom Studies*, fondé en 2012. Les fans ont été traités sous différents thèmes par différentes disciplines des sciences sociales telles que l'anthropologie, l'ethnographie, la psychologie, la sociologie, la linguistique, la communication et le droit. L'aspect des études de fandom découlant des études culturelles est important dans le cadre de la compréhension des cultures des fans. Il explore le fandom en tant que culture en examinant les fanworks, les communautés de fans et l'activité des fans.

Les premiers exemples des études de fandom en Turquie, sont généralement vus dans le cadre de séries étrangères, de mangas et de fans de sport. Bien qu'il y ait un manque d'études sur les fans de séries télévisées nationales dans le cadre des études de fandom, il existe de nombreuses études qui traitent de différents aspects tels que la comparaison des séries télévisées turques entre elles et les effets des séries télévisées sur la société. Avec le développement de l'industrie Turque des séries télévisées, le nombre de séries télévisées sur le marché et la qualité de ces séries télévisées ont également augmenté. Le fait qu'une série soit appréciée du public et qu'elle ait une communauté de fans montre que le texte a des caractéristiques qui plaisent aux gens. Quand on regarde le cours général de l'industrie des séries télévisées en Turquie, on constate que depuis les années 2000, les séries télévisées embellissant le mode de vie riche axé sur la consommation ont été intenses. La forte densité de ces séries peut signifier que le nombre de contenus qui attirent les téléspectateurs qui préfèrent différents genres est faible. Dans ce cadre, TRT peut assurer la production de contenus différents de ceux produits par des chaînes privées à des fins commerciales, avec une garantie de l'État. La série *Leyla ile Mecnun* (L&M) présente également un contenu que les chaînes privées n'osent pas diffuser pour des raisons commerciales, dans lequel les éloges de la culture populaire sont quelque peu vilipendés. Quand l'humour ou la comédie absurde est considéré comme une attitude critique envers la culture existante, un terrain de lutte, la série L&M attire l'attention des jeunes téléspectateurs, notamment avec la résistance de l'auteur à la culture de masse et ses méthodes de lutte. Cet intérêt conduit à l'émergence d'une admiration unie autour de la série L&M, et la visibilité et les activités de ladite base de fans attirent l'attention. Il est important d'aborder l'augmentation de l'influence des fans avec les médias sociaux, la solidarité entre les fans et la culture communautaire dans la base de fans de L&M, qui n'était pas très grande au début. Le fait que la série télévisée "*Leyla ile Mecnun*", qui s'est terminée en 2013, ait toujours une base de fans active et en constante expansion qui a pu faire retransmettre la série, crée une curiosité sur la raison et le comment de ce long terme l'existence et l'influence de la communauté. Cette étude est la première étude à examiner le fandom de la série télévisée '*Leyla ile Mecnun*', qui a une base de fans large et active dans les médias sociaux, dans le cadre des théories de la culture participative et de la sous-culture, dans le cadre des études Fandom, qui a émergé de la discipline des études culturelles.

Cette étude vise à révéler le parcours d'un fandom formé dans le cadre de la série *Leyla ile Mecnun*. Dans ce contexte, les modèles et les motivations générales des communautés de fans de L&M sont explorés dans le cadre de la culture participative. Deuxièmement, les causes communes et les caractéristiques culturelles communes (sens, jargon, activités, style de parole, etc.) qui rassemblent le public autour du fandom sont explorées dans le cadre de la théorie de la sous-culture.

La diffusion du sujet de recherche sur une longue période de temps et la présence des groupes de recherche sur les médias sociaux ont nécessité la création d'un design de recherche mixte. Dans la première partie de la recherche, il s'agissait de mieux observer la culture de la communauté et dans quels plate-formes et quel type d'activités de fans les fans effectuent sur les réseaux sociaux. Afin de comprendre cela, la méthode de recherche netnographique et d'analyse de contenu, qui est la version Internet de la recherche ethnographique, a été utilisée afin de déterminer à partir de quel support et quel type d'échantillon serait approprié. Afin de déterminer les modèles de comportement, de pensée et d'évaluation du fandom de la série *Leyla ile Mecnun* dans l'environnement numérique, des interrogations ont été menées à certains intervalles entre décembre 2015 et février 2019 avec les mots-clés '*Leyla ile Mecnun*'. Par la suite, les données sur les plateformes de médias sociaux sur lesquelles les fans étaient engagés ont été collectées et enregistrées sous forme de captures d'écran et soumises à une analyse de contenu par catégorisation.

Dans la deuxième partie de la recherche, dans le cadre des informations obtenues lors de la première étape ; Il vise à tester la fiabilité des observations faites, à obtenir des informations détaillées sur le fonctionnement interne des communautés et à

obtenir des informations plus approfondies sur la culture communautaire. Pour cela, il a été décidé de créer un échantillon ciblé et de mener des entretiens semi-directifs approfondis avec les responsables des communautés de fans L&M sur Facebook, où il a été observé que la culture communautaire pouvait être créée à travers des pages de fans et des groupes de fans. Avant les interviews, les groupes et les pages de fans ont été recherchés et répertoriés sur Facebook avec les mots-clés « Leyla ile Mecnun ». Par la suite, une demande d'entretien a été envoyée aux responsables des pages de fans encore actives et des groupes de fans de 1000 membres ou plus. 12 personnes ont donné des commentaires positifs aux demandes d'entretien, et les entretiens ont eu lieu après les avoir informés de la recherche et obtenu leur approbation. Les entretiens ont eu lieu entre le 8 février et le 17 mars 2019, et chaque entretien a duré entre 40 et 60 minutes. Dans l'échantillon, ceux qui sont dans le fandom depuis le début de la série, ceux qui ont regardé et participé à la série plus tard, ceux qui ont endossé et vécu de nombreux rôles dans la communauté des fans, étaient les personnes qui ont fourni des informations dans une large perspective, de sorte que les réponses reçues pourraient éclairer les développements généraux jusqu'à aujourd'hui.

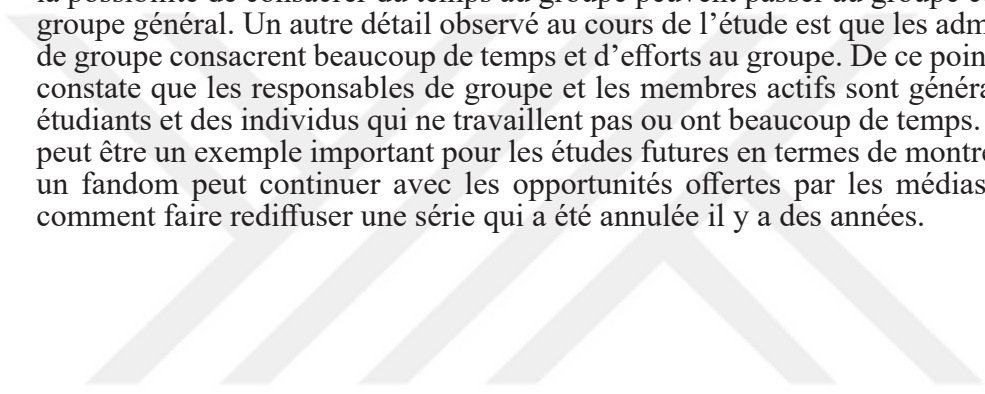
En regardant les résultats obtenus à partir de la recherche netnographique, il a été constaté que les fans de L&M utilisent différentes plateformes numériques pour différentes activités de fans. Les fans, qui peuvent poursuivre leurs activités et interagir avec Internet et les nouveaux outils médiatiques, peuvent exprimer librement leurs pensées, critiques et sentiments sur la série sur différentes plateformes et discuter avec d'autres fans. D'autre part, on a vu qu'une culture commune peut être créée dans le cadre de certaines règles avec des personnes qui ont les mêmes vues, sentiments et pensées en rejoignant une communauté virtuelle. Les activités préférées des fans de L&M sont les lignes de la série ajoutées aux photos de la série, le partage des scènes en les coupant, la réalisation des visuels des collages de la série télévisée et les conversations en utilisant le jargon de la série. En dehors de cela, on voit qu'il y a des interactions fan-fan et fan-membres d'équipe de la série. L'équipe de la série peut interagir avec les fans sur Twitter, Instagram et Facebook. Ces interactions se présentent sous forme de commentaires sur les épisodes, de félicitations ou de célébration de l'anniversaire de la série lors de la diffusion. On a vu que les fans peuvent se regrouper dans le cadre d'une culture commune et former des communautés virtuelles de fans sur Facebook.

Les résultats obtenus lors des entretiens sont regroupés sous les rubriques; les raisons de regarder L&M, recherche de plus d'informations, règles de la communauté, cohésion et continuité dans la communauté des fans, relations interpersonnelles, activités des fans et développement professionnel. Après avoir regardé la série, le besoin de parler sur la série avec les gens et d'obtenir plus d'informations se fait sentir. Les fans qui ne trouvent personne à qui parler de la série les recherchent sur les réseaux sociaux et trouvent une plateforme qui les intéresse. On voit que les fans qui ne peuvent pas trouver ce qu'ils cherchent ou espèrent, créent leurs propres groupes de fans et invitent d'autres fans, et peuvent se positionner comme des leaders d'opinion au sein des groupes. Ces personnes, qui sont pour la plupart des managers de groupe, sont d'une grande importance pour assurer la continuité de la communauté de fans, maintenir sa vitalité, informer et intégrer de nouveaux fans dans le groupe. Le nombre, la qualité et les likes et commentaires des publications populaires au sein du groupe peuvent également devenir un indicateur de statut en participant au travail. Ces compétitions peuvent aussi devenir une compétition à la fois pour la vivification du groupe et pour obtenir du statut.

Certains fans de L&M essaient d'apporter leur admiration à leur vie réelle et de créer un environnement social conforme à la philosophie de la série. Les réseaux sociaux ont un grand impact sur l'atteinte de cet environnement social que l'on essaie de créer. Des fans, partis d'un goût commun, se réunissent en groupes sur Facebook, puis ils créent des plus petits groupes privés entre eux dans des différentes plateformes sociales comme Whatsapp. Dans ces groupes, il commence à partager sur leur vraie personnelle vie, en dehors de la série. Une amitié étroite s'établit entre les fans qui ont commencé à se rencontrer face à face en portant leurs connaissances croissantes dans

le groupe en ligne dans la vraie vie. Dans le cadre des relations réelles, le phénomène d'admiration est pris comme critère de base, puis des critères plus profonds et personnels/caractéristiques sont inclus, et des relations interpersonnelles sont réalisées.

En conséquence, on constate que les fans de L&M maintiennent leur existence autour d'une sous-culture commune dans des communautés avec une certaine structure de fonctionnement sur Facebook. Trois domaines principaux ont été déterminés au sein des groupes de fans : les membres du groupe général, les membres du groupe central et les administrateurs. Les membres du groupe général sont des personnes qui ne sont pas actives dans le groupe mais qui suivent les publications. Les membres du groupe central sont des membres actifs du groupe entre 10 et 15 personnes. Ces membres mènent la plupart des conversations dans le groupe, publient et commentent fréquemment. Les amitiés hors ligne proviennent principalement de cette zone. Les managers, quant à eux, sont les personnes qui interagissent avec les membres du groupe avec au moins une publication par jour, assurant la dynamique du groupe. La caractéristique la plus importante de ce modèle, qui est obtenue à partir des groupes Facebook, est la possibilité de transitions entre ces zones spécifiées. Cette situation permet aux nouveaux fans d'avoir des rôles différents, et les managers qui n'ont pas la possibilité de consacrer du temps au groupe peuvent passer au groupe central ou au groupe général. Un autre détail observé au cours de l'étude est que les administrateurs de groupe consacrent beaucoup de temps et d'efforts au groupe. De ce point de vue, on constate que les responsables de groupe et les membres actifs sont généralement des étudiants et des individus qui ne travaillent pas ou ont beaucoup de temps. Cette étude peut être un exemple important pour les études futures en termes de montrer comment un fandom peut continuer avec les opportunités offertes par les médias sociaux et comment faire rediffuser une série qui a été annulée il y a des années.



ABSTRACT

With the innovations brought by internet technologies in the 21st century, great progress has been made in fan activities, fan works (artistic designs produced by fans for other fans) and fandom studies. Fans and fandom studies, which were previously ignored, have become more visible and effective thanks to the opportunities provided by new media technologies. Fandom studies have revealed important information about fans, fan activities, fan works, fan culture, fan tourism, and fan communities over the past two decades.

Advances in communication studies have proven that the media's influence on audiences is limited. Reception analysis that combines qualitative research methods and reader-oriented theory has showed that audiences do not watch everything on television and are selective (Deacon & Keightley, 2011). Other studies in the field of communication also indicate that the meaning is not fixed by the sender, that the public is not a passive receiver of the messages and that each of them filters the text sent by the filters such as race, class and gender (Hall, 1980; Bird & Godwin, 2006). It has been investigated by many researchers in the context of different samples that the audience is active during the reception of cultural texts. In this context, David Morley (1980) stated that while the meanings attributed by the audience to a television program are homogeneous within groups, they differ between groups; Janice Radway (1991) asserts that a group of women reading romance novels appropriate what they read in different ways, that each is looking for different things and that they interpret what they read in their own way, so the reader should be understood by focusing on the reader, not the text; Mary Ellen Brown (1994), on the other hand, points out that the process of watching TV serials is as important as what women understand when discussing the series with each other.

Fans, considered mentally ill, excluded from society and having a bad impression in the press until the 90s, started to be purified from the label of "deviant" and became a worthy subject to investigate thanks to academic studies on fans in the early 90s (Jenkins, 1992; Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992; Coppa, 2014). Fandoms have been studied in contexts such as fans' interactions with each other, artistic works produced as part of their admiration, fan fictions in which they rewrite the text they admire, fan tourism, fan meetings, fan communities and fan cultures. Besides the books written in fandom studies, two academic journals in which different aspects of fandom are discussed continue to be published: *Transformative Works and Cultures*, which started its publication life in 2008, and *Journal of Fandom Studies*, which was founded in 2012. Fans were treated under different themes by different social science disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography, psychology, sociology, linguistics, communication and law. The aspect of fandom studies arising from cultural studies is important within the scope of understanding fan cultures. It explores fandom as a culture by examining fanworks, fan communities, and fan activities.

The earliest examples of fandom studies in Turkey, are generally seen in the context of foreign serials, manga, and sports fans. Although there is a lack of studies of fans of national TV series as part of fandom studies, there are many studies that deal with different aspects such as the comparison of Turkish TV serials to each other and the effects of TV serials on society. With the development of the Turkish TV serial industry, the number of TV serials in the market and the quality of these TV serials have also increased. The fact that a series is loved by the audience and has a fan community shows that the text has features that appeal to people. When we look at the general course of the TV serial industry in Turkey, it is seen that since the 2000s, the number of TV serials exalting a consumption-oriented and decadent lifestyle has

increased considerably. The high density of such serials may mean that the amount of content that appeals to viewers who prefer different genres is low. In this context, TRT can ensure the production of content different from that produced by private channels for commercial purposes, with a state guarantee. The *Leyla ile Mecnun* (L&M) series also features content that private channels do not dare to broadcast for commercial reasons, in a way that denounces what popular culture praises. When humor or absurd comedy is considered as a critical attitude towards the existing culture, a ground of struggle; The L&M series attracts the attention of young viewers, especially with the author's resistance to mass culture and his methods of struggle. This interest leads to the emergence of a united admiration on the basis of the L&M series, and the visibility and activities of the said fandom draw attention. It is important to address the increase in L&M fandom influence within social media, fan solidarity and community culture in the fandom, which was not very large in the beginning. The fact that the TV series "*Leyla ile Mecnun*", which ended in 2013, still has an active and ever-expanding fandom that was able to get the series rebroadcast, creates a curiosity about the reasons for the long-term existence and influence of the community. This study is the first study to examine the fandom of the '*Leyla ile Mecnun*' TV series, which has a large and active fandom in social media, within the framework of participatory culture and subculture theories, and as part of Fandom Studies, which emerged from the discipline of Cultural Studies.

This study aims to reveal the journey of a fandom formed as part of the "*Leyla ile Mecnun*" TV series. In this context, the patterns and general motivations of L&M fan communities are explored within the framework of participatory culture. Secondly, the common causes and common cultural characteristics (meanings, jargon, activities, speaking style, etc.) that bring audiences together around fandom are explored within the theory of subculture.

The prolongation of the research topic over a long period of time and the presence of the research groups on social media necessitated the creation of a mixed research design. In the first part of the research, the netnographic research, which is the Internet version of the ethnographic research, and content analysis method was used in order to determine which platforms and what kind of fan activities the fans carried out on social media, and from which platforms and what kind of sample would be appropriate to better observe and understand the community culture. In order to determine the behavior, thought and evaluation patterns of the fandom of the *Leyla ile Mecnun* series in the digital environment, interrogations were carried out with the keywords '*Leyla ile Mecnun*' at regular intervals between December 2015 and February 2019. Data on which activities the fans were engaged in on which social media platforms were collected and recorded as screenshots and subjected to content analysis via a categorizing process. In the second part of the research, and within the scope of the information obtained in the first stage, it is aimed to test the reliability of the observations made, to obtain detailed information about the inner *modus operandi* of the fan communities and to obtain more in-depth information about the community culture. For this, it was decided to create a purposeful sample and to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with the administrators of L&M fan communities on Facebook, which is seen as suitable for the creation of community culture that could be created through fan pages and fan groups. Before the interviews, groups and fan pages were searched and listed on Facebook with the keywords '*Leyla ile Mecnun*'. Afterwards, an interview request was sent to the administrators of the fan pages that are still active and the fan groups with 1000 or more members. 12 participants accepted the interview requests, and interviews were held after informing them about the research and obtaining their approval. The interviews were held between 8 February and 17 March 2019, and each interview lasted between 40-60 minutes. The names of the interviewees are not used in the study. The sample includes fans who have been in the fandom since the beginning of the series, those who have watched and participated in the series later, and those who have taken on and experienced many roles in the fan communities. This variety served to provide information from a wide perspective, so the answers received have been able to illuminate the general developments in fandom until today.

Looking at the results obtained from the netnographic research, it's seen that L&M fans use different digital platforms for different fan activities. These fans continue their activities and interact easily with the internet and new media tools. They may freely express their thoughts, criticisms and feelings about the series on different social media platforms and discuss with other fans. On the other hand, it's seen that a common culture can be created within the framework of certain rules with participants who have the same views, feelings and thoughts by being included in a virtual community. L&M fans' favorite activities are sharing the lines from the series with photos from the series, sharing the scenes in short versions, making collages of the visuals from the TV series, and having conversations using the jargon of the series. Apart from these, it is seen that there are fan-fan and fan-series team interactions. The series production team also interacts with fans on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. These interactions may be in the form of comments on the episodes, congratulations or celebrating the birthday of the series during the broadcast. It's also seen that the fans mostly prefer Facebook to come together within the framework of a common culture and form virtual fan communities.

The results obtained during the interviews are grouped under the following headings; Reasons to watch L&M, Seeking more information, Community rules, Cohesion and continuity in the fan community, Interpersonal relationships, and Fan activities and professional development. The introduction of the fans to the series was either through someone else's recommendation, or a post about the series on social media, or running across the series on television. After watching the series, the need to talk about the series and for more information about the series arises if the series is admired. Fans who can't find anyone to talk to about the series search for them on social media and find a medium that appeals to them. It is seen that the fans who cannot find what they are looking for or hoping for, create their own fan groups and invite other fans. The results show that the fans can come to a position like opinion leaders in groups. These people, who are mostly group managers, are of great importance in ensuring the continuity of the fan community, maintaining its vitality, and informing and incorporating new fans into the group. The popularity of fans within the group, which is linked with the number of likes received and the quality of comments and posts, may become a social status indicator in the group. In-group competitions may also contribute to the status indicators besides its revival effect in the group.

It is interesting to note that some of the L&M fans try to bring their admiration to their real lives and create a social environment in line with the philosophy of the show. Social networks have a great impact on reaching this social environment that people are attempting to create. L&M fans who have a common admiration meet in Facebook groups, then they create smaller private groups among themselves in different social platforms such as Whatsapp. In these groups, they begin to share details about their real personal life, outside of the series. A close friendship is established between the fans who started to meet face to face after developing their relationship in the online group. In offline relationships, the phenomenon of admiration is taken as a basic criterion, then deeper and personal/characteristic criteria are included, and interpersonal relations are carried out.

As a result, we see that L&M fans maintain their existence around a common subculture in fan communities with a certain operating structure on Facebook. Three main zones are identified within fan groups: general group members, core group members, and administrators. Members of the general group are not active in the group but they follow the sharings and posts. Core group members are active group members between 10 and 15 people. These members lead most of the conversations in the group, and post and comment frequently. Offline friendships stem mostly in this zone. Administrators interact with the members of the group with at least one post per day and ensure the dynamics of the group. The most important feature of this model, which is obtained from the Facebook L&M fan groups, is the possibility of transitions between these specified zones. This situation allows new fans to have different roles, and to switch between zones with different levels of interactions, and also offers the

administrators, who do not have the option to devote time to the group, the possibility of moving to the core group or the general group. Another detail observed during this study is that group administrators devote a lot of time and effort to the group. From this point of view, it's revealed that the group leaders and active members are generally students and individuals who do not have a large workload. This study is an important example for future studies in terms of showing how a fandom lasts a long time with the opportunities offered by social media technologies and how to create civic power in fandoms as seen in the example of L&M fandom, which succeeded to rebroadcast the series that was cancelled years ago.



ÖZET

21. yüzyılda İnternet teknolojilerinin getirdiği yeniliklerle birlikte, İngilizce literatürde fan activities, fanworks ve fandom studies olarak geçen, sırasıyla hayran aktivitelerinde, hayran çalışmalarında (hayranlar tarafından diğer hayranlar için üretilen sanatsal tasarımlar) ve hayranlık çalışmaları alanında büyük bir ilerleme kaydedildi. Daha önce önemsenmeyen hayranlar ve hayranlık çalışmaları yeni medya teknolojilerinin kullanıcılarına sağladığı olanaklar sayesinde daha görünür ve etkili hale geldiler. Hayranlık çalışmaları son yirmi yılda hayranlar, hayran aktiviteleri, hayran çalışmaları, hayran kültürleri, hayran koleksiyonculuğu, hayran turizmi, hayran topluluğu ya da cemaatleri hakkında önemli bilgiler ortaya koydu.

İletişim çalışmalarındaki gelişmeler medyanın izleyiciler üzerindeki etkisinin sınırlı olduğunu kanıtladı. Nitel araştırma yöntemleri ve okur odaklı teorinin birleşiminden oluşan alımlama analizleri izleyicilerin televizyondaki her şeyi izlemediğini ve seçici olduklarını gösterdi (Deacon & Keightley, 2011). İletişim alanındaki diğer çalışmalar da anlamın gönderici tarafından belirlenip sabitlenmediğini, izleyicilerin pasif mesaj alıcıları olmadıklarını ve her birinin gönderilen metni ırk, sınıf, cinsiyet gibi filtrelerden geçirdiklerini söyler (Hall, 1980; Bird & Godwin, 2006). İzleyicilerin kültürel metinleri alımlama sırasında aktif oldukları birçok araştırmacı tarafından farklı örneklemeler bağlamında araştırılmıştır. Bu kapsamda David Morley (1980), izleyicilerin bir televizyon programına atfettikleri anlamların gruplar içinde homojenlik gösterirken gruplar arasında farklılaştığını; Janice Radway (1991), bir kadın grubunun aşk romanları okurken okuduklarını farklı şekillerde sahiplendiklerini, her birinin farklı şeylerin arayışında olduklarını ve okuduklarını kendilerine göre yorumladıklarını dolayısıyla okuyucunun metne değil de okura odaklanılarak anlaşılması gerektiğini; Mary Ellen Brown (1994) ise televizyon dizilerinin izlendiği süreç kadar kadınların kendi aralarında dizi hakkında konuşurken neyi nasıl anlamlandırdıklarının da önemli olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

90'lı yıllara kadar akıl hastası olarak görülen, toplumdan dışlanan ve basında kötü bir izlenime sahip olan hayranlar, 90'lı yılların başında hayranlarla ilgili yapılan akademik çalışmalar sayesinde "sapkın" etiketinden arınmaya başladılar ve araştırılmaya değer bir konu haline geldiler (Jenkins, 1992; Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992; Coppa, 2014). Dünyada birçok hayranlık aktiviteleri bulunmaktadır. Yoğunlukla hayranlık duyulan metnin ya da metindeki karakterlerin yer aldığı farklı olay ve dünyaların yaratılmasına dayalı fan-fiction aktivitesi revaçta bulunmaktadır. Hikaye yaratmanın dışında videolar, video klipler, karakterlerle ilgili objelerin diğer sanatsal ürünlerin ortaya çıkarılması. Hayranlar topluluklar oluşturarak etkileşime girmekte, dizi odaklı hayran buluşmaları organize etmekte ve gerektiğinde örgütlenerek istekleri doğrultusunda (dizi senaryosunda değişiklik yapılması, dizinin yeniden çekilmesi vb. şeyler.) bazı şeyleri elde edebilmektedirler. Hayranlık çalışmaları hayranların birbirleriyle olan etkileşimleri, hayranlıkları çerçevesinde ürettikleri sanatsal çalışmaları, hayranlık duydukları metni kendilerine göre yeniden yazdıkları hayran kurguları, hayran turizmi, hayran buluşmaları, hayran toplulukları ve hayran kültürleri gibi bağlamlarda çalışılmıştır. Hayranlığın farklı yönlerinin ele alındığı iki akademik dergi de yayın hayatına devam etmektedir: 2008'de yayın hayatına başlayan Transformative Works and Cultures dergisi ve 2012'de kurulan Journal of Fandom Studies. Hayranlar antropoloji, etnografi, psikoloji, sosyoloji, dil bilimleri, iletişim, hukuk gibi farklı sosyal bilimler disiplinleri tarafından farklı konu başlıklarında ele alınmıştır. Hayranlık çalışmalarının kültürel çalışmalardan kaynaklanan yönü hayran kültürlerinin anlaşılması kapsamında önem arz etmektedir. Hayranlık çalışmaları, hayran toplulukları ve hayran faaliyetlerini inceleyerek hayranlığı bir kültür olarak ele alır.

Türkiye’de, Hayranlık Çalışmaları’nın ilk örnekleri genel olarak yabancı dizi, Manga ve spor hayranlıkları çerçevesinde görülmektedir. Hayranlık çalışmaları kapsamında yerli dizi hayranlıklarına dair çalışma eksikliği olsa da Türk dizilerinin birbiriyle karşılaştırılması, dizilerin toplum üzerindeki etkileri gibi farklı yönlerini ele alan birçok çalışmaya rastlanmaktadır. Türk dizi sektörünün gelişmesiyle birlikte piyasadaki dizi sayısı ve bu dizilerin kalitesi de artmıştır. Bir dizinin seyirci tarafından sevilmesi ve bir hayran topluluğuna sahip olması, o metnin insanlara hitap eden özellikleri olduğunu göstermektedir. Türkiye’deki dizi sektörünün genel gidişatına bakıldığında 2000’li yıllardan bu yana tüketim odaklı zengin yaşam tarzını güzelleştiren dizilerin yoğunlukta olduğu görülmektedir. Bu tarz dizilerin yoğunlukta olması farklı türleri tercih eden izleyicilere hitap eden içeriklerin sayısının az olduğu anlamına gelebilmektedir. Bu çerçevede, TRT, özel kanalların ticari amaçlarla ürettikleri içeriklerden farklı tarzdaki içeriklerin üretilmesini devlet garantisiyle sağlayabilmektedir. Leyla ile Mecnun (L&M) dizisi de özel kanalların ticari gerekçelerle yayınlamaya cesaret edemeyeceği, popüler kültürün övdüğü şeylerin bir nevi yerildiği bir içerik sunmaktadır. Mizah ya da absürd komedi var olan kültüre karşı eleştirel bir tutum, bir mücadele alanı olarak ele alındığında; L&M dizisi yazarın kitle kültürüne karşı direnişi ve mücadele yöntemleri ile özellikle genç izleyicilerin ilgisini çekmektedir. Bu ilgi L&M dizisi temelinde birleşen bir hayranlığın doğmasına vesile olmakta ve söz konusu hayran kitlesinin görünürlüğü ve faaliyetleri dikkat çekmektedir. Sosyal medya ile hayranların etki gücünün artması, L&M’nin başlarda çok büyük sayılmayacak hayran kitlesindeki hayranlar arası dayanışmayı ve topluluk kültürünün ele alınması önem taşımaktadır. 2013 yılında biten ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’ dizisinin günümüzde hala aktif, sürekli genişleyen ve dizinin yeniden yayınlanmasını sağlayabilmiş bir hayran topluluğuna sahip olması, topluluğun bu uzun süreli varoluşunun ve etkisinin nedenine ve nasılına dair bir merak oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma, kültürel çalışmalar disiplininin doğan Hayranlık Çalışmaları (Fandom Studies) kapsamında sosyal medyada geniş ve aktif bir hayran topluluğuna sahip olan ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’ dizisi hayranlığını (Fandom) katılımcı kültür ve alt-kültür teorileri çerçevesinde inceleyen ilk çalışma niteliğindedir.

Bu çalışma, Leyla ile Mecnun dizisi çerçevesinde oluşan bir fandomun yolculuğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Kompare (2018), hayranların yeni metinleri nasıl keşfettiklerine, ilk etapta metinlere ve fandomlara nasıl dahil olduklarına ve fandomun yeni ve eski üyeleriyle nasıl bir ilerleme kaydettiğine odaklanan çok fazla çalışma olmadığını belirtmektedir. Bu bağlamda, öncelikle katılımcı kültür çerçevesinde L&M hayran topluluklarının kalıpları ve genel motivasyon sebepleri araştırılıp keşfedilmektedir. İkinci olarak, izleyicileri fandom etrafında bir araya getiren ortak nedenler ve ortak kültürel özellikler (anlamlar, jargon, etkinlikler, konuşma tarzı vb.) altkültür teorisi içinde keşfedilmektedir.

Araştırma konusunun uzun bir süreye yayılması ve araştırma konusu grupların sosyal medya üzerindeki varlığı karma bir araştırma deseni oluşturulmasını gerektirmiştir. Araştırmanın ilk kısmında hayranların sosyal medya üzerinde hangi mecralarda ve ne tür hayran faaliyetleri gerçekleştirdiğinin ve topluluk kültürünün daha iyi gözlemlenip anlaşılması için hangi mecradan ve nasıl bir örneklem seçilmesinin uygun olacağını belirlebilmesi kapsamında etnografik araştırmanın İnternet üzerinden yapılan versiyonu olan netnografik araştırma ve içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Leyla ile Mecnun dizisi fandom’unun dijital ortamdaki davranış, düşünce ve değerlendirme kalıplarının belirlenebilmesi amacıyla Aralık 2015 - Şubat 2019 tarihleri arasında ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’ anahtar kelimeleriyle belli aralıklarla sorgulamalar gerçekleştirilmiş ve hayranların hangi sosyal medya platformlarında hangi faaliyetlerde bulunduklarına dair veriler toplanarak ekran görüntüsü olarak kaydedilmiş ve kategorilere ayrılarak içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur.

Araştırmanın ikinci kısmında, ilk aşamada elde edilen bilgiler kapsamında; yapılan gözlemlerin güvenilirliğinin test edilmesi, toplulukların iç işleyişine dair ayrıntılı bilgilerin elde edilmesi ve topluluk kültürüne dair daha derinlemesine bilgi edinilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bunun için, amaçlı bir örneklem oluşturulmasına

karar verilerek hayran sayfaları ve hayran grupları üzerinden topluluk kültürünün oluşturulabildiği gözlemlenen Facebook'taki L&M hayran topluluklarının yöneticileri ile derinlemesine yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmasına karar verilmiştir. Görüşmeler öncesinde Facebook'ta 'Leyla ile Mecnun' anahtar kelimeleriyle gruplar ve fan sayfaları araştırılmış ve listelenmiştir. Sonrasında hala aktif olan hayran sayfaları ve üye sayısı 1000 ve üzeri olan hayran gruplarının yöneticilerine görüşme talebi iletilmiştir. Görüşme taleplerine 12 kişi olumlu geri dönüş yapmış ve araştırma ile ilgili bilgilendirme yapılarak onayları alındıktan sonra görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşmeler 8 Şubat- 17 Mart 2019 tarihleri arasında gerçekleştirilmiş olup her görüşme 40-60 dakika arası sürmüştür. Çalışmada görüşme yapılan kişilerin isimleri kullanılmamıştır. Örneklemde dizinin başlangıcından bu yana fandom içinde olanlar, diziyi sonradan izleyip katılanlar, hayran toplulukları içinde birçok rol üstlenip deneyimlemiş olanlar geniş bir perspektifte bilgi sağlayan kişiler olduğu için alınan cevaplar günümüze kadar olan genel gelişmeleri aydınlatabilmektedir.

Netnografik araştırmadan elde edilen sonuçlara bakıldığında L&M hayranlarının farklı hayranlık faaliyetleri için farklı dijital platformları kullandıkları görülmüştür. İnternet ve yeni medya araçlarının getirdiği kolaylıkla her an her yerden faaliyetlerine devam edip etkileşim halinde olabilen hayranlar dizi ile ilgili düşünce, eleştiri ve duygularını farklı mecralarda özgürce dile getirebilmekte ve diğer hayranlarla tartışabilmektedirler. Diğer tarafta sanal bir topluluğa dahil olarak aynı görüş, duygu ve düşüncelere sahip kişilerle, belli kurallar çerçevesinde ortak bir kültürün yaratılabildiği de görülmüştür. L&M hayranlarının en çok gerçekleştirdikleri hayranlık faaliyetleri diziyi ait fotoğraflara eklenen diziden replikler, dizi sahnelerinin kesilerek paylaşılması, dizi sahnelerinden görsellerin kolaj haline getirilmesi, dizinin jargonunun kullanıldığı sohbetlerin gerçekleştirilmesidir. Farklı tarzlarda hayran çalışmaları olsa da bunlar genelde facebook gruplarında değil de farklı platformlarda sergilenmektedir. Bunlar dışında hayran-hayran ve hayran-dizi ekibi etkileşimlerinin olduğu görülmektedir. Dizi ekibi Twitter, Instagram ve Facebook'ta hayranlarla etkileşime girebilmektedir. Bu etkileşimler dizinin yayında olduğu süreçte bölümlere ait yorumlar, tebrikler ya da dizinin doğum gününün kutlanması şeklinde olabilmektedir. Hayranların yoğunlukla Facebook'ta ortak bir kültür çerçevesinde bir araya gelebildikleri ve sanal hayran toplulukları oluşturdukları görülmüştür.

Yapılan mülakatlardan elde edilen sonuçlar; L&M izleme nedenleri, daha fazla bilgi arayışı, topluluk kuralları, hayran topluluğunda uyum ve devamlılık, kişilerarası ilişkiler, hayranlık faaliyetleri ve profesyonel gelişim başlıkları altında toplanmıştır. Hayranların dizi ile tanışmaları ya bir başkasının tavsiyesi, ya sosyal medyada dizi ile ilgili bir paylaşım rastlanması ya da televizyonda diziyi rastlanması şeklinde olmaktadır. Dizinin izlenmesinin ardından dizinin beğenilmesiyle dizi hakkında konuşulacak kişilerin ve daha fazla bilginin aranması ihtiyacı doğmaktadır. Etraflarında diziyi ilgili konuşacak hiç kimse bulamayan hayranlar sosyal medya üzerinden bir arayışa girmekte ve kendilerine hitap eden bir mecra bulmaktadırlar. Aradığını ya da umduğunu bulamayan hayranların ise kendi hayran gruplarını oluşturarak diğer hayranları davet ettikleri görülmektedir. Hayranların gruplar içerisinde kanaat önderi gibi bir pozisyona gelebildikleri görülmektedir. Çoğunlukla grup yöneticisi olan bu kişiler hayran topluluğun devamlılığının sağlanabilmesi, canlılığın korunması, yeni hayranların bilgilendirilmesi ve gruba dahil edilmesi konusunda büyük öneme sahiptirler. Grup içi popülerlik yapılan paylaşımların sayısı, kalitesi ve alınan beğeni ve yorumlar da işin içine katılarak bir statü göstergesi haline gelebilmektedir. Grup içi yapılan yarışmalar da hem grubun canlandırılması hem de bu statü için bir yarışma haline gelebilmektedir.

L&M hayranlarının bir bölümü hayranlıklarını gerçek hayatlarına taşıyıp dizinin felsefesine uygun bir sosyal ortam yaratmaya çalışmaktadır. Oluşturulmaya çalışılan bu sosyal ortama ulaşmada sosyal ağların etkisi büyüktür. Ortak bir beğeniden yola çıkan hayranlar sosyal medya üzerinden gruplarda buluşmakta ve sonrasında binlerce hayran arasından bir süzgeçten elenir gibi birbirlerini bularak bir araya gelmektedirler. Önce Facebook grubu üzerinden konuşmaya ve paylaşımlarda bulunmaya başlayan

hayranlar sonrasında ayrı mecralar üzerinden daha küçük gruplar kurarak dizi haricinde gerçek hayatlarına dair de paylaşımlar yapmaya başlamaktadır. Online grup içerisinde artan tanışıklıklarını gerçek hayata da taşıyarak yüz yüze görüşmeye başlayan hayranlar arasında sıkı bir dostluk kurulmaktadır. Daha önce sözü geçen eleme süreci çevrimiçi ve yüz yüze görüşmelerde de devam etmektedir. Gerçek ilişkiler kapsamında hayranlık olgusu temel bir kriter olarak ele alınıp sonrasında daha derin ve kişisel/karakteristik kriterler de işin içine katılarak kişiler arası ilişkiler yürütülmektedir.

Sonuç olarak L&M hayranlarının Facebook'ta belli bir işleyiş yapısına sahip topluluklar içerisinde, ortak bir altkültür etrafında varlıklarını sürdürdüğü görülmektedir. Hayran grupları içerisinde genel grup üyeleri, çekirdek grup üyeleri ve yöneticiler olmak üzere üç temel alan belirlenmiştir. Genel grup üyeleri grup içerisinde aktif olmayan fakat paylaşımları takip eden kişilerdir. Çekirdek grup üyeleri 10-15 kişi arasındaki aktif grup üyelerinden oluşmaktadır. Bu üyeler grup içerisindeki sohbetlerin çoğunu gerçekleştirmekte, sıklıkta paylaşım yapmakta ve yorumlarda bulunmaktadır. Yöneticiler ise grubun dinamikliğini sağlayan her gün en az bir paylaşım ile grup üyeleriyle etkileşime geçen kişilerdir. Facebook gruplarından elden edilen bu modelin en önemli özelliği belirlenen bu alanlar arasında geçişlerin olabilmesidir. Bu durum yeni gelen hayranların farklı rollere sahip olabilmesi, gruba zaman ayırmayacak durumda olan yöneticilerin de çekirdek grup ya da genel gruba geçebilmesini sağlamaktadır. Çalışma sırasında görülen bir diğer detay da grup yöneticilerinin gruba çokça zaman ve emek harcıyor olmalarıdır. Buradan yola çıkınca grup yöneticilerinin ve aktif üyelerinin genelde öğrenciler ve çalışmayan ya da çokça zamanı olan bireyler olduğu görülmektedir. Bu çalışma bir fandom'un sosyal medyanın sağladığı olanaklar ile nasıl devamlılığını sürdürdüğü ve yıllar önce yayından kaldırılmış bir dizinin nasıl tekrardan yayınlanmasını sağladığını göstermesi açısından önemli bir örnek oluşturmaktadır.

INTRODUCTION

The coming of new Internet technologies and the spread of easy access to digital social media networks has opened up new areas to fan activities and fandom studies. Over the past two decades, fandom studies have provided important information on fans, fan communities, transformative fan works, fan cultures, fan collections, fan tourism, and so on. Fans and fan communities became more powerful and had an important place in the entertainment sector with the opportunities presented to them by the Internet technologies and the participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006).

1.1. Fans and Fandom Studies

Audience studies have revealed that the audience are not passive but active in the reception of messages. In this framework, research has been shown that the cultural and personal background of the audience is important. The interest in different interpretations of different people brought researchers to cultural studies, which tries to understand and explain how ideology, power and power relations work in the cultural field. Therefore, the studies within this school focus on cultural products as a field of struggle and how they are interpreted, but not on industry and economic instances by definition. These studies served to involve the voices of marginalized others such as the lower classes, women, fans, etc. In this regard, fan studies or fandom studies focus on fans by observing the different aspects of their activities and interactions, at both personal or community levels, and by particularly taking into account the cultural features surrounding them or reproduced by them.

Fan(dom) Studies can be described as a multidisciplinary field of study encompassing all research in all disciplines whose subject is “fan”. Looking at how groups of people or individuals interact with a text, it involves the scholarly study of the members of a fan community and their ability to identify with or express their identity through some form of media. It focuses on the experience provided by a text and how this is added to and shared by those who engage with it (Jenkins, 1992)¹. Being almost the most influential person of Fandom Studies, Henry Jenkins (1992) shows the complexity and diversity of fandom as a subcultural community in his book

¹ It's necessary to indicate here that the term Fandom means all the fans and fan communities in the sense of a fannish emotional energy and affect, that claim a common identity and a shared culture with other fans (Booth, 2019: 731; Jenkins, 2018).

Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture. He offers a conception of fandom with at least five levels of activities. These levels are 1) involvement of a particular mode of reception, 2) involvement of a particular set of critical and interpretive practices, 3) constituting a base for consumer activism, 4) possession of particular forms of cultural production, aesthetic traditions and practices, and 5) functioning as an alternative social community.

The history of fandom studies is mostly separated into three different periods (Trzcińska & Nożewski, 2016; Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington, 2017). Trzcińska & Nożewski (2016: 16) and P. Siuda (2010) state that the three phases of approach to fans among scholars can be noted as 1) the “deviation phase”: fans are identified as deviants with mental instability, 2) the “resistance phase”: fans are considered as members of a community with accentuated creativity and activeness, and 3) the “mainstream phase”: fans are seen as a part of convergence culture which defines them as prosumers (producers & consumers). Differing from the former division, Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington (2017) outline three “waves” of fan studies research, beginning with the second wave of the previous division. Concerned with questions of power and representation, the first wave presents fandom as a worthwhile area of study; the second wave sees fandom as the reproduction of cultural and social hierarchies within fan cultures and subcultures; and the third one examines the intrapersonal pleasures and motivations among fans, refocusing on the relationship between fans’ selves and their fan objects. Morrissey (2013) proposes a fourth stage in which the different ways that fan experiences are distributed at both the individual and social levels are examined. She indicates that fandom should be analyzed not only through individuals’ media consumption, but also through fan networks and practices in a holistic way. In this study, all of the waves explained in the second division are crucial to understand the fandom of Leyla ile Mecnun (L&M). Hence we will observe the power relations of this fandom within the participatory culture, the basic elements of the L&M fan culture, and the interpersonal relationships between community members creating the community culture and its structure.

Fans are one of the most widely studied groups of media consumers who cover a wide range of ordinary people with positive emotional occupation with popular culture (Duffett, 2013; Hills, 2002). As the most visible and identifiable of audiences, fans are the ones who are connected, fascinated, interested or emotionally involved with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme or band; they are the ones who can produce lots of detailed information on their object of fandom more than the stars or program-makers themselves; and they can quote their favored lines or lyrics, chapter and verse (Lewis, 1992; Hills, 2002; Busse, 2009; Duffett, 2013). Additionally, they participate in communal activities, engage with a particular leisure activity and they

are not ‘socially atomised’ or isolated viewers/readers (Hills, 2002; Busse, 2009). Fans establish a sense of ownership of favorite media texts, they engage in interpretive activity with these texts, and they develop a sense of self-identity for themselves (Fiske, 1992). Busse and Gray (2011) point out, however, that the Internet has made it possible for many more people to express their fandom as individuals rather than through fan communities, and this has resulted in a differentiation of ways of being a fan.

There is no agreement concerning the use of fan, follower, cultist, cult fan or fan(dom) as terms or concepts in fan studies. Duffett (2013: 55) defines fans as networkers, collectors, tourists, archivists, curators, producers and more, correspondingly with the abilities that technology offers them. Jenkins (1992) separates fans and followers to specify their levels of affinity/connectedness to the text. Hills (2002) use the “cult fan” concept to make another differentiation. He suggests that *“fandom relates not to the intensity, social organization or semiotic/material productivity of the fandom concerned, but rather to its duration, especially in the absence of ‘new’ or official material in the originating medium.”* Thus he indicates that Star Trek fans became ‘cult fans’ that reflected the program’s intense popularity that persisted long after its cancellation. He also suggests that Doctor Who fans only properly became ‘cult fans’ after the program’s cancellation (Hills, 2002). Busse & Gray (2011: 431) explain that fans can also be measured in terms of time and length of involvement, besides that of intensity and investment. They pronounce two different groups; Fandom-Is-a-Way-of-Life (FIAWOL), denoting the fanishness of fans as central to their identity that influences all facets of their lives, and Fandom-Is-Just-a-Goddamned-Hobby (FIJAGH) meaning that their fandom does not form their identity and is just one of their hobbies. Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2017) found in their research that fandom has two main dimensions. The first one involves the perception of group membership and the other one requires communication with members in the group. Jenkins (2018) argues that the word “fan” has an expansive connotation in everyday language that signifies anyone forming a deep emotional relation with a particular characteristic, regardless of whether they share their feelings with anybody else. He gives the example of pressing a “like” button on some Facebook page as a tiny sign or indication of being a fan (Jenkins, 2018). Booth (2019) also asserts that fandom becomes more accessible and viewer activities become more fannish with the tools of online technological developments. Hence everyone can seem as a fan, even if they are not actually participating in fan communities (Booth, 2019). In other words, we can say that the definition of “fan” as a concept is constantly changing and evolving .

Overlooked and not taken seriously as research subjects, fans have received a bad press and the familiar images of fandom have been loaded with negative stereotypes and labels of deviancy until the early 1990s (Jenkins, 1992; Lewis, 1992; Hills, 2002;

Coppa, 2014). Edited by Lisa A. Lewis (1992), *The Adoring Audience* considers the relationship between fans, stars, media texts and media industries via essays of different authors examining the way in which fandom relates to identity, sexuality and textual production (Fandom and Gender, Fans and Industry, Production by fans etc.). Authors recognize fans as creative and energetic respondents to their often repressive social milieu, and as cultural producers in their own right (Lewis, 1992). J. Jenson (1992), J. Fiske (1992), and L. Grossberg (1992) attempted to distinguish fans from aficionados, consumers, and general audience members. Jenson (1992) counters the social scientist's and the press's view of fandom as pathological and deviant by approaching fans as ordinary people immersed in everyday life. By doing this she also reveals the deep dilemmas about modern life that generate such negative characterizations. Grossberg (1992) approaches fandom as a special relationship between audience and culture in which fans construct coherent identities for themselves. By doing this they enter a domain of cultural activity of their own making which is, potentially, a source of empowerment in struggles against oppressive ideologies and the unsatisfactory circumstances of everyday life. Fiske (1992) describes how the cultural criteria of fans differ from official standards by applying Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural economy'. He declares that popular culture fans, in contrast to official culture, tend to formulate personal (social) connections with texts and to participate in textual production.

Following *The Adoring Audience*, Henry Jenkins' *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992) and Camille Bacon-Smith's *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992) are the other important texts establishing fandom studies. Jenkins described fan cultures as a structured network that runs parallel to the production of the text, supporting fans and giving them chances to find other viewers that have formed a similar, strong connection. He indicates that these cultures can be compared to a special club or organization that revolves around the text, or even as a religion (Jenkins, 1992: 13). Bacon-Smith (1992) focuses on fan productions as fanzines and fan fiction. Working on female fan groups of *Star Trek*, she studies the identity construction of fans and the creation of a larger universe around a text, opposing their real world life.

Perceiving fans as active producers (prosumers) and meaning manipulators, Henri Jenkins (1992) demonstrates in *Textual Poachers* that, as researchers began to focus on the experience of viewers outside of the initial reaction to the text, fandom studies moved into a field in its own right. Duffett (2013: 45) emphasizes that Jenkins challenged existing stereotypes of fans and represented them as thoughtful, productive and creative people. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) attracted attention to a new paradigm on fandom, regarding the productive and identity constructive spectacle and performance of fans, and launched a new era of audience and fan studies. Booth (2019)

points out that despite the technological changes, the basic motivation for fandom, the community of like-minded fans, has not shifted much. A big quantity of work within fan studies has focused on the transformative textual practices of fans, from the writing of fan fiction to the creation of fan art and fan vids (Adams, Baerten et al., 2018). There are countless books and articles devoted to the study of fans' production and communal circulation of transformative works ranging from poems, short stories or novels to drawings, comics, photo collages (manipulations), fan videos (fan vids) and multimedia installations (Busse, 2009: 387; Adams, Baerten et al., 2018). Jacobs (2020) summarizes the state of fan studies saying "It is no wonder that we are still in the early stages of discussion about what exactly fan studies research looks like, and how it should be carried out."

Fans are studied by different social sciences disciplines like anthropology, ethnography, psychology, sociology, linguistics, communication, law, media, film and television studies etc. These fields have produced a wide range of research topics about fans that include: interpretations of fan artifacts, fan creation, and the rhetorical strategies that fans use to make meaning; analyses of fan subcultures; studies of the group behavior of fans along with the passionate commitment and affective behaviors towards fan objects; analyses of problems related to copyright issues, parody, and fair use of fan artworks or fan exploitation; fan tourism; fan consumerism; and the use of media within fan practices and artworks concentrating on the relation between media texts and their audiences (Busse, 2009, 2017; Linden & Linden, 2017; Black, 2020; Flaherty, 2020; Schimmel, Harrington, and Bielby, 2007, Stanfill, 2019). Being also the subject of consumer and marketing research, fandoms are seen as social and cultural universes of meanings and practices that support the building of solidarity amongst consumers. They are frequently defined as subcultures of consumption, brand communities, or consumer tribes in consumer research (Fuschillo, 2018).

In recent years, companions and edited books related to fandom studies have increased, alongside journal articles. For example, the books titled *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fandom Studies* (Ed. Booth, 2018), *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom* (Ed. Click & Scott, 2018), and *Seeing Fans: Representations of Fandom in Media and Popular Culture* (Ed. Bennett & Booth, 2016) consist of articles by many researchers focusing on different aspects of fandoms. There are two main academic journals discussing different aspects of fandom; *Transformative Works and Cultures* which was issued in 2008, and the *Journal of Fandom Studies* established in 2012, which serves to follow the actual developments in fandom studies.

Lots of books and articles are written about special fandoms, for example the Sherlock Holmes Fandom or *Sherlockians* (Stein & Busse, 2012; Booth, 2018); the

Dr. Who Fandom or *Whovians* (Hills, 2013, 2014; Booth & Kelly, 2013; Porter, 2010); Veronica Mars fans or *marshmallows* (Hills, 2015); The Glee Fandom as *Gleekdom* (Stein, 2015); Star Wars Fandom (Proctor & McCulloch, 2019); Shakespeare fans or *Shakespeareans* (Blackwell, 2018; Pope, 2020); there are also fans of particular singers or music groups like Kurt Cobain, Ian Curtis, Joy Division or David Bowie (Bickerdike, 2014; Cinque & Redmond, 2019). We also encounter a book focused on fandom politics in a particular country, as in the book named *Intimate Visualities and the Politics of Fandom in India* (Gerritsen, 2019). Other works investigate the rise of a particular form of pop culture known as *The Korean Wave*, known also as *Hallyu*, which constitutes a field of study in its own right (Hallyu Studies) and is concerned with the global-scale of its fandom and fans (Yoon & Jin, 2017). There are also books that concentrate on different aspects related to fans like the race issue in fandom (Pande, 2018); religion, pop culture and fandom relationship (Ed. Cusack, Morehead & Delano Robertson, 2019); fans and food cultures (Ed. Reinhard, Largent & Chin, 2021); or fans and videogames making part of game studies (Ed. Swalwell, Stuckey & Ndalianis, 2017). Academic journals also organize special issues dedicated to a specific fandom like the 23th volume (2017) of the *Transformative Works and Cultures*, titled *Sherlock Holmes Fandom, Sherlockiana and the Great Game*. The articles in this volume discuss a variety of fandom aspects like Sherlock in Japanese fan works, transformations of Sherlockian fan practices, the expanding universe of Sherlockian fandom and archival collections, case studies of local Sherlockian fandoms like British Sherlockians, female fans over 50 in the Sherlock fandom etc. It can be said that as fandom studies constitute a wide range of research fields, researchers focus on different categories/layers of fandoms, in order to realise their research. These categories/layers can be a special fandom with its different aspects or only an aspect of various fandoms. In this study I choose to research a special fandom's journey / background history by trying to reveal different aspects of it and focusing on one of these aspects.

As an example of a study on a specific fandom, in their edited book *Sherlock and transmedia fandom: essays on the BBC series* (2012), Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse gather a collection of essays focusing both on the evolution of Sherlock Holmes fandom and the alteration of Sherlock Holmes narrative through different media tools. The book presents the evolution of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson's story from books to comic books, and from movies to the BBC series. Within that period, it's not only the media form which changes, but the context also changes too. For example, in the BBC series Sherlock Holmes, as a literary and cultural figure, switches from the Victorian context to the contemporary (digital) context. In the digital context Sherlock is skilled with digital tools. The Internet technology and the BBC's Sherlock series result in the convergence of different generations and modes of Sherlock fandom (dedicated Sherlock Holmes fans, including fans of the books, of the various adaptations, fans

from other communities, such as science fiction, slash, and anime fandom, fans of the recent Sherlock Holmes (2009) film, etc.) (Stein & Busse, 2012).

Stemming from audience centered studies, fan studies are getting attention and research on fans has been increasing in Turkey. In his research, Yücel (2020) reveals that there are three groups of audience studies in Turkey; (1) research on institutions and organizations, (2) research focusing on the cultural functions of the media, and (3) research based on the position of the audience. Research carried out by institutions and organizations, like RTÜK or TRT, are mainly aimed at determining the preferences of the audience and are important in terms of sociological findings and statistical data. Studies focusing on the cultural functions of the media generally examine the relationship between the media and society in the context of socialization. The effects of the media on society in terms of its educational, developmental, socialization facilitation and modernizing functions are discussed in several research. In other words, these research focus on the sociological influence of the media and the validity of the mentioned cultural functions. Studies based on the position of the audience are divided in two. Firstly, studies positioning the audience as passive take into account the strategies used by the mass media to achieve their goals. These studies are important in order to understand that there are other factors influencing the audience. Secondly, studies seeing the audience in an active position have been prepared based on approaches such as uses and gratifications, reception (interpretation) analysis and cultural studies. These studies focus on the idea that the audience chooses and perceives the media content as a result of their own experiences, views, thoughts and convictions (Yücel, 2020).

There are lots of theses and articles discussing the Turkish TV series/dramas from different aspects. Those aspects are; the history, the economy-politic or the analogy of the Turkish TV series/dramas (Sevim, 2016; Öztürk, 2015; Ergüney; 2017; Suci, 2014); the impacts of dramas on the audiences as a propaganda tool, gender issues, consumption culture, touristic destinations, and social identities (Bilis, 2012; Erman, 2016; Öneren, 2013; İnceoğlu & Akçalı, 2018; Bayram, 2018; Taş, Başkan & Kamber Taş, 2017; Örgün, 2012; Ünür, 2013); the narrative styles or theoretical perspectives on the dramas/series (Önal, 1999; Güleç, 2014); reception analyses of Turkish TV series or adaptations of foreign TV series in Turkey (Karaduman & Aciyan, 2019; Ilgın & Uruç, 2018); effects of foreign cultural products like TV series, music bands, digital games, etc. on different Turkish audience groups like Muslim youth, students etc. (Asa, 2019); parasocial interaction developed by audiences with TV series characters (Arslan, 2013); transformation of drama series watching practices on the internet (Tüzün Ateşalp & Başlar, 2020); and analysis focused on the convergence and cross-media strategies of digital platforms (Holat, 2021).

Research focused on “fan” and “fandom” concepts has increased in Turkey in the last decade. The study of Afşar Yegin (2006) titled *Fan-Textual Television: Narrative Structure, Virtuality and Fandom in Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel and Veronica Mars* can be cited as the first MA thesis about the fandom of foreign texts/contents in Turkey. Other research about fans consists of theses about Turkish fans and fandoms in the framework of the foreign texts, TV series, manga, or anime fandoms or sports fandoms (Albayrakoglu, 2015; Yıldırım, 2015; Özbıçakçı, 2016; Efe, 2019). The MA thesis titled *Young Audiences, Youtube Culture And Fandom Concept In Turkey* (Kesici, 2018) focuses on Youtube culture and the Turkish young audiences’ fandom tendency as Youtubers. Özdemir’s (2020) research on Turkish anime fans shows that anime is seen as an important culture and fans find many traces of their emotions in them. There are studies evaluating Turkish fans’ or audiences’ online participatory dimensions on digital platforms within the scope of the participatory culture (Akınerdem, 2012; Yazıcı, 2019; Tüzün Ateşalp & Başlar, 2015). Fan gift giving practices (Başlar & Tüzün Ateşalp, 2019) and anti-fan activism in Turkey (Keskin & Binark, 2021) are also studied. Batur (2020) made an examination of the “distance” problem with celebrity-fan relations. The research showed that, as the use of social media makes it easier to reach famous people who seem to be inaccessible, the easy accessibility of famous people makes the perception of fame ordinary in the eyes of fans. All of these studies reveal different aspects of fandom in Turkey and it seems that the quantity of fandom research will continue to increase over time. It is also important to note that since the search is based on the ‘fan’ and ‘fandom’ related concepts, all fan-related research conducted in Turkey might not have been included in this research during the literature search.

Being the origin of this study, the Leyla ile Mecnun TV series attracted the attention of some academics and has been the subject of research from a variety of different aspects. Demet Lüküslü (2014) is the first one who analysed the series within the framework of the youth culture in Turkey. She also analysed the creative tactics of the series to overcome censorship (Lüküslü, 2015) and the political potential of the three TV series (Leyla ile Mecnun, Ben de Özledim, and Beş Kardeş) created by the same producers (Lüküslü, 2018). Abalı (2017) analysed the “Aksakal” motif in the frame of Turkish culture which is presented by the Aksakallı Dede character who is crucial in the plotline of the series. The article written by Gül Dilek Türk (2017) within the framework of virtual communities is the most related one with this study. In her study, Türk (2017) has analysed the L&M virtual community from a sociological perspective. The present study analyses the audience of L&M from the perspective of fandom studies and within the framework of participatory culture and fan subcultures as part of a longer research process.

1.2. Importance of the Study

With the developments in the Turkish “TV-series Industry” the number and the technical quality of TV-series has increased in the last two decades (Bayram, 2018; Özertem, 2014; Öztürk, 2015; Sevim, 2016). On the other hand, the genres, subjects or narratives of the serials have become stuck within some “market judgments” parameters (Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016) which guarantee higher numbers of audiences. Differing from the general TV series genres, *Leyla ile Mecnun* (L&M) presents an absurd but a more realistic, familiar and particular text with its characters, social milieu and its critical nuances.

Leyla ile Mecnun (2011-2013), which has a fan base of its own, was suddenly cancelled years ago, after the Gezi Protest, which occurred in May-June 2013. Although the series was over, fans continued sharing posts about the series, and the fan communities which produced their fan subcultures continued to exist for years. The suspicions about the political reasons for the sudden cancellation of the series and the online and offline protests by fans on this issue was significant in making the series become more popular after its cancellation. Social media technologies which enable fan activities and communities to be more visible and long-lasting, helped this fandom to succeed in making the series return on an online TV platform after eight years. The organisational structure and the subcultural features of this long-lasting fandom, which can be a model for other fandoms, is worth analysing in detail.

The importance of this study comes from the holistic approach to a native or local fandom with all of its aspects which are interrelated. This means that I tried to observe and reveal all the fannish activities, fan culture, fan productions and fan community features of the L&M fandom. I am not attempting to discuss all of the observations in detail, which can be hard to achieve, in a sole study. Instead, I am focusing on the L&M fan communities, the interactions of fans in these communities, their affectivity, common subculture and the structure of these communities. Overall, this study tries to explore a local/native fandom, and to explore the common and different fandom features related to international fandoms.

1.3. Scope of the Study

This study aims to find out the journey of a fandom in the frame of the Turkish TV series “*Leyla ile Mecnun*”. Kompare (2018) indicates that there are not many studies focused on how fans discover new texts, how they are initiated into texts and fandoms in the first place, and how the fandom finds its way with its new and old members. Furthermore, Morrissey (2013) claims that, “*Only by exploring fandom holistically,*

looking at its communities, its practices, and its individuals, can fan studies continue to map out the role of fans and fandom in the shared production of contemporary culture and society.” In this regard, I firstly explore the L&M Fandom universe online and offline within the framework of participatory culture. Then, I observe the patterns and motives of the L&M fan communities, and lastly, I discover the common reasons gathering audiences around the fandom and the common cultural features (meanings, jargon, activities, speaking style etc.) within the subcultural theory.

In the context of the L&M fandom, the modus operandi of the fandom universe and the online platforms which allowed the creation of different fan groups, hence fan communities, are observed and uncovered via the following main questions: (1) How do Leyla ile Mecnun fans discover the text?, (2) How and why have L&M fan groups or communities been established and shaped in time?, (3) What are the role(s) of fans in this process?, (4) What are the dynamics of this long-lasting fandom? The main questions which served to disclose the subcultural features of the L&M fandom are: (5) Why are the fans so interested and enthusiastic about the series?, (6) Why and how do they get in contact with other fans? (7) What do they share in common in the cultural aspect? The answers to these questions are extracted from a long qualitative research process.

1.4. Method & Research

By taking into consideration the subject of this study, a mix of qualitative research methods (participant observation, descriptive method, content analyses of textual and photographic data, semi-structured interviews) which is clarified according to the necessities occurring during the research is applied as methodology.

The first aim of this study is to observe the L&M fandom universe and the online platforms which better allow the creation of different L&M fan communities and to find out the modus operandi of these fan communities. Field research is appropriate when the research questions involve learning, understanding, or describing information about a group that interacts with each other (Neuman, 2009). A (n)ethnographic research methodology has been chosen in order to learn first-hand about which online platforms are used by L&M fans and for what reasons, what kind of fan activities are performed, how fans interact with each other, and what attracts or upsets them within online platforms. Netnography is a concept used by Kozinets (2010) which means ethnographic research conducted on online platforms.

In the real world we learn culture by observing others, watching television, listening to parents, and so on (Neuman, 2009). But in the virtual platforms we discover culture by observing different online platforms, watching, reading or listening to the contents shared in these platforms, and monitoring the social structures of virtual communities and the ways of social interaction on different online platforms (The language of the members, their life stories, their dreams and fears, where they meet, what they share and how they communicate etc.) (Kozinets, 2010). Within the borders of the online L&M fandom universe, a descriptive observation process was held, mainly between December 2015 and February 2019, with an aim to understand the variety of different types of fan activities and interactions in different social media platforms. The results of these observations showed that L&M fans engage in several fan activities by interacting both with each other and also with the series producers and especially, they better present the features of an online community with a subculture on Facebook fan pages and fan groups.

The second target of this study is to understand the cultural components of the online L&M fan communities which necessitates a deeper comprehension of the community dynamics. The field researcher uses various methods to get information; changes perspectives and sees the environment from multiple perspectives at the same time (Neuman, 2009). Therefore at this stage, I decided to apply semi-structured interviews with the administrators of the Facebook L&M fan pages and groups with the consideration of narrowing the research sample and getting healthier first hand data. L&M fan communities are selected with a search on the Facebook platform with the “Leyla ile Mecnun” keywords. The list of the fan pages and groups containing the keywords are re-filtered in regard to their member numbers and the groups and fan pages with the number of members less than 1000 are eliminated. The list is also filtered by relating to their correlations with the L&M TV series. The next step was to send an interview request to the administrators and wait for their responses. Finally, interviews were held with twelve fans who represent a wide range in respect of the time they spent within the fan communities, the roles that they took or still take within the fan communities, etc. This variety served to provide information about the different phases of the L&M fandom which complement each other in different aspects, as well as giving a deeper understanding of the structural and cultural features of Facebook L&M fan communities spread over time. The results of the interviews are categorized under the titles 1) demographic information, 2) discovering “Leyla ile Mecnun” and becoming a fan (with the subcategories of ‘reasons for watching L&M’, and ‘information seeking behavior’), 3) inclusion to the L&M Fandom and its modus operandi on Facebook (with the subcategories ‘community rules’, ‘coherence and durability in fan communities’, ‘interpersonal relationships’, and ‘fan activities and professional developments within the fandom’).

The theories used in the research are presented in the first chapter. The second chapter briefly presents the history of the Turkish TV sector and the place of L&M in this sector by explaining its main features. I thought it would be appropriate to add a section giving information about the series, its subject, characters and basic features, in order to reduce the difficulties I had while trying to read and understand the studies in a foreign language and culture. This also aimed at ensuring that the research is not detached from the cultural context. The third chapter is focused on the L&M fandom universe. It shows the fan-fan interactions and fan-actor-producer interactions both online and offline with examples of fan activities, and the organizational and civic power of the fandom in different social media platforms within the framework of the participatory culture. The fourth chapter consists of the research results held via the interviews conducted with L&M fan community administrators and members which serve to better understand the L&M fan communities and their functions, including fan activities and meaning making processes. The modus operandi and the fan subcultural features of the Facebook L&M fan groups are discussed in the fifth chapter.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Communication studies has revealed that fans interact with texts, they interpret them in their own way and create new meanings. It is also observed that fans form interpretive communities by sharing those meanings with others. With the help of new technologies, these interpretive communities turned into a participatory culture which enables the development of fan studies in different aspects. In this chapter, the perspectives of the participatory culture and fan subcultures which settle the base of this research will be discussed within the framework of fandom studies.

1.1. From Audience Research to Fandom Studies

As a means of information or meaning exchange, “Communication” is crucial to human existence and social life. Communication sciences is an interdisciplinary field, born and developed as a result of the fast spread of mass media activities in society. It engages in the process of the production, transmission and reception of the signals of the object, their relation to a symbolic system and their effects on the behavior, beliefs, and values of individuals and social groups, as well as on the forms of collective organization (Bourse & Yücel, 2012: 26). Communication sciences can be categorized into different types like interpersonal communication, mass communication, organizational communication, intercultural communication etc. Among them, mass communication examines the effect of messages conveyed by mass media on the target groups. In this context, in the first half of the 20th century, the general belief was that the mass media had a very strong persuasive ability in directing people’s behaviours and attitudes. For this reason, the position of the recipients of the message, that is, the audience, has always been an important element of communication.

The *audience* concept, which has been applied to an increasingly diverse and complex reality, has different meanings and manifestations which can refer to a place, people, a particular type of medium or channel, content or time (McQuail, 2010; Schröder, 2009). For example; ‘Spectators’ assembled at a given time and location who pay attention to a product or media presentation (people at a concert or a football match); a group of people from a certain age group, gender, political belief or income category - in terms of population demographics - that the communicator appeals to via content shaped for them (the ‘inscribed’ or ‘interpellated’ audience); a ‘happening’ as

a practice of reception alone or with others interactively in daily life; a participatory audience experience which enables participation, physically or by remote means, or provides a response at the same time (audience as ‘hearing’ or ‘audition’) (McQuail, 2010; Nightingale, 2003). Schröder explains the audience concept as follows:

“The range of meanings for the audience includes, on one hand, the idea of a group of spectators gathered in the same physical location for a performance of some kind on which their attention is focused. On the other hand, an audience can be the dispersed, anonymous individuals who in the privacy of their home attend simultaneously or with a time delay to the content offered by a particular mass medium.” (Schröder, 2009)

McQuail (2010: 336) divides the goals of audience research into two as ‘Media-centered’ and ‘Audience-centered’ goals:

Media-centered goals:

- Measuring actual and potential reach for purposes of book-keeping and advertising (sales and ratings)
- Managing audience choice behaviour
- Looking for new audience market opportunities
- Product testing and improving effectiveness from the perspective of the sender

Audience-centered goals:

- Meeting responsibilities to serve an audience
- Evaluating media performance from an audience perspective
- Charting audience motives for choice and use
- Uncovering audience interpretations of meaning
- Exploring the context of media use
- Assessing actual effects on audiences.

McQuail (2010) lists eleven main dimensions of the audience, which can be used to describe and classify one or other of the many types of audience, each having different theories and research. These dimensions are: degree of activity or passivity; degree of interactivity and interchangeability; size and duration; locatedness in space; group character (social/cultural identity); simultaneity of contact with source; heterogeneity of composition; social relations between sender and receiver; message versus social/behavioural definition of situation; degree of perceived ‘social presence’; sociability of context of use. All these dimensions show the complexity of working on audiences and its interdisciplinarity.

The milestone audience theories resulting from various scientific paradigms in the social sciences and humanities are; *The Hypodermic Needle Theory*, *The Two-Step Flow Theory*, and *Uses-and-Gratifications Theory*. Following and going further from these theories, we encounter reception theories which show that audiences are mostly active, selective and in an interactive relationship with their socio-cultural and socio-economic environments rather than passive receivers.

Harold Lasswell, a political scientist working on propaganda methods, developed the propaganda model that focuses on “Who says what to whom, through what channel and with what effect”, in 1948. This model, which is a typical example of behaviourism, was developed from the stimulus response conceptual perspective and was named as the “hypodermic needle” model through a metaphor. Communication tools are seen as a needle, and the recipients who are exposed to communication tools are evaluated as completely open to the effect of the drug injected under their skins. In this communication model, Lasswell considers the communication process as a persuasion process and accepts that the transmitter acts to influence the receiver. In other words, as a stimulus the message directly targets the receiver and causes a reaction/an effect on the audience. The basic assumption is that the message has a direct, instantaneous and powerful effect on the audience (Schröder, 2009; Mattelart & Mattelart, 2013).

The two-step flow theory has questioned the strong media and passive audience view. A large-scale empirical research was designed by Paul Lazarsfeld, in the United States in the 40s and 50s, to measure the effectiveness of communication tools on election campaigns. The results of the research revealed that communication tools do not lead to direct, one-way and strong effects as thought. The name of the theory comes from the fact that the effect happens in two steps. In this order, the mass-mediated message firstly reaches the opinion leaders who have a prestigious place in their own communities. If the message passes these gatekeepers’ filters then the second step happens as they spread the message to more dependent individuals around them. In other words, it’s seen that interpersonal relations and social context are more influential in the communication process than the media itself (Schröder, 2009; Mattelart & Mattelart, 2013).

The uses-and-gratifications theory explores the next step of audience research by asking the question: “what do people do with media?”. With a change of paradigm relating to the position of the audience, UGT assumes that individuals are aware of their needs and are goal-oriented in their use of media. People are capable of assessing value judgments of media content and have the initiative to link needs and gratifications to a specific choice of medium. These individual psychological and social needs can be classified in 5 main titles as 1) to be informed or educated, 2) to identify with

characters of the situation in the media environment, 3) for simple entertainment, 4) to enhance social interaction, 5) to escape from the stresses of daily life (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973; Schröder, 2009). Schröder (2009: 65) explains this evolving process as:

“Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, three of the founding fathers of the theory, described how its 7-point platform wishes to account for how the social and psychological origins of needs generate expectations of the mass media or other sources, which lead to differential patterns of exposure to the media, resulting in need gratification and other consequences.”

The UGT is criticized in terms of some of its aspects. Firstly, for seeing the mass media as only a transmitting device. It's argued that simplifying the analysis by completely objectifying the media as forming a part of the system may lead to misleading results. The second criticism is about the underestimation of the socio-cultural, socio-psychological and socio-economic structure of the audience which is not sufficiently emphasized. Another criticism is that the demographic characteristics of the audience are not examined in detail (Güngör, 2013).

Audience theories have showed that the influence of the media on audiences is limited. The next step in the study of audiences is the approach of audience reception theories. Comprised of qualitative research methods and reader response theory, reception analyses revealed that audiences are selective and don't watch everything on the television (Deacon & Keightley, 2011). The contribution of cultural studies to reception studies emerges at the point of proposing that a text is coded and that there are different decodings. Therefore, reception theory is fundamentally based on Stuart Hall's Encoding- Decoding Theory. Stuart Hall, one of the founders of the Birmingham School of Contemporary Cultural Studies, asserts that the cultural process is blended with various cultural competences and daily rituals of individuals (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). In his theory, he suggests that the meaning is not fixed/determined by the sender; the message is never transparent; and the audience is not a passive recipient of meaning (Hall, 2005 [1980]). In other words he says that while media producers “code” their texts to produce a message, viewers will decode it in many ways, such as through the lenses of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and other aspects of identity (Bird & Godwin, 2006). When audiences encounter messages challenging their worldviews, they may interpret them using three positions. In the dominant hegemonic interpretive position, the receivers decode the message in accordance with its suggested meaning. The negotiated interpretive position is a mix of both accepted and rejected elements in a decoded message. In the oppositional interpretive position the receiver decodes all the meanings and connotations contained in the text and takes an attitude towards

them (Hall, 2005 [1980]). Therefore, reception studies aim to understand the reception process with concepts of the social environment, culture, ideology and coded messages as carriers of the dominant ideology. It tries to find answers to the questions of how and in what ways the audience perceives the content of the media and how this process directs the use and effects of media content. In this framework, it's important to find out the differences between audiences and to give importance to every single piece of data about them which can affect the reception process.

Cultural studies proposes to examine culture around the social relations and system in which culture is produced and consumed. It critically analyses the representations of race, gender and class by centering the concept of ideology, and draws attention to how power relations and domination are coded in cultural texts, using the semiology of Roland Barthes. On the other hand, it also reveals how the audience resists these dominant codes with their own critical and alternative readings. Hence it deals with the impact of culture on understanding, sense-making, and interpretations of a programme (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). Interested in the collective dimensions of meaning making processes which have a cultural importance, cultural studies of media audiences research the shared meanings carried by a large group as fandoms (Jenkins, 2018).

According to Barnlund, meaning is not received but created. What determines communication is not only the production of a message, but also the production of meaning. He states that the essence of a message is not only in the message itself, but in the 'unspoken' words and the whole 'atmosphere' in which these words are spoken and listened to. Barnlund identifies two types of signals in his Transactional Communication Model: *supervised* (verbal and non-verbal signals) and *unsupervised* (objects accessible to the person and sounds from the environment). Signals perceived or sent can refer to past successes or failures, and the current needs and wishes of the communicators; communicators also select signals that can create meaning or support an established view and form of behaviour. In other words, subjects of interpersonal communication are not always aware of the same elements of the environment or message, they are not sensitive to the same behaviours and signals, and they do not give the same value to the signals. Everett M. Rogers and Lawrence D. Kincaid (1981) say that social and cultural contexts should take place on Barnlund's model. Thus they added to this communicative convergence model by including (1) the examination of the communication network and (2) the information creation and sharing processes applied to the parties in order to understand each other. Hence, in this model, the meaning is not in the mind of the subject, but in the relations system. Lee Thayer also emphasizes the importance of the receiver versus the sender in the communication process. According to him, the communication process can take place as long as the receiver takes into account the signal transmitted by the sender, records it, interprets

it and gives it a special meaning. In other words, meaning is not transmitted by the sender, it is created by the receiver (Bourse & Yücel, 2017: 184-187).

The active engagement of the receiver with cultural texts is studied by different researchers with different samples of audiences/readers having different social backgrounds. David Morley gives his attention to the audience in ‘The Nationwide Audience’ (1980) study, which reveals that the constructed meanings depend on the media text and the social and discourse positions of audiences. The research also shows that different meanings are generated by different groups for The Nationwide TV show and the meanings were homogenous within groups (Morley & Brundson, 1999). Morley particularly points to the deep divisions between men and women over television. He also highlights the impact of interpersonal interactions and conversations between television viewers on the interpretation of the television content (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). Opposed to the popular new criticism during the 1980s, Janice Radway challenges the literary critics who focus on the text instead of the reader and prefers reader response criticism. In her book *Reading the Romance* (1991), she researches about an interpretive community of women readers of devalued fiction. She says that the reader has the ability to appropriate, poach, and interpret on his or her own. Her findings show that historians and critics must understand the reader as active and not passive (Radway, 1991). No television program can impose a unilateral meaning on its viewers. On the contrary, meaning arises from the negotiation process between different types of senders and different types of receivers (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). In her cult book *Soap Opera and Women’s Talk* (1994), Mary Ellen Brown tries to find answers to the question, “*Why do women enjoy soap operas so much?*” She says, “*The sense-making that people engage in when they talk about television may be as important as their actual viewing of the television program.*” (Brown, 1994: 2). She interrogates the positive and progressive contribution of female soap opera fans to women’s culture and through that to the broader culture of late capitalism. Brown focuses on the “leaky hegemony” notion because she thinks that there is no total hegemony and there is always a challenge towards the dominant culture. In this regard she investigates women’s counterhegemonic readings of popular culture and reveals the emancipatory effect of conversations that enable the sharing of experiences between women.

The wideness, durability, and multidisciplinary of fan research, directed Duffett (2013) to suggest a distinction between the wider research fields and fan studies, emphasizing the narrower area of fan studies that helps to better understand a fan culture. Kellner (2003: 106) says, “*One can study the reception of media culture by analysing its reviews, criticism, and the ways that the texts become embedded in popular discourses and generate a multiplicity of diverse effects*”. The cultural aspect

of fan studies coming from the cultural studies origins is crucial in this regard. Cultural studies indicated the resistance between the 1980s and early 1990s, and additionally explored how culture was produced. By connecting media texts to fannish communities through the reading of culture as a text in itself, fan studies has begun to examine fandom as a culture formed by audiences. It also aims to normalize the fandom or represent the positive sides of it by studying fan communities and practices (Busse, 2009, 2017; Busse & Gray, 2011; Duffett, 2013; Schimmel, Harrington, and Bielby, 2007). This simplified version of fan studies served to draw the boundaries of this study into the fan community and fan culture framework.

The value of audience communication about the mass media, researched by cultural studies, served to understand the place of the mass media as part of the daily life of interconnected persons. Duffett (2013: 50) underlines the importance of fandom activities saying, *“The ‘work’ of fandom includes the ways it can heighten our sense of excitement, prompt our self-reflexivity, encourage us to discuss shared values and ethics, and supply us with a significant source of meaning that extends into our daily lives.”* Nancy Baym (2000), interested in the interpersonal dimension of the audience community, studied how the social dimensions take over the textual ones as an audience becomes a community of fans, in her book titled *Tune in log on: Soaps, fandom and online communities*. She asserts that focusing on the communicative patterns of participants from a practice perspective and examining how networks and texts are transformed into socially meaningful fields through interactions, leads to understanding online and audience/fan communities (Baym, 2000). As the next step of the meaning-making process, the ‘interpretive community’ concept is discussed within the framework of fandoms and fan studies.

1.2. Interpretive Fan Communities

Among several meanings of the word community, fan communities fit within two meanings that complement each other, and which aim to establish a “sense of community” among participants, whether they exist face-to-face or virtually. The first one treats community as a set of people sharing an interest or activity and the second one as a positive emotion or belief decided, performed or followed (Tracy, 2009: 143-146). Creating a sense of caring and connection among participants through communication builds a community (Tracy, 2009), and the way that fans benefit from the resources to create the communal practices, norms, relationships, and identities defines this community (Baym, 2000: 15).

In reader response theory, making meanings of a text in similar ways is described as “interpretive communities” that can usually be taken to define something like a

world-view, discipline, or profession (Harris, 1989; Jenkins, 2018). Different readings produced from the same text reveal that individuals see themselves as members of some sub-groups (or interpretive communities). This belonging guides the interpretation and requires submission to the explicit or implicit ‘rules’ of the community. Interpretive community can be defined as a semiotic and social phenomenon that produces and places some forms of interpretation of discourse (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). Schroder (2009: 66-67) explains the interpretive community concept as follows:

“The concept serves to express two different phenomena: first, the idea that the readings of media messages are likely to some extent to follow sociodemographic boundaries of age, gender, ethnicity, and so forth, which may thus be seen as a community in a loose sense of the term (e.g., a music video being read differently by White and African American youth); second, the phenomenon of fan cultures, in which members have a strong sense of cultural belonging to a cultural public, with something approaching membership”.

The construction and nature of an interpretive community’s consensus is shaped by the interpersonal dynamics of the group (Baym, 2000: 211), which means that, besides the source text they analyze, criticize, and expand, fans also engage in an emotionally invested negotiation with their fan community and its discourses (Busse & Gray, 2011: 436).

Lamerisch (2018) asserts that ‘affectivity’ is essential for fans. Their fandom experience is grounded in a feeling or an admiration of texts or their characters which are used to connect with others. She also explains fandom as a way of making sense of the world through felt and shared experiences. Fandom studies serve to understand the networked patterns of consumption and interpretation or the agreed central interpretive choices and values (Jenkins, 2018; Busse and Gray, 2011). In his book titled *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities*, Stanley Fish (1980) says that an interpretive community is social and institutional with explicit and implicit ‘rules’ which must be observed by members. He also emphasizes that, there can be disagreements about interpretations within the broader community, leading to the creation of ‘sub-communities’ with their own supplemental rules differing from the basic common rules of the larger community (Fish, 1980). Booth (2019) acquaints us with the ‘protective fandom’ that defines who is and who is not considered a fan and which can be taken into consideration within the interpretive communities aspects. Stanfill (2011) examines the ‘whiteness’ and ‘masculinity’ issues in fan communities in her study and points out that fan communities are not always inclusive, even if they think that they procure democracy and diversity within their communities. Hence we can assume that a fandom is constituted by several fan communities and individual fans

who are interested in the same fandom object or subject but who can have different points of views, rituals or practices regarding their fan activities.

Fan communities have a lot in common with the communities of practice. The community of practice theory is grounded in the collective engagement of the members of a community within the framework of shared activities and interests. This process is marked by three characteristics that follow: Firstly undertaking tasks and activities individually within a shared domain of interest; secondly, building relationships with others in the community; and thirdly, developing a shared culture between the members of the communities over time (Swieringa, 2009). These characteristics can be exemplified within fan communities. Fans also firstly join a fan activity related to a common object of interest on their own. This can be searching information about their fandom object and in the simplest term, joining a community as a lurker or engaging in activities to share their fandom. Secondly, they begin joint activities and discussions in the community and build relationships resulting from these engagements. Finally, fans' involvements result in shared meanings, rituals, rules, jargons, stories, strategies for common problems, activities, speaking or dressing styles which can stem from the fandom object or not. Additionally, fan communities like fan pages or groups on Facebook create their own membership rules in time (no abuse, no swearing, no Whatsapp groups, no merchandising etc.). Hence all these above-mentioned characteristics can be considered within the creation process of a subculture.

Baym (2000: 209) asserts that besides reading a text in a particular way, being a member of an audience community requires having a set of shared practices with a group of friends, and having relationships and feelings grown from these relationships. Indicating the importance of interpersonal activities and communications, she explains the r.a.t.s. newsgroups' journey as follows:

“The r.a.t.s. newsgroup began as a group of individuals oriented to the same television programs. Through their connection to soap opera texts, they built a range of practices that function to pool information and collaboratively interpret the show. In this sense, r.a.t.s. clearly is an audience. ... Out of the textually oriented practices, r.a.t.s. also developed interpersonal practices and connections that came to be equally (and sometimes more) important to its participants. If we are going to take the term community seriously in audience research, then we need to take on the unfamiliar task of examining interpersonal communication.” (Baym, 2000: 209)

Baym (2000) remarks the significance of the interpersonal communications within an interpretive community study, and passes on to the details of interpretive

practices. While sharing opinions, predictions, plot ideas, parodies and other varieties of interpretations, viewers use the personalization, character interpretation and speculation as the main interpretive practices of an interpretive community. There are also noninterpretive social (tangents and unlurkings) or informative (updates, spoilers, sightings, and trivia) activities in an interpretive community. As noninterpretive social activities, tangents are a default category of all discussions no longer directly related to the soap operas; and unlurkings are posts in which new or rare posters introduce themselves to the group. Within the frame of informative activities, updates are retellings of daily episodes; spoilers involve the sharing of previews culled from magazines, sightings, and other computer networks; sightings are reports of having seen current or former soap opera actors in other contexts; and trivias are posts raising questions from the show history in a game form (Baym, 2000: 70-71). Viewers put themselves in the show and sympathize with its situations and characters during personalization and share themselves, their feelings, relationships, values, cultural norms or standards, frequently in character interpretation (Baym, 2000: 71-72). Using the clues that the text offers, viewers make predictions as the most common form of speculation or they make assumptions regarding the text genre's narrative codes (Baym, 2000: 80-81). Baym (2000) points out that allowing the consideration of a community, the rituals, traditions, norms, values, and senses of group and individual identity are developed and maintained in the details of fan talks. She also explains that *"Rather than judging from the outside, we need to listen closely to what members of new media communities have to say to one another and to those who ask. Only then will we understand their diversity and the opportunities and challenges they offer"* (Baym, 2000: 218). It is also important to emphasize that some fans (like science fiction slash¹ fans) avoid large online communities and perform their fandom online but in person, in small group conventions or directly facing each other within confidential fan clubs which still exist and in which conversations still dominate (Booth, 2019: 728-729). The development of new media and Internet technologies has offered a more prolific area and various tools to facilitate the interaction of the audience, especially to fan communities. The influences of the participatory culture in the digital age on fan activities and fan communities within different aspects are explained in the ensuing part.

1.3. Fans and Participatory Culture

New social media and infrastructures enable a variety of virtual community types in a variety of domains. The new virtualities result in the reproduction of existing social practices or the accelerating formation of new social practices. Online social interaction is a flexible issue that people use for a variety of purposes (e.g. to

¹ "Slash" is a concept used to identify the genre of fanfiction involving pairing two male or female characters together via the use of a slash "/" sign (Urban Dictionary, 2004).

chat, to find like-minded people, to debate issues, to play games, to share and seek for information, to find support, to shop, or just to hang-out with others.). There are tools enabling achievement of these purposes such as chat-rooms, instant messaging software, bulletin boards and discussion forums, which allow people to join as members of groups or to create their own groups (Akoumianakis, 2009).

In his groundbreaking book *Convergence Culture: Where old and new media collide*, Henry Jenkins (2006) examined the relationship between fans and the media industries in the framework of the participatory culture. In the new media era, fans are no longer just consumers but active contributors who can interact with the producers and all persons invested in the media production in the framework of a participation including transmission, consultation and conversation modes of engagement with media (Schroder, 2009). Including the fan culture, participatory culture represents a very fluid context where fans, at the center of a media convergence (e.g. text-context, producer-consumer, appropriation-ownership), can voluntarily participate or not in a community, and provide content, raw materials or marketing strategies beyond the community (Jenkins, 2018; Busse, 2009).

Jenkins et al. (2009) define a participatory culture as including the following items:

- Relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
- Strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others
- Some type of informal mentorship in which the most experienced members pass along their knowledge to novices
- Members who believe their contributions matter
- Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another and care about other members' opinions about their contributions

Hence we can sum up that the participatory culture allows fans to meet with whom they might not have the chance to meet in another way, and provide them the opportunity to have meaningful exchanges and co-creations in expansive and spontaneous social networks.

The dynamic nature of the Internet and communication technologies has an impact on fandoms and fan cultures. Fans have gained stronger resources and integration within the digital media landscape, as the participatory culture and transmedia practices developed in parallel, within a convergence culture, with the advancement of digital technology. A whole range of new technologies enabled fans to archive, comment, appropriate, and recirculate media content and in the process, these technologies have altered the ways that consumers interact with core institutions of

government, education, and commerce (Jenkins, 1992, 2006; Bennet, 2014). According to Bennet (2014), technological advances have impacted on and shaped four key, often interconnected, areas of fandom and enquiry within the field: (1) communication, (2) creativity, (3) knowledge and (4) organizational and civic power.

(1) Within the framework of social interaction people go online for a variety of purposes such as to chat, to find like-minded people, to debate issues, to play games, to share and seek for information, to support, to shop, or just to hang-out with others. Respectively, there are tools such as chat-rooms, instant messaging software, bulletin boards and discussion forums, allowing people to join as members of groups or to create their own groups (Akoumianakis, 2009: 4). Networks and communities composed of fans have been developed with the possibility for a seemingly easier, more direct and instantaneous connection between the object of fandom, or media producer, and their fans through online social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. This also led to the rapid growth of fandoms demographically, including more and younger television viewers (Bennet, 2014; Busse, 2009).

As the new media provide users with varied interpersonal and mass communication capabilities accentuating interactivity and mobility, the social engagement concept becomes noteworthy. The act of social networking while watching television becomes a remarkable phenomenon and leads researchers to investigate the motives for using social media to engage with television content (characters/celebrities in the show, and related personnel such as writers, directors, or producers, etc.). Social engagement refers to the degree of interactions or connections that a viewer develops with television content through various social media (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015: 241). Booth (2019: 731) advises to examine fandom through the lens of fan engagement which organizes and takes collective action through media engagement to better understand the dynamics of fan communities. In her study of female fans online, *Cyberspaces of Their Own* (2005), Rhiannon Bury concludes that '*fandom is ultimately about relating to other fans*', and subsumes the adored media text into the sense of solidarity that being a fan can bring with it (Bury, 2005: 209).

The study of Guo & Chan-Olmsted investigated social television viewing by introducing the social engagement construct. Three categories of factors - television program related perceptions, social media characteristics, and audience attributes - were proposed to predict the social engagement experience. In their study they tested 10 audience motives for using social media to engage with television content. It was found that social engagement is a complex process driven by multiple factors, particularly, program-related variables such as affinity, involvement, and genre preferences, as well as individuals' innovativeness trait (Guo & Chan-Olmsted, 2015). Mudrick, Miller

and Atkin (2016) state in their study that greater social networking usage is associated with higher levels of fan identification, self-esteem, and general life satisfaction. The findings of the study held by Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2017) reveal that fan community membership improves enjoyment, appreciation, physiological responses, knowledge acquisition, and intention to seek fan-related materials. Findings also indicate that being a fan requires high degrees of affective, cognitive, and behavioural involvement apart from simply being a passive media consumer (Tsay-Vogel and Sanders, 2017).

In their book titled *Lost Ate my Life: The Inside Story of a Fandom Like No Other*, Lachonis & Johnston (2008) narrate the online open door communication platform named 'The Fuselage' which allowed fans to communicate and ask questions directly to people who actually work on or act in the show. According to them the roots of the Lost fanbase were formed and cultivated within this platform where writers and producers of the show were interacting personally with fans, and in time with loyal fans who had a privileged place within the LOST fan community (Lachonis & Johnston, 2008: 23). There had been hierarchies between fans in the community, and fan groups with closer friendship which were also identified by the series' producers; "*Damon (production team member) calls this group "the faithful" but they call each other the "Usual Suspects," and all have friendships that have gone beyond the black- and-green backdrop of The Fuselage.*" (Lachonis & Johnston, 2008: 27). The conversations between fans are exciting moments which connect them with their predictions about the story plot: "*Every season since the season 1 finale has had a similar "hatch gate" moment — a time where the fans generate so many incredibly imaginative predictions in response to a major event or reveal that the final resolution seems mundane.*" (52). Lachonis & Johnston (2008: 83) also emphasize the warm social ambiance of the fan community and the weekend parties of Lost fans: "*Very early in its existence, the atmosphere of The Fuselage was like a social club, which led to discussions of getting together in "real life" and having a fan party for Lost.*" They also assert that the official conventions are money traps, though in spite of that, parties organized by fans are more fun and respectful.

(2) The Internet and social media has offered more opportunities for productive activities within fandom. The richness of fan creativity attracts fan studies scholarship on these activities. As visual and audio-visual editing programs become more economic, reachable and easier to use, more fans create more varied fannish products (composing and performing songs, creating artwork, cosplaying and writing fan fiction etc.) to be circulated more easily and quickly than before. Fan videos are shown in museums and art exhibits, and also taught in classes on media, television, reception studies, fan studies, and queer theory. Moreover, fan activities can operate on collective and individual levels, and can potentially reach larger audiences (Bennet, 2014; Busse,

2009, 2017). Falero (2016) says that the central elements of fandom like emotional investment in fictional characters, meeting other fans at conventions, writing fan fiction, group viewings, examining and re-examining pop culture texts remain. The role of the Internet is to make these activities more accessible to those who would never have known such subcultures existed. Booth (2019: 730) asserts that despite the changing aspects of fan culture with the use of digital technology, traditional analogue practices still endure via a 'hybrid fandom'. In other words, fans use digital technologies to augment their feelings of fandom. The example of Twitter, permitting the practice of role-playing via tweets of fans performing as characters from the program in some fan cultures, is a good one to explain this hybridity.

“Nevertheless, it is apparent that while some fannish trends are unique to today’s convergence culture, others are simply continuations of practices that have a long and varied history. Digital technology has certainly aided fandom in reaching greater numbers of people, in creating more varied communities, and has increased communication across space and time. But it has not changed everything, nor has it made fandom itself different. People still practice fandom in their own unique ways, and use fandom for many things – often contradictorily and often with abandon.” (Booth, 2019: 739)

There is a multi-authored website named Fanlore which constructs a good base to review the activities and practices of fans. It aims to record both the history and current state of fan communities and fanworks. Since it is based on wiki software, it can be assumed as an encyclopedia of fannish culture. Fans from a variety of communities with an account can contribute to the platform. It is possible to publish public information, edit and create pages related to fandom². In Fanlore, fan activities are listed as; activism³, audio, awards, challenges, collaboration, conventions, costuming, crafts, discussion, fandom occurrences, fiction writing, fictional languages, food & recipes, gaming & role playing, multimedia, non-fiction writing, plays & skits, poetry, print media, statistics, translation, video, visual art, and websites (“Category: Fan Activities- Fanlore,” n.d.). Savit (2020) indicates that podcasts produced by fans about their fandom are also fan productions, and adds podcasts realized by fans in the listed fan works categories.

Duffett (2013: 73) defines three categories of fan practice that all mean an associated type of pleasure: 1) pleasure of connection which occurs while communicating with the fandom subject or collecting related objects, 2) pleasure of appropriation stemming from spoiling or fiction writing, and 3) pleasure of fan

² There are 54,167 articles and 995,593 edits on 03 January 2021. (Fanlore, fanlore.org/wiki/Main_Page)

³ Fan activism is a form of civil engagement and political participation that emerges from the passions of fandoms and fan culture (“A FAN’S GUIDE TO FAN ACTIVISM,” n.d.).

performance emerging from practices like conference participation or cosplaying⁴. Moore (2020) discusses the continuum of paratextual practices such as plastering bedroom walls with band posters, collecting signatures or photographs of celebrities, and building collections of physical objects (merchandise) across digital platforms. He points out that images, memes, statements, and associations such as likes, favorites, follows and retweets, subscriptions, and other social networking equipment serve a range of relationships between fans, texts, and their creators (Moore, 2020).

Requiring some level of artistry and having a value, fan works which are exchanged for free like fan fictions, fan vids, fan arts (e.g. drawings, photo collages) etc. are considered as ‘gifts’ in fan communities, and are the focal point of the fandom, and the occasion of passage for admission into the fannish community (Sabotini, 1999; Hellekson, 2009). Sabotini (1999) asserts that the status of a fan within a fannish community depends on the number of recipients who talk about the gifts and the frequency of gifts he/she gives to the community, independent from the objective quality of the works. She concludes her study by saying: “...*the individual high-status fans continue to write and post, and their status goes up, while the fandom that supports them finds itself emotionally drained because of its ongoing, continued emotional support.*” (Sabotini, 1999). Turk (2014) emphasizes that gifts are meant for everyone who wants them, and explains that fans who are not producers also participate in fandom’s networked gift economy by consuming the gifts. Hence while Sabotini (1999) thinks that gift consumers feel drained, Turk (2014) has a more positive approach to the consumption activity as a contribution to the fan culture.

Turk (2014) asserts that fan works are the objects, and therefore the labours, presumably to be publicly valued by other fans in the form of comments, kudos, likes, reblogs, recommendations, etc. and to be studied by academics. Then she expands the gift concept with the fan works which do not result in objects for recirculation and arrays a list of other forms of labours that serve to produce information, discussion, architecture, access, resources, and metadata: “*all the behind-the-scenes labour, for example, that goes into commenting on stories, writing essays and recommendations, reviewing and screen-capping episodes, collecting links, tagging bookmarks, maintaining online communities, organizing fests/challenges/exchanges, assembling newsletters, making costumes, animating .gif sets, creating user icons, recording podfic, editing zines, collecting fan mixes, administering kink memes, running awards sites, converting popular stories to e-book formats, coding archives, updating wikis, populating databases, building video conversion software, planning conventions, volunteering at conventions, moderating convention panels etc.*” (Turk, 2014). Fan

⁴ Yamato (2020: 1) asserts in his study that “Cosplay (costume play) activity is not just about the performing self in the fictional world but is also an identification process that occurs in the actual world in which the cosplayers live.”

curators, as key figures in fan communities or fandoms, organizing their expertise on the fandom objects to bring new people into fandoms, can be cited within these above mentioned fan work producers. Different from the commercial marketing, they curate new fans with their further information and shape the interpretation, understanding and engagement of fans related to the text (Kompore, 2018).

It's important to note that fan culture is regularly renewed by the exchange of the symbolic gifts which are circulated for free to foster fan communities (Hellekson, 2009; Stanfill, 2018). Stanfill (2018) highlights the potential threat that corporate and for-profit fanfiction platforms pose to fan culture's longstanding gift economy model. The culture industries holding digital tools and technologies recognise, solicit, sustain and encourage fan works, assert ownership over the fan productions or reframe fan gifts as "user generated content" to capitalize on the fan works, which are marketable either to other consumers or to advertisers, by turning them into marketable demographics, free advertising, and fan labour (Carpentier, 2011; Jenkins, 2018; Stanfill, 2018; Booth, 2019).

(3) Social media facilitates active pursuance of spoiler knowledge of the text before the air date. Some fans engage in the observance of set-watching and set-reporting, as their favorite TV programme is being filmed (Bennet, 2014). The spoiler organizations with fully invested fans to spoil any information regarding the 'Survivor' TV program (Jenkins, 2006) and the efforts of 'Lost' TV series fans (Lachonis & Johnston, 2008) are good examples for the spoiling activity of fans. Lachonis & Johnson (2008: 29-30) describe spoilers as *"Premature information about plot that can spoil a viewer's surprise or enjoyment of a TV show or movie."* They also refer to the 'spoilerholic' concept referring to someone who is addicted to "spoilers" for their favorite shows, and the 'spoilerphobe' concept for someone who goes to extremes to avoid all "spoilers" for their favorite shows.

(4) Within the fan activist landscape, the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube has further heightened and facilitated the scope of fan cultures and networks to be drawn together and to be more effective than in the past. The technological developments support the potential of networks to communicate in a more spontaneous and momentary manner, to 'spread' their messages and 'call to action' across different media platforms (Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins et al. 2013).

Bourdaa (2021) says: *"Among the many fans' activities, some can be at the intersection of cultural, social, and political participation and involve an increased level of civic engagement, especially among young fans who use media platforms and especially social networks as a platform."* In terms of activism, the most

popular form used by fans are ‘Save Our Show’ campaigns. Fans use a number of communication channels (e.g. fan letter-writing campaigns in the 1960s, social media campaigns, Tweets, and nowadays crowdfunds, etc) to pressure broadcast networks and production companies to try to get a television series broadcast again, or to achieve other goals within their fannish interest (Jenkins, 2006; Close, 2018; Booth, 2019; Bourdaa, 2021). As the first manifestation of fans’ social engagement, ‘Save Our Show’ campaigns demonstrate the evolution of negotiation between the audience, the channels, the production companies and the sponsors. Bourdaa (2021: 12-13) asserts the importance of the support that production companies can get from fan communities to put pressure on TV channels/networks by giving the examples of the campaigns for two TV series: *Timeless* (NBC, 2017–2019) and *Veronica Mars* (UPN-The CW, 2004–2008). She also remarks that ‘Save Our Show’ campaigns are *‘a collective and collaborative organization, a common desire to defend the series and advocate for them.’* which existed well before the Internet. The campaigns for the *Star Trek*, *Cagney and Lacy*, *Hill Street Blues*, or *Beauty and the Beast* are given by her as good examples for the pre-internet era fan activism (Bourdaa, 2021).

“Social networks represent a privileged platform that fans use to carry out their actions and give them a certain visibility and echo in the public sphere. The organization is set up within the fan community itself, the rules of the game are enacted by fans themselves, but the permeability and porosity of social networks allow them to make their actions visible and known.” (Bourdaa, 2021: 12)

On the other hand, Bourdaa (2021) asserts that the desire of fans to have a “real” ending or to reap sufficient funding to produce a movie can turn fans into co-producers, in the economic and literal sense of the term. The example of the *Veronica Mars* fandom who crowdfunded the *Veronica Mars* movie takes them beyond the gift-economy, which advocates non-commercial exchanges between fans (Bourdaa, 2021: 13).

The active efforts of socially aware fans, through self organization, serve to achieve a shared goal that goes beyond the actual fan text, and into civically charged cultural (e.g. gender, race) or political change areas (e.g. charity works) and concerns which can enact social changes (Bennet, 2014; Booth, 2019).

Jenkins (2006) asserts that the increased dialogue between users and producers in the industries make them co-producers who can shape a new public space and even create political implications. Regarding this co-production idea, Fuchs (2014: 58) claims that Jenkins is mistaken by expecting a certain connection with fandom in popular culture and political protest. He asserts that *‘Henry Jenkins reduces the notion of participation to a cultural dimension, ignoring the broad notion of participatory*

democracy and its implications for the Internet....’, and adds that Jenkins does not see the exploitation of users’ digital labour as a big problem if users have social benefits from platform usage (Fuchs, 2014: 65). Gelder (2007; 143) points out that subcultures can indeed be elitist and excluding, as well as esoteric in contrast to the views of Jenkins which he finds populist, and which is reading fandom ‘as a mode of democratic participation in the sense that anyone could do it, at any time’. He gives examples of slash fanfiction writers and adds that *‘fans create a sense of solidarity amongst themselves, built around their specific interests and practices’* (Gelder, 2007; 144). Supporting the claims of Jenkins, the results of a study held by Earl and Kimport (2009), show that with the emerging usage level of the Internet as a new media, the diffusion of protest practices has accelerated and diverse nonpolitical claims have been pursued online, including culturally-oriented and consumer-based claims that look very different from traditional social movement claims. The study of Kurt and Ceyhan (2021) shows that, in 2019, protesters of a social movement used the *Joker* character to attract attention to their problems. Protesters constituted a common language within the scope of avatar activism, and this language has spread through mass media within the network society, regardless of time and place. This study presents an example of the common interpretation of a popular culture object, and its change into a social movement dynamo which strengthens the assertion of Jenkins, thus directing us also to the observation of the political implications of L&M fandom.

To conclude, fans may lobby TV networks to bring back cancelled TV series, or organize online campaigns to be heard by the producers and to influence the plotline of their favorite texts. They can also write their own text in response to their favorite media content which can lead them to struggle with copy-right owners. All these activities are self-organizing strategies of fans that are becoming more visible with the participatory digital culture that provides them with the opportunity to create an environment of civic power.

1.4. Participatory Culture and Fan Subcultures

Participatory culture offers a more participative environment for fans by letting them share, curate, critique, lobby for, and promote certain kinds of content, as well as various forms of media production which blurs the borders between producers and audiences. Within this setting, all of the fan practices which can be executed collectively create new meanings and/or products, and even a shared subculture in many cases.

Cultural Studies has a critical look, attentive to forms of cultural domination. Bourse & Yücel (2017), indicate that what is important for cultural studies is to evaluate the power of different practices in the social production of meaning, and

to give importance to the ‘discourse’ level as well as the message. Being important figures of cultural studies, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart oppose economic reductionism. Raymond Williams emphasizes that culture is an area of daily life; and also an area of ‘cultural conflict’ where hegemony-building conflicts occur. In contrast to McLuhan’s view that technology changes society, Williams argues that society determines technology. According to him, every new medium has a social meaning and is adapted to existing social and economic conditions. Hence it’s wrong to put technology at the center and associate everything that happens in social life with it. Richard Hoggart does not deny the influence of television, advertisements or the press on the public. On the other hand, he emphasizes that even if there has been a change resulting from the influence of modern means of communication, it has taken its direction and form from within the traditional culture.

The term *culture* signifies forms of existence. It brings together all the elements of human life - material or spiritual - transmitted by society. There are some points to be considered while dealing with the subject of culture. The first is that there are as many different cultures as there are different societies. Second, everything about culture involves difference and subjectivity. Finally, the idea of the randomness and contingency of every institutional and behavioural system is important, even if people are inclined to the culture. Every human practice has a cultural aspect adopted by the society. While culture signifies the lifestyles, behavior and thought styles of a social group, it also determines its relationship with nature, people, technique or artistic creation. Thus, culture is a social formation of constant exchanges and innovations and is not a closed system to be preserved. Although cultural values are limited to cultural differences between nations, there may be differences between communities in the same country. In a society, both a dominant culture in which the majority participates and many subcultures - which do not belong to dominant values, reject dominant values and replace them with other values and beliefs - can be detected (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). Barker (2004: 1933) defines subculture as follows: “*a subculture is constituted by groups of persons who share distinct values and norms which are held to be at variance with dominant or mainstream society and offers maps of meaning that make the world intelligible to its members.*” Bourse & Yücel (2017: 52) explain the term as follows:

“The concept of subcultures is the expression of a symbolic form of resistance to social domination. It refers to any group of people who are usually a minority, adopting behaviors and beliefs different from the dominant culture of their society.”

Cultural studies benefits from the semiotics, the ‘science’ of signs, which help to understand, interpret or explain the meaning-making process with the construction and deconstruction of messages. Semiotics studies the signs and their meaning in society using the ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’ concepts. The signifier is what we ‘read’ as code or items (words, photos, drawings etc.). The signified is the expressed meaning or idea given by the signifier. Influenced by the thoughts of Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes used the methods of semiotics to show that all texts are constructed with signs in social contexts. According to Saussure, language is a sign system constituted by interrelated terms without positive values. He uses the word ‘arbitrariness’ to describe the flexible, constructed, and changeable concept of ‘language’. The role of signs in generating meaning and framing the way texts are read is central in semiotics (Barker, 2004). In other words, signs are encoded and decoded in context within the relationship between signifier and signified which can change over time in different contexts.

The concepts of *High Context* and *Low Context* Communication of Edward T. Hall (*Beyond Culture* published in 1976), also has an importance in fan cultures. High and low context refer to the amount of information directly stated in a communication message versus any additional amount needed to understand it. In any culture, people need contextual information beyond the words of a message in order for it to make sense. The amount of context needed varies between different cultures and messages. Communicators’ relationships, beliefs, values, and the rules of cultural norms notably influence the intended meaning of a message in a high-context culture. High-context cultures often emphasize politeness, nonverbal communication, and indirect expressions. Therefore, context is important in interpreting high-context communication. In these cultures, the group and in-group confidence is more emphasized. Ferdinand Tönnies’ concept of *Gemeinschaft*, which refers to communities or family-type relationships with strong personal ties, is similar to Hall’s concept of high context. Both of these concepts are similar to Basil Bernstein’s concept of *restricted codes*. Restricted codes arise where there are closely shared identifications, expectations, and assumptions in a subculture promoting “we” against “I” (Steinfatt, 2009: 176-179). All these three concepts have a place in fan cultures and help us to better understand the communication and relationships in fan communities.

Culture does not pre-exist in individuals. Individuals create culture together by organizing their existence symbolically (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). Howard S. Becker (1963) and Dick Hebdige (1979) studied the subculture concept. In his book titled *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, Becker (1963) researches marijuana users who are considered socially deviant and tries to understand the emergence of marginal behaviors in society. He emphasizes that a society has many groups which have their own set of rules, and people belong to many groups simultaneously (1963:

8). He observes the deviants' journey, beginning with its entrance to an organized and institutionalized deviant group. He reveals that the deviant learns how to avoid trouble and a rationale for continuing in its ways. In the end of his study, he concludes that every kind of group has certain common understandings and thus a culture (Becker, 1963: 39, 80). In 1979, in his book titled *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Hebdige researched the youth groups committed to different music genres (Rastafarians, skinheads, punks, mods, hipsters etc.), who revolted against the status quo of mainstream culture. They created new (spectacular) subcultures in which members share a common language that enables the creation of new meanings which change over time. The importance of their production of styles is in the framework of the specific cultural and historical conjunctures.

Busse & Gray (2011: 438) emphasize that fandom, existing outside mainstream audience practices and responses, has traditionally been a subcultural entity. Lacey (2002: 203) gives the example of 'Gross out' movies which disgust mainstream audiences and their fans who are accepted as cult audiences since they were meeting around this genre via fanzines. Lacey also asserts that certain audiences define themselves against the mainstream by inhabiting subcultural groups which have their own particular set of pleasures (2002: 205).

The creation of online fan subcultures in the new media era via the cultural production within interpretive communities and the participatory culture leads us to understand subcultures and the social worlds structured by rules and protocols (Gelder, 2007; 7). In this study, the Leyla ile Mecnun TV series fandom in Turkey will be researched within the framework of the participatory culture and the subculture theories. As the first step towards understanding the L&M Fandom, in the second chapter of this study I give general information about the political context and content selection criteria of Turkish television from past to present. Additionally, I present the general plotline (story), characters and prominent features of the L&M series. I think that this information will provide a better understanding of the series' value from the eyes of the fans or to find its bearings among the general Turkish TV content. Thus, we can understand the reasons why the audience (especially youth) watches and is connected to the series, in the general context. The developments pertaining to the broadcasting process of the series are also presented in this chapter.

“LEYLA ILE MECNUN”: MORE THAN A LOVE STORY

This chapter is designed to present firstly the conditions that *Leyla ile Mecnun*¹ (L&M) has been born in, and secondly the general plotlines, and the features of the series. In this regard, the first part will be focused on the Turkish TV sector's evolution in time, its impact on the Turkish public channel TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), and TRT's transformed broadcast policy, which will serve to better understand the value and meaning of L&M for its audiences. In the second part the history of the L&M TV series, its general plotlines, its main characters and its features will be discovered.

2.1. "TRT" the chance or the mischance of "*Leyla ile Mecnun*"?

TRT, which is the Turkish public channel where *Leyla ile Mecnun* series is broadcasted, can be called both the chance and the mischance of the series. In order to understand this issue, it is necessary to take a brief look at the history of the Turkish TV sector and the broadcasting policy of TRT that led to both the airing and the cancellation of the L&M series. As all the areas and sectors in life, the television sector has also been impacted by the economic, social and political developments. These impacts caused lots of changes in TV broadcasting hours, TV content genres and broadcasting policies of both public and private TV channels in time.

Before television broadcasting, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) was only a radio broadcasting institution. One of the managers in TRT Bülent Osma (2019) explains in an interview that the political authority of the time thought that TRT was not ready for TV broadcasting. The TRT managers asserted that they could develop the educational level of the society via TV broadcasts. Thus they got permission to begin TV broadcasting. They presented the “educational entertainment” formula for the programs’ structure (Osma, 2019).

The evolution of Turkish television in the second half of the 20th century was accompanied by many factors. As television broadcasting continued its journey with

¹ The TV series broadcasted in TRT. It started on 9 February 2011, and lasted until its cancellation on 17 June 2013.

the broadcasts of Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) from Ankara on 31 December 1968 and from Istanbul on 30 August 1971, there were social factors supporting the spreading of the television besides the technical developments. In the 1970s the main Turkish cinema audiences consisting of families started to move away. This was happening due to increasing terror incidents, economic and political instabilities in local and global contexts, the rise of production costs in films and the fury of sex movies in the second half of the 1970s'. Thus, as families formed an extensive audience of television, the need for more content to fill the increased broadcasting hours had arisen (Sevim, 2016: 290).

Early television broadcasts by the autonomous TRT were aired three days a week, and mostly consisted of amateurish domestic productions. Especially during the autonomous period of TRT, programs reflecting societal problems were watched with curiosity. In the following years, the broadcasting hours of television increased and the need for more TV content emerged. The first solution to the need for television content was 'outsourcing'. Thus in parallel with the increasing airing hours, the rate of outsourced productions also increased. In the 1970s, 37,87% of TV content was outsourced. American TV programs like "*Mission Impossible*", "*The Fugitive*", "*Shirley's World*", and "*Star Trek*" were the primary television works imported. Besides the American dramas, historical and documentary series were also imported from France and the United Kingdom (Cankaya, 1997, 2003; Kejanlioğlu, 2004; Serim, 2007; Sevim, 2016). Over time it has been understood that broadcasts couldn't be filled only with imported TV content. Additionally, the culture started to become influenced by one particular source, due to the majority of the outsourced productions being from the United States. İsmail Cem² indicates this situation by stating "*The broadcasting on television was only five days a week. Beginning at 7:00 PM and ending after 10:00 PM. And half of this broadcasting was imported series and films, and the other half was mostly music and news. The imported contents were randomly chosen and nobody thought about their effects on society.*" (Cem, 2010: 50). He also explains the situation as the biggest shortcoming of Turkish TV. The programs were not addressed to people's problems and they failed to provide and establish a solid perspective with respect to Turkey as a nation as well as the agenda of the world that the audience live in (Cem, 2010: 65). As Bayram (2018) indicates, the media play important roles in establishing the values and habits of the society and determining the direction of their habits, as well as having a side function to teach the Turkish people the modern way of life. Indeed, the streets were empty at the broadcasting time of these imported soap operas, and the heroes of the soap operas made their mark on the popular culture of the period. However, the conservative groups of society harshly criticized these serials (Cankaya, 2003; Mutlu, 1991).

²He was the third general director of TRT between 1974-1975.

Thereby, TRT decided to create new domestic programs for television. In this context, the period of Ismail Cem (1974-1975) became a breakthrough for TRT. In the first place, daytime broadcasts began on television. Sports programs, documentaries, literature adaptations and new series were aired. The first domestic TV dramas in Turkish TV history were shot during this period. TRT had, for the first time, commissioned TV dramas adapted from Turkish novels, and directed by some of the outstanding Turkish cinema directors (e.g. Lütü Akad, Metin Erksan, and Halit Refiğ). An example was *'Aşk-ı Memnu'*, which was the first Turkish mini TV series (Cankaya, 1997; Kejanlioğlu, 2004; Sevim, 2016). The lack of competition and the prevalence of public broadcasting understanding enabled TRT to remain completely loyal to the novel in a small number of adaptations in time. The directors of Yeşilçam movies, which were said to be degenerated, stated that they could work without being under pressure during this period. Çelenk (2010: 20) comments about this fact saying, *"Looking for today, it is interesting that where the commercialism of the cinema is emphasized, the cultural potential of television is highlighted and it is coded as a free, autonomous and preeminent cultural medium in the face of a 'rotten cinema'"*. In the 1980s the tradition of adaptations from novels (*Denizin Kanı, Kiralık Konak, Sekiz Sütuna Manşet, Merdiven, Üç İstanbul, Küçük Ağa, Kartallar Yüksek Uçar* etc.) continued alongside the importation of soap operas from Brazil (e.g. *Escrava Isaura, Virginia* and *Sinha Moça*) and USA (e.g. *Dallas* and *Falcon Crest*), until the emergence of private TV channels (Cem, 2010; Kejanlioğlu, 2004; Serim, 2007; Sevim, 2016).

With the emergence of private televisions in the 1990s, the pressures of powerful groups holding political and economic power were reflected in the broadcasts. Hence the relations between political forces and television appeared more definitely. Previously, TV broadcasts were under the influence of TRT, thus they were under the influence of political forces. Thereafter, with the rise of private television channels and advertising revenues, broadcasting policies have been impacted, and the contents of broadcasting have been transformed and diversified (Bayram, 2018; Cankaya, 1997; Canoruç, 2009; Serim, 2007).

The habit of watching domestic TV serials was strengthened in the 1990s. Domestic TV serials and different types of programs characterized private television channels. Serials broadcasted in this period were of reasonable length, with timing not exceeding fifty minutes. Productions based around a neighbourhood or on family relations, adaptations of foreign sit-coms, serials evolving around patriarchal landlords' stories and mafia themes were popular in this period (Sevim, 2016; Sivas, 2011). In 1997, drama programs constituted the highest proportion (22,5%) of TRT broadcast content (Cankaya, 1997). TV serials, quiz shows, and reality shows focusing on daily events have been the most popular program genres in Turkey, since the beginning

of private TV broadcasting. Alongside reality shows, it's possible to add television programs for women and matchmaking shows to the list of emerging and highly popular programmes between 2005-2008. Beside dramas and historical serials, and especially after the Turkish coup d'état attempt in 15 July 2016, TV serials began to around "anti-terrorism" themes based upon military and police squad stories (Ergüney, 2017).

The contents of TV serials have been enriched with a large production boom occurring in the domestic production sector since the beginning of 2000s. The visual quality of these series increased and reached higher technical levels, which led to the rise of a sector specifically called the "*TV-series Industry*" (Bayram, 2018; Özertem, 2014; Öztürk, 2015; Sevim, 2016). The interest of the audiences to the dramas, the ability to attract certain audiences every week at the same time, great interest from the sponsors and advertisers to the series, and the possibility to broadcast serials repeatedly are the main factors that led to the television channels reserving their prime-time slot for the broadcasting of these dramas (Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016). In time, domestic series followed by Turkish society began to be exported to other countries and presented to foreign audiences. Between 2010-2014, the number of production companies was about 85 in Turkey and by mid-2014 more than 70 Turkish TV dramas reached audiences in 75 countries (Özertem, 2014; Alankuş & Yanardağoglu, 2016). The intense demand for TV serials causes 50-70 TV series to be aired every season. However, more than half of these serials cannot see the end of the season (Deloitte, 2014: 17). Bayram (2018) indicates that nine mainstream national TV channels (Kanal D, ATV, TRT, Show TV, Star TV, Teve 2, a2, FOX TV, and 360 TV) in Turkey, broadcast 54 domestic TV serials at the same periods in 2018 and 50 of them were new ones. He also adds that during a year, 100 different and new TV serials are broadcasted on national TV channels. This information shows the professionalization of the TV sector and the decreased chance of different TV content genres to be produced.

In the course of time, ratings became the only criterion for the success of the series. As high ratings mean the largest slice of the advertising cake, this motivation led professionals to give priority to "*market judgments*" in their decision-making processes (Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016). Cankaya (1997) summarizes this matter saying that individuals are not considered as "*citizens*" but as "*consumers*". Thus, TV series have turned into popular culture products with no art value. Especially after the 2001 economic crisis in Turkey, economic problems were experienced in the media sector, as in all other sectors. Upon this, many independent and diverse media organizations were sold to certain capital owners and a monopolization of media ownership had begun. This monopolization, which was previously horizontal (only in the media sector), showed a vertical expansion in other areas like construction, shipping, distribution, transport,

mining and so on. As a result, the media sector, which was no longer very profitable, turned into a showcase functioning as the advertising and profit area of other sectors. It can even be said that TV serials became commercials for products via product placements (Cankaya, 1997; Serim, 2007; Sevim, 2016; Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016; Yeğin, 2006; Yurderi, 2018). Analysing the representation of the values in Turkish novels written at the beginning of the 20th century and the adaptations of these novels into TV serials produced in the beginning of the 21st century³, Yurderi (2014) finds significant variations in values. According to the results of the study, the critical approach of the novels towards the habits and lifestyles of the rich class turns into the praise of consumption habits along with the way of thinking and living of the upper classes in the TV series (Yurderi, 2014).

Nowadays the increase in the number of domestic productions and the length of the extended serials makes it difficult to produce original content and the quality of the productions is decreasing day by day. The extended length of the serials restrains the production of some TV content genres like sitcoms, which were popular at one time.⁴ This situation damages the genre diversity in Turkish television and plays an important role in the penetration of melodrama into all genres. The emphasis on literary adaptations and adaptations from Korean serials is an indication of the congestion in the sector (Sevim, 2016; Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016).

TRT is a public TV channel, which should in theory be autonomous and free from any outside factors; but in reality it has never been independent from politics. There were lots of restrictions and prohibitions that disadvantaged TRT as a possible competitor with the private TV channels in the 1990s. Although not in the first years, commercial broadcasters forced TRT to take into account their own practices in both content production and flow planning (Erdemir Göze, 2017). Between the end of 2000 and 2006, TRT worked on the restructuring and public communication issues and changed its logo with the intent of regaining its audience, which it had lost to private TV channels. TRT produced mainly original productions in this period but local literature adaptations also continued to a certain extent (Kale, 2019). Hence with the effect of the ongoing intense monopolization, the media system that can be called neo-authoritarian, and the rising commercial and political expectations, it can be said that

³ Within the scope of the study, the change in value representations between novels and adapted series (*Aşk-ı Memnu*, *Kalp Ağrısı*, *Dudaktan Kalbe*, *Yaprak Dökümü*) was made by qualitative content analysis. Ten basic value categories Schwartz used in the study: Self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism.

⁴ It's interesting to see the changing broadcasting conditions related to economic developments in 5-6 years. As Sevim explained in her study, Turkey had an economic crisis in 2008 and this led to a recession in the TV series industry. The budget of TV channels downsized, and the number of professionals in the series industry decreased. With the crisis, the number of published series began to reduce in relation to the decline of advertising revenues by 20%, and the low-cost sitcom series came to the screens. Shooting a drama-style series costs 300 thousand Turkish Liras per episode, while the cost of a sitcom per episode requires a budget ranging from 60 to 100 thousand Turkish Liras. That's why sit-coms like *Benim Annem Bir Melek* (2008-2010), *Papatyam* (2009-2011), *Cümbür Cemaat Aile* (2010), and *Cuma'ya Kalsa* (2010) became popular after the crisis.

public broadcasting is not done as it should be (Yurderi, 2018). As part of a research aiming to reveal the primary broadcast program types in prime-time, it has been found that TRT programs comprise 4 categories. These are the news bulletins broadcast at the beginning of the prime time, dramatic productions consisting of movies and TV series, cultural programs, and religious and moral programs. Considering the distribution of the programs by days, it is seen that one or two TV serials are broadcast every day except one day of the week, and generally the series is accompanied by a movie, an information program, or a religious program (Şeker, 2016).

Teer-Tomaselli (1998) remarks that through trying to maintain public legitimacy through an editorial independence from both the government of the day and rampant commercial interests, public broadcasting firstly protects the national identity and culture, and secondly provides information, education and entertainment to the society. In his study in which he discusses the autonomy of TRT, Canoruç (2009) states that although one of the reasons for the 1960 coup in Turkey was due to the partisan use of the radio by the political power, TRT had been under the influence of political authorities for many years and has often been used as a tool of propaganda. TRT is important because it holds the broadcasting monopoly in the field of public broadcasting, broadcasts in an important area, the size of its budget and staff is great, has a large number of radio and television channels. Yurderi (2018) also asserts that today's TRT broadcasting has become a showcase of the political existence of the Turkish state and it functions as a tool to reformat the society and make them forget the past. Nowadays, "*autonomous*" working conditions should be provided for TRT institutions not only in legislation but also in de facto (Canoruç, 2009).

Connected with its missions, the programs of TRT had to face lots of restrictions and prohibitions issued from TRT Law. Since the goal was to develop the educational level of the society, program makers have been tasked to avoid damaging the culture of the audience and also the national spirit. Article 5 of the TRT law is about the general broadcast principles. The last sub-article (m) of this article states to make sufficient publications on subjects of public interest in order to create a healthy and free public opinion; not to publish a one-way, biased broadcast and not to be a tool for the interests of a political party, group, circle of interest, belief or thought.⁵ Yet, ironically, beside its educational mission, the use of TRT has been exploited the political powers as a tool of propaganda and the arbitrary restrictions and prohibitions changed according to the time, depending on the ideological stances of the governments. TRT's pro-government policy of news and broadcasts has been criticized in every period (Cankaya, 1997; Erdemir Göze, 2017; Yurderi, 2018). One of the TRT managers Bülent Osma (2019) commented on the broadcast priorities of TRT as follows:

⁵ TBMM Mevzuat Bilgi Sistemi, "2954 Sayılı Kanunun Genel Hakkında Bilgiler", mevzuat.tbmm.gov.tr/mevzuat/faces/kanunmaddeleri?pkunlarno=41912&pkunnumarasi=2954. Accessed 03 September 2020.

“When TRT began its broadcasting life (it was able to reach the most remote corners of the country), it had to focus on educational broadcasting in order to contribute to the educational campaign implemented in Turkey. As a matter of fact, it fulfilled this mission. However, as a result of the diversification and widespread use of mass media today, I think this task has taken a secondary position” (Osma, 2019).

With a mission of raising awareness to catch the level of contemporary civilization within its understanding of social responsibility, TRT has always attached great importance to culture and arts festivals, sports events, documentaries reflecting world events and scientific technological developments, and foreign serials in its programming (Erdemir Göze, 2017; Yurderi, 2018). Nevertheless, the production of the programs that TRT could not produce due to the restrictions, the people who could not get on television as a result of various prohibitions, the subjects that were previously unspoken that later became talkable, etc. has been effective in attracting more attention to TRT’s broadcasting policy. In her study, which aims to reveal whether TRT has changed its broadcasting policy for ratings in the new communication environment, and which programs were criticized in this process, Erdemir Göze (2017) revealed the criticized and praised aspects of TRT programs. Her analysis concluded that almost every program of TRT was criticized in the period when the institution tried to join the commercial environment for ratings and made some changes in its broadcasting policy (Erdemir Göze, 2017).

The main issues voiced by critics toward TRT were its protocol journalism and the controls and prohibitions applied by TRT in its broadcasts. TRT’s protocol reporting, by keeping important events off the agenda, has always been at the main axis of the discussions. TRT’s supervision, censorship and bureaucratic obstacles are complained about and criticized. As a matter of fact, criticisms such as those that complain about TRT cutting movies without justifiable grounds, that a limited number of artists and their songs were inspected and found eligible, that TRT operates the censorship mechanism in almost every program are intense (Erdemir Göze, 2017). Kale (2019) gives lots of censure examples from the history of TRT. One of them is about news that takes place in the newspapers, dated 20 November 1983:

“The "Tired Warrior", which could finally be completed after 5 years full of events in the social and political environment of our country between 1978-1983 and is now expected to be published, was found objectionable and burned.”(Kale, 2019).

Years will pass and TRT will begin broadcasting the Tired Warrior, whose copies were thought to have been burned, in 1993, in the changing and softening atmosphere of the period. In another example, the series named *Memoirs of a Criminal Lawyer* was completed in 1980 and it was only allowed to be published in 1989. The movie adaptation called *Gülibik*, which is the first international co-production of TRT and which could only be completed in 1984 for various reasons, despite the decision to make it being taken in 1978, cannot be published in any way because it is found inconvenient to be broadcast even though it has been included in many national and international festivals and won awards (Kale, 2019). On the other hand, Yurderi (2018) asserts that TRT's goals, priorities, approaches and values have changed and the main factor is the fact that the art productions in the 2000s have decreased even when compared to the 1970s; this being the result of postmodern cultural influences and the dominance of a conservative power.

It can be said that, during the last decade, the most important development that caused the increase in the number of history serials broadcast on TRT is the *Magnificent Century* series, which was broadcast as of 2011 on a private TV channel. The statements, which are found to be “*biased and wrong*” in terms of the attitudes (script, acting, setting, costume, etc.) in the content of the series, were met with discomfort by the state officials. This issue led to the creation of a ground and a milestone for starting to instil the desired spiritual feelings to the society. The state focused on informing the society through the relaying of correct information and values (as it perceived them) via this medium . As a consequence, it is seen that twenty-three historical serials were broadcast in 14 years between 2003-2017; nineteen history serials were on the screen during the eighteen years between 1981- 1999 (Okumuş, 2020). Paying attention to quality and content, TRT shot historical serials with their own producers-directors or subcontracted projects, which could not be done by any other organization under the conditions of that period between 2000- 2006 (Kale, 2019). These productions have continued until today. In line with these developments, we can assume again that TRT is a channel that governments have the tendency to use upon their request and regardless of the costs.

Some of TRT's duties, as determined by Turkish Radio and Television Law, were making programs such as news, culture, science, art, entertainment and similar type programs (Article 9); TRT was also tasked with the responsibility to balance the types of contents by covering as diverse topics as possible (article 17), this being repealed on 09.07.2018.⁶ As Erdemir Göze (2017) shows in her study, the area that TRT is most appreciated in terms of its broadcasting policy is documentary productions. The second appreciated one is culture and art programs. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that TRT is successful in broadcasting in areas that commercial televisions do not deal with.

⁶Ibid.

Public broadcasting institutions, on the one hand, apply a more elitist broadcasting policy and do not include popular culture products; on the other hand, they have faced a dilemma of similarity between commercial broadcasters and their broadcast contents (Yurderi, 2014). Yörük (2012) indicates that when looking at the drama broadcasts of TRT in the 1970s and 80s, she states that a split into two in the form of popular broadcast-quality broadcasts is immediately noticed. In the frame of this split, the adaptations of novels in the period of İsmail Cem are within the scope of qualified publication, while the imported serials are considered as popular publications (Yörük, 2012). Despite this distinction, popular narrative forms specific to television were noticed during the reign of İsmail Cem, and the *Kaynanalar* series, written and directed by Tekin Akmansoy is one example from this period (Serim, 2007: 82). The first TV series admitted in the comedy genre in Turkish television history was *Kaynanalar* which aired on 10 May 1974 and ended in 1987. This series' subject revolves around the family concept and the conflict between traditionalism and modernism (Mutlu, 1991). In the following years, further serials including comedy elements were made, such as *Kuruntu Ailesi*, *Perihan Abla*, *Uzaylı Zekiye* and *Bizimkiler* (Yanardağoglu, 1999: 82, cited in Öneren, 2013: 78). Broadcasted by a private TV channel, *Kaygısızlar* was an absurd comedy example of the 90s. These productions were in the form of serials in which each episode had a specific story tied to an end.

Channels prefer to work with producers and script writers who have proven themselves with high-rated jobs and who have worked with the same channels before in the sector. This situation makes it difficult for new entrants to the sector to realize their projects (Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016).

'There are production companies, screenwriters and directors that are starting branding. Channels are now doing this: a TV series or a project is coming. The executive staff are sitting at the table. They say, "We will shoot the following series". The boss says, "Who is the producer? Who is the scriptwriter? What did this guy do, did he get that many ratings?" The screenwriter's data is presented. "Who is the director? Which serials did he shoot? How many ratings did he get?" If he/she has no name, there is little chance of survival. Hardly with feelings... Maybe those who are friends with the directors of the channel... Generally, decisions are made based on data in big channels.' (Bekir Hazar, personal interview, September 13, 2012)

The quote above from the study of Tüzün Ateşalp (2016) held with TV professionals also shows clearly the chance that L&M had for being broadcasted. As Tüzün Ateşalp (2016) indicates in her study, the professionals of TV emphasize that quality does not guarantee high viewing rates. Additionally, it's important for

viewers to find themselves in the story or make the story curious. The concern of reaching as wide an audience as possible in prime-time causes channels to stay away from programs other than melodrama and this reduces the possibility of different and original productions. Hence, we can comment that this situation prevents the broadcasting of programs that respond to the needs and demands of different segments of the society, which do not provide huge numbers of audiences like L&M audiences. But as emphasized previously that TRT has the opportunity and the duty to produce different types of program contents without economic concerns and this condition led TRT to produce the series.

At the end we can state that the changing genres of serials due to the economic, political and cultural change has had an impact on the Turkish TV series industry. Private TV channels produce content serving popular culture. The broadcasting adventure of L&M also shows us the structure of the private channel and the impact of chance in being broadcast on TRT. The general director of the series underlines the fact that the acceptance of the series by TRT was due to the openness of the department manager to new ideas at that time. The scriptwriter says that he has been writing the story of the series since 2009. Within that period, he tried to sell his script via a producer of the TV series industry. One of the private TV channels responded, *“This will not work in Turkey. It’s ridiculous and love doesn’t have any credibility.”* At that point TRT contacted Burak Aksak, and asked him if he had any content like *Ramazan Güzeldir* (Ramadan is Good), the previous TV series that he had written for TRT1. The scriptwriter had a fear that the story would be found very absurd, and thus thought it would be rejected. Yet TRT accepted the project and met him with the director Onur Ünlü; then the series began (*“Burak Aksak Bloomberg Ht Röportajı (1. Kısım),”* n.d.).

Hence as it is a public TV channel that should provide the diversity of its programs to appeal to the different segments of the citizens and which mostly does not have to totally consider the revenue of the contents, TRT was the only channel able to air absurd comedy content like *Leyla ile Mecnun*. In one of the summits organized by fans with the series team,⁷ one of the participants asked about the ratings of L&M to the general director of the series. He replied that the ranking of the series is between 40-50. Then another question followed, asking: *“Normally serials with 40-45 rankings discontinue broadcasting. Why didn't they cancel L&M?”* The general director explains this saying, *“TRT is not cancelling this series because with this series it gets another kind of feedback rather than the ratings and this gives pleasure to the channel. A remark like ‘rating is not everything’ has emerged and the ones who glorify the ratings*

⁷ The summit was realized on May 19, 2012, towards the end of the second season. There was the general director of the series (Onur Ünlü), and actors of the two main characters of the series (Ali Atay and Serkan Keskin). The conversation passes between 23:30-24:15. (*“Onur Ünlü, Ali Atay ve Serkan Keskin Söyleşisi,”* 2012)

can understand that all that matters is not the ratings.” (“Onur Ünlü, Ali Atay ve Serkan Keskin Söyleşi,” 2012) Compatible with the statement of the general director of L&M, Yurderi (2018) also emphasized that TRT is able to produce programs not to compete commercially with private channels, but rather in terms of prestige.

With the development of Internet technologies, the traditional audience measurement techniques are no longer the unique indicators of the success of TV serials. When we take into account that other audience measurement techniques based on new media platforms (hashtags, 'likes' and 'favorites', sharing rates on social media platforms) are also important for audience measurements, *Leyla ile Mecnun's* success seems remarkable. The show became a great success as the first Turkish TV series, which has been listed in the IMDb index (with 9.2 rating out of 10) as the 10th highest rated TV series with at least 25.000 votes (IMDb, 6.12.2015). Besides its success in an international movie evaluation platform, the series also has lots of rewards from different national institutions.

The cancellation of *Leyla ile Mecnun* occurred suddenly after the Gezi movement.⁸ It's been told that the series was cancelled because of the participation of the series team in the Gezi protests. The cancellation of the series had an effect even in the Turkish Parliament. According to a newspaper report, Candan Yüceer, the deputy of the Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi⁹ from Tekirdağ city, issued a directive and asked Bülent Arınç who was the deputy prime minister at that time for the reason for removing TRT's "*Leyla ile Mecnun*" from the broadcast. Bülent Arınç, relying on the information given from the TRT General Directorate, said that the cancellation of the series had no relation with the Gezi protests. He explained that TRT was taking into account issues like ratings, cost of the programs, schedule/team changes, broadcast streams etc., like all broadcasters. He emphasized that these criteria were effective in the cancellation of *Leyla ile Mecnun*. He also said, "*The Gezi Park protests have nothing to do with the cancellation of the show. In addition, there was no pressure on the actors, the technical team or the producer company to not support the resistance.*"

After these explanations were given, the scriptwriter and an actor of the series affirmed that there was no pressure on them and nothing said to them about the Gezi Protests. In an interesting way the scriptwriter put emphasis on the fact that the ratings were not high during the first season but there was a serious increase during the

⁸ Within the framework of the Taksim Pedestrianization Project, a group gathered in the park on May 28 to peacefully protest the destruction of Gezi Park. But, in the early hours of the morning on May 31st, the police forces evacuated the park by using tear gas and water cannons. The disproportionate intervention of the police forces to demonstrations using tear gas and water cannons increased the spread of the protests in various districts of Istanbul and to many cities, including Ankara and Izmir. More than 8,000 people were injured as a result of the police interventions and this protest became a massive event, both online and offline, in Turkey's history (Kurt, 2016).

⁹ Republican People's Party was the main opposition party in 2013.

third season. He also indicates that towards the end of the third season one of the producers and the general director of the series told him that the channel was also willing to continue the series beside the actors and the audiences. He said, *“While we were thinking that the series would continue, at the beginning of the new season it was announced that the series was cancelled”*. An actor of the series emphasized the success of the series saying, *“... On the other hand, we didn’t have much of rating but the series was of a huge impact. We brought TRT together with the youth.”* (“Arınç açıkladı: Leyla İle Mecnun neden bitti,” 2013; “Leyla ile Mecnun Neden Yayından Kaldırıldı Senaristi Burak Aksak Anlatıyor,” 2013; Tafolar & Malkoç, 2013)

In 2017, the director of the series Onur Ünlü gave an end to the cancellation ambiguity of the series saying, *“In the last season the ratings of Leyla ile Mecnun were not less than the previous season. During the last season we were among the first 10 TV programs in the rating list. The decrease of the ratings is not simply wrong, but rather it is a lie. TRT stopped the broadcasting of our series due to an order from the Prime Ministry, precisely after our participation in the events in Gezi Park, Gezi Park resistance, Gezi Park rebellion, Gezi Park movement, whatever its name is.”* (Kırklar, 2017: 229). It’s sure that we can never confirm the real reason for the cancellation while TRT1 authorities choose not to reveal the reason. At the end of the day the Gezi Protests were against the government, and L&M was broadcasting on the Turkish public TV channel TRT1 (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) which is under the control of the government, thus it’s not surprising to see the authorities deciding to finish the series, as they did before to other programs, in the history of TRT broadcasts. On the other hand, it is also thought provoking that another series in the same genre, format and fiction as L&M, *Tutunamayanlar*, has been broadcast 7 years after the cancelation of the latter on the pretext of low ratings. Moreover, the new series is aired on Tuesdays at 8.00 PM within the prime-time period. This can be interpreted as a success of L&M, which has an important impact on social media via its fans. In 2021 it was announced that the series will be aired on an online movie platform which has bought the rights of the series from TRT1. They also succeeded in convincing and gathering the same actors, director and scriptwriter together after eight years.

The banishment of the series in 2013 caused disappointment among its fans. It’s perhaps its banishment that transformed this series into a legend. Hence, it’s a little complicated to determine whether its broadcast or its cancellation provided it with the chance of having such a particular type of fandom. In the end, we can say that the series appealed to the needs and expectations of a niche young group in the Turkish society thus, we have met an organized and active fandom via the series, which is worth taking a closer look at.

2.2. What is “*Leyla ile Mecnun*”?

Leyla ile Mecnun is an unusual TV series both with its genre and its impact on social media. The series started on 9 February 2011, and lasted until 17 June 2013. The series has 3 seasons with 104 episodes. The last episode aired on 24 January 2014 on TRT1 after its sudden cancellation on 20 August 2013. The average runtime of an episode is around 80 minutes. In this part of the study I will focus on the series itself to let the reader know about the details and the features of the series, which will facilitate the understanding of the reason why the series has been chosen as a study subject. Firstly, we will take a look at the general plotline of the series and its characters in conjunction with the breaking points that shaped the plotline of the series. Secondly, we will analyse the main features of the series, which allowed the rise of a subculture. Lastly, we will focus on the references and the critics within the series that attract and amuse most of the fans.

2.2.1. The General Storyline of *Leyla ile Mecnun*

Derived from the “Layla and Majnun” myth¹⁰, *Leyla ile Mecnun* TV series narrates the story of people living in a neighborhood called Kireçburnu, in the Sarıyer district of Istanbul. The plotline of the series revolves around the legendary love story of the main characters *Leyla ile Mecnun* at the beginning. Then both the story line and the actors change within the process due to the events that emerge among the series characters. The series generally references the common values of the Turkish society, world cinema and literature, and reflects nostalgia for the old days (especially the 90s) in an absurd way.

According to a scriptwriter, the story of *Leyla ile Mecnun* also emerged in an absurd way. Burak Aksak says in an interview that the story came to his mind in a stressed period of his life when he didn’t know how to proceed on his way. He had some alternatives, such as making art films for the Ministry of Culture, or to continue with the cinema or chasing TV serials. He indicates that at one moment he was sitting down in the living room and the roof was leaking. He saw that the inverted mop leaning

¹⁰ Layla and Majnun is the myth of two lovers who never come together. Presented in many Middle-Eastern and sub-continental cultures, the myth has different versions with different senses brought to the fore in different cultures. For example; in the Islamic version, the myth narrates the journey of Majnun in the desert, trying to find his love Layla that refers to the concept of Beloved, the love of God. The most notable version of the classical story is that of Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi. Layla and Qays (called Majnun by his community because of his obsessive love of Layla) are in love from childhood. Layla’s father does not allow their marriage because of the bad reputation of Majnun and marries his daughter to an old but reputable man. After this event Majnun becomes a hermit. He goes away into the desert and composes verses about his beloved... After a while Layla’s husband dies but this time she is condemned by the tradition to grieve for her husband for two years. At the end of the story they die without seeing each other... (Seyed-Gohrab, 2009; “The Story — Layla and Majnun,” n.d.).

to a white plastic chair resembled a wise old man. He wished a wise old man¹¹ to help him. Then he dreamed of a wise old man helping lovers, but a clumsy one who hashes up everything (“Burada Laf Çok CNN Türk,” 2012). Hence, everything started with the scriptwriter’s own difficult situation and his thought of a wise old man helping him in his life.

The story begins with a scene of two babies born on the same day and at the same hospital, the main characters “Leyla” and “Mecnun” sharing the same cradle as a twist of fate. Mecnun’s father “Iskender” comes to the hospital and sees the babies in the same cradle. He asks the nurse about his son and the nurse tells him that there were not enough cradles that day, so they put the two babies in the same cradle. Iskender decides that time and tells Leyla’s father “Metin”: “Their destiny is written together from the very beginning, they’ve found each other, the moment they’re born.” He tells Metin “Let’s not separate the lovers!” He proposes to betroth the babies in the cradle and to name them “Leyla” and “Mecnun” as in the sensational love story “Leyla ile Mecnun”. After 25 years of his birthday, one morning Mecnun’s family tells him about this story and in the evening of the same day, they go to Leyla’s parents’ house to ask for Leyla’s hand for their son’s. Stupefied by the situation and, even though he is totally averse to the arranged marriage at the beginning; Mecnun falls in love with Leyla at first sight. Metin, who became a rich businessman, refuses Mecnun and his family. After that night Mecnun doesn’t know what to do to impress Leyla and one night, he dreams about a wise old man in the middle of a desert. This wise old man tries to give him the numbers of the next national lottery, as he does generally, to help people. But then he understands that Mecnun needs more help. When Mecnun wakes up, he realizes that the wise old man, named Aksakallı Dede, is in his bed and he has become real to help him. That is the point where all the absurd events begin. Seeing that Aksakallı Dede is as unskillful as Mecnun in love affairs, they get through lots of funny events.

2.2.1.1. The First Season of L&M

The first season of Leyla ile Mecnun is composed of 20 episodes (Figure 2.1). The first episode featured on 9 February 2011 on TRT1 (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation). Beginning with 60 minutes the average time of the episodes string out to around 80-90 minutes. Aired firstly on Wednesday and after then on Mondays at 11.00PM, the first season ended on 4 July 2011.

¹¹ A divine figure emerged with the merge of the ancient Turkish belief and the Islamic culture. They usually have a long white beard, wear white long clothes and are immortal persons believed to come in time of need.



Figure 2.1: “Leyla ile Mecnun”’s First Season Poster. Characters’ names from left to right: Yavuz (The Thief), Aksakallı Dede (wise old man), Iskender (Mecnun’s father), Pakize (Mecnun’s mother), Mecnun, Leyla, Sevim (Leyla’s mother), Metin (Leyla’s father), Erdal Bakkal (the grocer). (Retrieved April 25, 2021 from <http://www.sinematurk.com>)

The first season revolves around the attempts of Mecnun trying to declare his love to Leyla and the absurd events, based on the mischances and clumsiness of Mecnun and other characters trying to help him. There are clichés like rich girl and poor boy Mecnun and the rich boy who also tries to get married with Leyla and his rich dad cooperating with Leyla’s father. The first season has an intense humour and absurdism. We see the characters going to space and saving the world, entering into the brain of Mecnun who is in a coma, a pillow named “Dayı/Uncle” which can speak with Mecnun and give him advice, the stories of Ismail Abi’s ancestors etc. Every character has their idiosyncrasies and their own stories beside the love story of “Leyla” and “Mecnun”.

In the first episode of the series we recognize the legendary characters of Leyla ile Mecnun and begin to sense the absurdism of the series. As Mecnun is not pleased by the affair of arranged marriage, he goes to see his friends to complain about this situation. We first meet his close friend Kaan who is ironically a 12 year old primary school boy; then Mecnun goes to see Ismail Abi with whom he speaks loudly from a good distance and finishes the conversation, but ironically they do not think about approaching each other. We meet Yavuz the thief when he flags down the taxicab of Iskender (Mecnun’s father who is a taxi driver). Yavuz wants to go to a bank, and Iskender asks him about his job. He narrates his job gesturally by wearing a fake moustache and pantyhose and Iskender corresponds to it very normally. After a while we see that Iskender takes Yavuz to the Police Station and tells the policeman that he is a thief. Yavuz reacts very normally, he thanks Iskender, and they say goodbye like two old friends...

A couple of days later, Yavuz comes to the grocery of the neighbourhood with an LCD television, while Erdal (the grocer), Ismail and Iskender are also there. Iskender recognizes Yavuz and introduces him as the bank robber that he met a couple of days before. Erdal sees the television and asks Yavuz where he stole it. Yavuz takes offence and says, *“Am I that kind of person?”*. Iskender supports Yavuz by saying *“He is a bank robber. Did he enter the bank and steal a TV?”* Yavuz continues *“You’re right brother. This TV is a souvenir from my deceased grandmother. My grandfather bought it as a marriage gift to her. I wouldn’t sell it if I didn’t need cash.”* He proposes to Erdal to put the TV on the wall of the grocery. Erdal gets angry and says, *“This is not a coffee house, this is a grocery”* and he enters the grocery.¹² This is an example of a scene from the series with lots of conversation and absurdism.¹³ At the end of the first season Leyla goes to the United States with Arda, the rich boy that is the enemy of Mecnun. Aksakallı Dede, the wise old man, disappeared after hearing that Mecnun decided to let Leyla go. Mecnun and Ismail Abi wave at the ships in the Bosphorus and the last episode (20th) of the first season ends.

2.2.1.2. The Second Season of L&M

The second season of Leyla ile Mecnun is composed of 41 episodes (episodes 21-61) (Figure 2.2). The first episode of the second season was featured on 8 August 2011 Monday at 22.15PM and the last episode on 4 June 2012. The mother of Mecnun “Pakize” broke up with the series at the end of the first season.

L&M had an important break point in the first quarter of the second season. The character “Leyla” dies in the 30th episode due to a problem encountered on the series set between actors. With this event, two other characters with Leyla are removed from the cast. These departures led the scriptwriter to reshape the scenario in the middle of the season. The essence of the story was dislocated, and he had less than a month to recover the story. Additionally, the general director of the series got cancer and had a surgical process in this period. Hence in a very little time, the scriptwriter achieved a big success. New characters joined the cast and the time of the series set to one year later¹⁴, right in the middle of the second season. The scriptwriter explained this change, saying that he couldn’t continue to write scenes of humour because the main character Mecnun was in pain.

¹² We will see that the grocery of Erdal Bakkal will sell everything [tea, coffee, döner (special Turkish food with meat) and other fast foods etc.] in an absurd way, in a while.

¹³ Yavuz says that the TV is a souvenir from his grandmother but LCD television didn’t exist during the marriage of his grandparents; he is lying in an absurd way.

¹⁴ The series was passing in the actual time, but with this breakpoint the characters jumped in time and it was 2012 in the series while we were still in 2011 during the second season.



Figure 2.2: “Leyla ile Mecnun”s Second Season Poster. Two new female characters named “Şirin” (on the left) and “Sedef” (on the right) join the cast as the Leyla’s of the second season. (Retrieved April 25, 2021 from <https://can.newonnetflix.info/info/80126599>)

Leyla dies in a traffic accident and Mecnun tries to come to terms with the effects of Leyla’s death. He doesn’t speak during a year and the 31st episode begins with the events that occur one year after Leyla’s death. Mecnun learns that the organs of Leyla were donated. He chases this event and meets Sedef who has taken the liver and Şirin who has taken the heart of Leyla. Ironically during the following episodes Sedef and Şirin change their names to Leyla. These 2 Leyla(s) enter Mecnun’s life in an absurd way. Sedef’s second name was already Leyla and Şirin changed her name by court decision. The characters of these girls are totally different from each other. On the one hand there is Şirin who is an intellectual and cultured university student and on the other hand there is Sedef who is like a boy and is a carrier in a pizzeria. Somehow both of them fall in love with Mecnun. Mecnun hesitated between the two but cannot be happy with either of them. At the end of the season both of the girls abandon the neighborhood. The second season attracts attention with the shifts between drama and comedy scenes. Audiences were reported to have both laughed and cried within seconds.

2.2.1.3. The Third Season of L&M

The third season of the series began on 3 September 2012 and ended on 17 June 2013. It consists of 42 episodes (62-103) (Figure 2.3). In the third season, Mecnun who pursues his love in his desert (as metaphor of the spiritual part of Mecnun), falls in love with another Leyla, who is the daughter of an old friend of his father, Ömer who joins the series team besides other new characters. Mecnun struggles with Hidayet who is also in love with Leyla. This Leyla is a businesswoman who has an organization company and events revolve around them. At the end of the season lots of characters die and the scriptwriter astonishes the audience just like the ends of the previous seasons. But the series could not begin its fourth season even after it was declared. The TRT1 channel suddenly decided to finish the series. The shot but not aired 104th episode, which was about the silent period of Mecnun after first Leyla's death, was aired on 29 January 2014 at midnight by TRT.



Figure 2.3: “Leyla ile Mecnun”’s Third Season Poster. We see the fourth Leyla of the series in season 3. (Retrieved April 25, 2021 from <http://www.beyazperde.com/diziler/dizi-10127/sezon/>)

2.2.2. Main Characters of Leyla ile Mecnun

Even though the story revolves around Mecnun and his love Leyla, most of the characters are very popular in L&M. The plotline is so successfully designed and the actors are so good in their job that it's hard to choose among them to present in this study. I will present the characters most liked by the audience. Among these characters are Mecnun, İsmail Abi (Brother Ismail- One of the best friends of Mecnun), Erdal

Bakkal (Grocer of the neighbourhood), İskender (The father of Mecnun), Leyla (s), Hırsız Yavuz (Yavuz the Thief) and Aksakallı Dede (The wise old man).

2.2.2.1. Mecnun Çınar:

The central character of the series Mecnun (played by Ali Atay) is almost a prototype of an average Turkish man (Figure 2.4). Mecnun is a 25 year old unique son who still lives with his family and receives allowance from his father. He wears sweatpants and a yellow cardigan (depression suit) in the house. He hangs curtains by force from his mother, goes to the bazaar with her to carry the bags, buys bread etc. He is not a brilliant student and still continues to study business in an open university. He is kind, good, courageous but sometimes cowardly. His clumsiness and mischance are very significant in his life (Appendix-A). The character which reflects an average Turkish young man is successfully played by the actor and loved by a large number of audiences. The scriptwriter of the series affirmed that, “if 50% of Mecnun is me, the other half is Ali Atay. Because he has created a language and a character” (Meriç, 2018).



Figure 2.4: A collage of Mecnun Çınar’s photos (Retrieved April 25, 2021 from <https://www.uludagsozluk.com/e/19023139>)

2.2.2.2. İsmail Abi (Brother İsmail):

İsmail Abi (played by Serkan Keskin) is a good friend of Mecnun. He is colorful in either sense: physically and in character. He wears colorful clothes and he is always in a good mood, hopeful, cheerful and reassuring although he is sad inside himself. He is always looking for a job and when he finds one he loses it quickly. He shows the difficulties that jobseekers face. He doesn't have a family and interestingly we never see his house. He is lonely and has an interesting lifestyle. He is helpful, nurturing, faithful, very naïve, affable, clumsy and a do-gooder. He is such a good man that in a scene we see him writing "My condolences" on a note and hanging it on a store window, indicating that the store is closed because of a funeral (Figure 2.5).

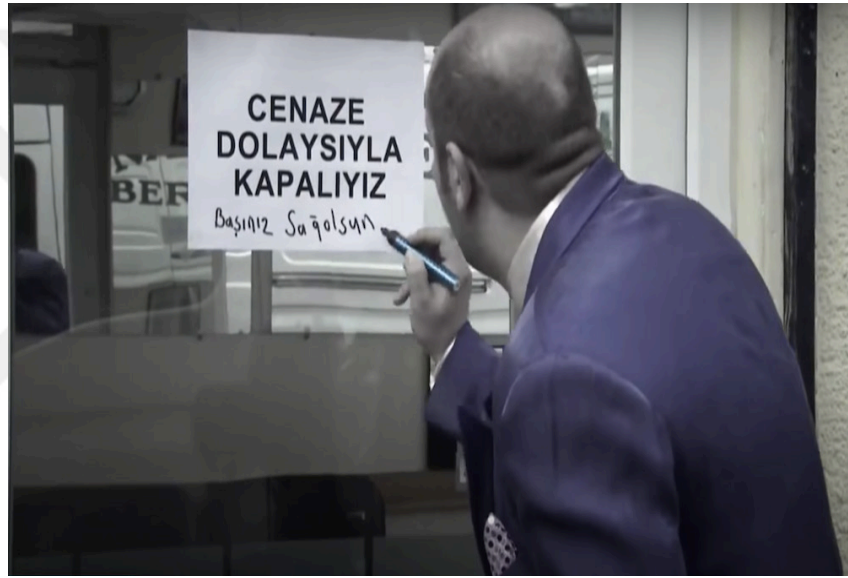


Figure 2.5: İsmail Abi writing "My condolences" (Screen shot from the 40th episode, minute 14:52 of the series)

İsmail Abi has a sad life story. His mother abandoned him and his father when he was a little boy. When he asks his father why she has left, his father answers him that she left because she wanted a more colorful life. That's why he is wearing jackets made with colorful sequined fabrics. He hopefully thinks that his mother would come because he is colorful. One day his father, who was very sick, told him that he will go to work far away on a ship and also emphasized that he would come one day with this ship. That's why İsmail Abi waves everyday at the inshore of Kireçburnu. He is like the symbol of "hope", "kindness" and "naivety". The scene in which İsmail Abi waves to the ships passing through the Bosphorus reveals sadness and hope together as emotions and is maybe the most affecting and indicative scene for the audience. During one of these scenes Mecnun wants to tell him that his father is dead but he can't hurt the feelings of İsmail Abi and destroy his hope. He comes and tells, "Your father is on this ship İsmail Abi" as a sign of friendship. In essence, İsmail Abi also knows that his

father is dead, but he doesn't want to admit or put it into words because once he does, he loses everything in his life. His hope...

At the beginning İsmail Abi was not very popular. In a while he became almost the most popular character of the series. Fans are still calling the actor Serkan Keskin as İsmail Abi even when they speak about his roles in other projects. There is a Wikipedia title¹⁵ for İsmail Abi giving detailed information about the character ("İsmail Abi - Vikipedi," n.d.), beside the social media fan accounts with this character's name.

2.2.2.3. Erdal Bakkal:

"Erdal Bakkal" is the grocer of the neighborhood. He is reflecting the economic system and international economic relations (Figure 2.6). His realism is funny and he is unprecedentedly gauche that we cannot encounter someone like him. His grocery is a kind of meeting point for the series characters. The scriptwriter declares that he has a tactless part in himself and he has things to say to people but he can't. He tells them via the Erdal Bakkal character. He also emphasizes that if we were all like him the world would be an uninhabitable place (Meriç, 2018).



Figure 2.6: Erdal Bakkal in front of his grocery shop. Retrieved April 25, 2021 from <https://twitter.com/LeylaileMecnun>

¹⁵ Wikipedia is a free, independent, free, ad-free, non-profit, open sourced Internet encyclopedia created jointly by its users in many languages.

We meet Erdal Bakkal (Grocer Erdal), in the first episode, via the visit of Ismail Abi to his grocery, which will be one of the main meeting areas of the series. Ismail Abi goes to the grocery and asks for a Turkish coffee. Confused with this request, Erdal Bakkal responds to him:

Erdal: Is this a coffee house?

Ismail Abi (reproaching Erdal): I just asked for a Turkish coffee! Gracious! Besides, a cup of coffee has forty years of memory!¹⁶

Erdal: But why are you asking for Turkish coffee in the grocery? This is a grocery store.

Ismail Abi (surprised/astonished by the response of Erdal overrides him, puts him out of countenance and makes him feel guilty): Lo and behold Erdal Abi!!! That is to say that I don't have a memory of a cup of Turkish coffee for you... Bravo!!!

Erdal (surprised by the attitude of Ismail looks perplexed and can't say anything): ...

Ismail (continuous as if he was in a tea house): Ok! Give me a cup of tea with one piece of sugar. A weak one...

Erdal is an ordinary grocer at the beginning, and he resists the various requests of the others. The above-mentioned conversation gives us the clues of the origins behind the capitalist facet of Erdal Bakkal and the changes he makes in his grocery. Everyone asks absurd things that are not for sale in a grocery and force him to make changes in the concept of the grocery. Those requirements lead him to uncover the selfish capitalist inside him. His entrepreneurial activities generate an important part of the episodes. In a TV program that he participated in, Cengiz Bozkurt indicates that groceries are in trouble and the grocery culture is about to disappear. He also adds that after a while, he received a plaque from the Groceries Cooperative for creating employment and endearing grocery stores with his character in L&M ("Burada Laf Çok CNN Türk," 2012).

¹⁶ "Bir acı kahvenin kırk yıllık hatırı vardır." is a Turkish saying that means, "a goodness is a goodness. Even a very small one is unforgettable." As it is said, this saying comes from the story of a wise keeper of a coffeehouse in Samos Island (now in Greece) and a Greek shipman. According to the story, an Ottoman janissary comes to the coffeehouse and buys coffee for everyone except a Greek shipman who sits inside the coffeehouse. The keeper gives coffee to everyone and takes two other coffees and goes towards the shipman. The janissary objects to the keeper but the keeper says it's his offer to the Greek shipman. After 40 years, a revolt occurs in that Island and the wise keeper of the coffeehouse becomes captive. During those days, as Greeks sell their prisoners in slave bazaars, the keeper also finds himself in the bazaar. An old man buys the keeper and takes him to the wilderness. When the keeper was thinking in fear that the old man would kill him, the old man tells him "I am the Greek shipman that you offered a coffee with 40 years ago. I have never forgotten about you and your goodness". Then he lets him go... (Usluer Uğurlu, 2015).

2.2.2.4. İskender Baba (Mecnun's Father)

İskender, Mecnun's father (played by Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan), is also one of the favourite characters (Figure 2.7). He is a taxi driver and he is generally pop starting his car, which is always out of order. He's even pop starting a spacecraft in an episode as an example of the absurdism of the series. He is so unlucky that his wife abandons him and there is always something wrong in his affairs. He has a heart attack while trying to go after his wife who left him and fled to Germany. Thus he suffers from a chronic heart attack disease and he becomes a "houseman".¹⁷ He cooks very well and he is good at domestic work. He does everything to be a good father to Mecnun and to take care of the wise old man and all others living in his house. He solves most of the problems but despite his effort he is never appreciated.



Figure 2.7: Mecnun's Father İskender Çınar. (Screen shot from the 20th episode, minute 60:04 of the series)

2.2.2.5. Leyla(s):

As a matter of its absurdity there are at least 6 Leyla(s) in the series. Mecnun meets happiness, sadness and many other feelings via the Leyla characters. The first Leyla of the series (played by Ezgi Asaroğlu) is a beautiful rich girl (Figure 2.8). She goes to university and studies English Language and Literature. She is cheated many times by her ex-boyfriend Arda. She resists Mecnun's love at the beginning but she falls in love with him after a while. Her father wants her to marry Arda instead of Mecnun, because Arda's father is very rich. As she is passive, when compared with the other characters, we don't see her characteristics very much. She dies in a car accident in the 30th episode of the series. She is the real love of Mecnun. Other Leylas are not like her and audiences feel that in every season.

¹⁷ Referring to "Housewife".



Figure 2.8: Mecnun with the first Leyla. Retrieved April 24, 2021 from <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1831164/>

During the second season two characters join the series crew after the death of the first Leyla. These characters are named Şirin (Müge Boz) and Sedef (Zeynep Çamcı) and they have a part of the first Leyla in their body (Figure 2.9). Şirin has the heart of Leyla and Sedef has her liver. Hence there is something connecting Mecnun to them.



Figure 2.9: Şirin, Mecnun and Sedef from season 2. Retrieved April 26, 2021 from <http://www.beyazperde.com/diziler/dizi-10127>

These two girls are completely different from each other. Şirin is a well-educated, clever blond girl who studies in two Universities at the same time. She lives in a big house with her brother. She doesn't have any economic problems. Sedef is a brunette who lives with her grandmother. She works in a pizzeria as a carrier. She is tomboyish but very sensitive inside. Mecnun found these two girls after the death of Leyla. He wants to be close to Leyla as these girls have a part of her. After a while these two girls fall in love with Mecnun somehow. Ironically, we learn that Sedef has a second name, which is Leyla, and Şirin also has the name Leyla after a court decision. There is a sweet competition between these two girls and events occur in every episode around these characters. At the end of the second season Mecnun realizes that he doesn't love these girls and the girls abandon the neighborhood.

The last Leyla (Melis Birkan) shows up in the third season as the daughter of a friend of Mecnun's father İskender (Figure 2.10). Her surname is "Yedinci" which means "the 7th" as a reference to the number of Leyla's in the series. Mecnun falls in love with her and lots of events emerge from this love. Leyla is a businesswoman who has her own company. She is a beautiful and clever girl with blue eyes. She doesn't fall in love quickly with Mecnun. Mecnun struggled a lot to win her love. He tries to help her with her job but every time he ruins the organizations with his friends. After a while Leyla also loves Mecnun.



Figure 2.10: Leyla Yedinci and Mecnun Çınar. Retrieved April 26, 2021 from <https://www.trt1.com.tr/arsiv/leyla-ile-mecnun>

2.2.2.6. Hırsız Yavuz

There is an expression in the Turkish language saying, “A ferocious thief suppresses the landlord”.¹⁸ The word “ferocious” which means Yavuz in Turkish is also used as a name. In this case we see that the character is a thief named Yavuz (Figure 2.11), played by the actor Osman Sonant. There is a reference to the above-mentioned idiom. Yavuz is a thief with principles who steals only LCD (liquid crystal display) televisions and never steals from friends. He falls in love in the sixth episode and then we see him changing. He begins to read poems and novels. He tries to not steal and starts a business etc.



Figure 2.11: Hırsız Yavuz reading a book on a bench. Retrieved May 25, 2021 from https://twitter.com/h_yavuuzz/photo

2.2.2.7. Aksakallı Dede (The wise old man)

Aksakallı Dede is the wise old man who changes a big part of Mecnun’s life (Figure 2.12). He is the first absurd element of the series. He is wise, he has supernatural powers via his wooden baton but he is as clumsy and naïve as the other characters in the series. We don’t know how many years he has but he can speak about the pre-industrial revolution times. In the first episode, he tells about a moment with the famous Phrygian King Midas, who lived about two thousand and seven hundred years ago. He has a habit of appearing all of a sudden and he can disappear quickly. He appears in the dream of Mecnun, in the middle of a desert, for the first time (Figure 2.13). He takes Mecnun to the dreams of other characters when they try to reach the dream of Leyla who is in a coma after a car accident.

¹⁸ The expression “Yavuz hırsız ev sahibini bastırır,” contains the name of the character Yavuz which means « ferocious » and can be translated as “Ferocious thief suppresses the landlord.” It means that some people feel powerful even though they are guilty. They make the person they harmed feel guilty.

He has been the object of an article, which analyses the updated version of the Aksakallı Dede motif. According to the conclusions of the article, like many folk creations, the Aksakallı Dede motif has also changed in tandem with today's conditions and has been updated in the context of society's needs and the entertainment culture. With the update in question, this motif preserved its old mystical character; however, some humorous features have been added to make it desirable for today's entertainment culture (Abalı, 2017).



Figure 2.12: Aksakallı Dede (The wise old man). Retrieved May 25, 2021 from <https://absurdko-medi.wordpress.com/2011/10/18/iste-yeni-ekip/>



Figure 2.13: First encounter of Mecnun and Aksakallı Dede (The wise old man) in a desert. (Screen shot from the 1st episode, minute 39:47 of the series)

2.2.3. Features of Leyla ile Mecnun TV Series

Known for its absurdism, Leyla ile Mecnun is an unordinary TV series combined with different elements of comedy, science fiction and romance genres. It makes fun of the popular culture of the present day in different ways but ironically after being an Internet phenomenon it become a part of the popular culture and even gave birth to a subculture with its ironic solutions to the censorship of TV channels that were ordered by the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK).¹⁹ L&M appeals to the attention of the audience with lots of references to the authors, poets, artists, scientists, directors and historical characters from Turkey and the world. L&M became so popular that there are lists of the referenced books in the series under the titles like *“The Writers that ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’ greeted”* in the online bookstores.²⁰ A critical perspective towards the actual events both in Turkey and the world agenda are also one of the main features of the series.

2.2.3.1. A Cliché Making Fun of Clichés

L&M was an absurd comedy during the first 30 episodes. Yet with the death of Leyla in the 30th episode, the series turned into a “dramedy”²¹ with dramatic scenes involving the pain of Mecnun, during the second season. The comedy element returned in the third season. Despite the critical changes in its plotline the series never lost its absurdism. L&M can be explained as a series which criticizes the clichés in dramas, sitcoms etc., but indeed it’s a cliché in itself. The scriptwriter explains this saying, *“We seem to criticize the clichés in other TV programs, but L&M is the most cliché story in the history of the world. There is a rich girl and a poor boy. Yet we modified it by making different jokes and using different inputs”* (“Burak Aksak Söyleşisi | Marmara TV,” 2015). We can find the explanation of the scriptwriter within “narrative theory”. Kozloff (1992), expresses that every narrative is splittable into two parts called the “story” and the “discourse”. As the story part tells “what happens to whom”, the discourse part shows that the identical story events can seem radically different depending on the narrator’s slant. The narrator decides how to tell the story depending on his/her power, remoteness, objectivity or reliability (Kozloff, 1992). This explanation clarifies the success of the scriptwriter Burak Aksak and the L&M team.

¹⁹ The state agency responsible for monitoring, regulating, and sanctioning radio and TV broadcasts in Turkey.

²⁰ Bozkurt, Abbas (n. d.). Leyla ile Mecnun’un Selam Durduğu Edebiyatçılar. <https://www.idefix.com/kataloglar/leyla-ile-mecnunun-selam-durdugu-edebiyatcilar/50434>. Last visited 20.09.2020.

²¹ Dramedy is a concept that started to be used to describe serials that use comedy and drama elements with more or less the same intensity, depending on the hybridization tendencies in television genres, and differ from situation comedies in this sense. The neighborhood-family serials, which focus on neighborhood and family relations that reproduce the values, forms and lifestyles of the common life world and play a role in creating a cultural cohesion, constitute popular examples of the dramedy genre (Gültekin Akçay, 2011).

As television genres have a greater tendency to recombine across genre lines (Feuer, 1992), L&M can be classified in a hybrid model, which contains features from both the TV serials and series forms. Even though there have been some episodes linked to each other with a cliffhanger as in the serials, L&M consist of individual episodes in which the plotline has a conclusion. There are multiple plotlines surrounding specific characters and a storyline for each season. Hence, despite the individual episodes we can trace the character developments between episodes or learn about the history of characters and link them with the general features of the characters. For example, we learn that İsmail Abi waves to the ships because of his father; the hope of the return of his father in a ship is the main reason that this character survives.

One of the features of L&M that makes it differ from the other TV serials or dramas are the main themes of the series, which are generally underestimated in other TV serials and dramas. As presented in the previous section, Turkish TV serials and dramas are under the effect of the consumer oriented popular culture. The rich lifestyle based on conspicuous consumption is at the forefront. There is a prevalence of an evening dress style that does not have much to do with the fashion of the people on the street. The curtains, sitting groups and bedroom set in the interiors change in every few episodes. Many important daily and political problems disappear. In the Turkish local series, there are good and bad people who live in mansions and mansions surrounded by servants and do not exhibit much existential or class contradiction. They express strong and universal feelings such as love, hate and grudge at the centre of their narratives combined with side stories of secrets, and conflicts (Çelenk, 2010; Tüzün Ateşalp, 2016; Yurderi, 2014). Çelenk (2010) emphasizes that these TV serials seem to have caught a “global” language of expression, thanks to the tales - adaptation or original - free from the tiring issues of community life.

In contrast to the dominating popular TV serial themes, L&M’s prominent themes are friendship, family, love, neighborhood/neighborliness, solidarity and cultural values. Abalı (2017) asserts that L&M differs from other television serials by containing many essential elements of folktales, hence it shows a continuation of folk tales. As L&M takes its name from a famous folk tale (Layla and Majnun myth), its subject is impossible love, the discovery of a miracle dervish (the wise old man- Aksakallı Dede) helping the lover (Mecnun), and some scenes set in the desert (as in the myth of Layla and Majnun); the series is a successful example of adaptation of the folktale genre to the present day (Abalı, 2017). On the other hand Lüküslü (2015) claims that L&M is in the same genre as Yeşilçam movies and to other “mahalle” series, which are focused on the neighborhood, like *Perihan Abla*, *Süper Baba*, *Bizimkiler*; etc.

As it uses humour and absurdity as a critical tool, L&M has an important place in Turkish TV and humour history (Özkan, 2019). Regarding the absurdity of the series, the general director of the series Onur Ünlü, during a meeting with fans says, *“We try to find out how we can include the absurd elements into the plotline in such a way that it causes people to react as naturally as possible. They should be embedded naturally into the story. It’s easy to blather but the hard thing is to blather in an organized way. That should be done. And we chase for it...”* (“Onur Ünlü, Ali Atay ve Serkan Keskin Söyleşi,” 2012). We can give the following example to explain this situation. Mecnun discovers, in the 46th episode, that the lace pillow in his room, “Hakkı Dayı” (Uncle Hakkı), speaks with him. He begins to communicate with it. When Yavuz enters Mecnun’s room from the window²² with juice cans wrapped in newsprint paper in a black plastic bag, and sees him talking to himself (actually he talks with Hakkı Dayı) he asks him worriedly if he was talking to himself. Mecnun responds to him saying, *“No, I’m talking with the lace pillow”* then Yavuz says, *“Ahhh it’s ok then. I worried when I saw you talking to yourself”*.²³ Then they continue to chat with each other. In the upcoming scenes we see Yavuz and Mecnun making fun of İsmail Abi who talks with the lace pillow “Hakkı Dayı” (Figure 2.14)²⁴. Pointing out İsmail Abi to each other, Yavuz says, *“Look at İsmail. He is chit chatting with the lace pillow (laughing).”* Mecnun adds, *“Look at those types. Take a look at this for God’s sake. He did not find it strange, he did not question. He didn’t say, “The pillow is talking!” Like a crazy (Laughs).”*²⁵ These scenes show an example of the characters of the series also reacting to the absurdity of the series. Hence the series is not only making fun of other series but also of itself (Figure 2.15)²⁶.



Figure 2.14: İsmail Abi talking with Hakkı Dayı. (Screenshot from the 46th episode of the series.)

²² As he is a thief he always enters Mecnun’s home from the window and it’s very normal for them.

²³ Scene between 50:05-50:35 in episode 46.

²⁴ Screenshot taken from; Leyla ile Mecnun Kesitleri, *Youtube*, 6 October 2019, youtube.com/watch?v=AHnvqgB04BM. Accessed 24 November 2020.

²⁵ Scene between 54:40-54:50 in episode 46.

²⁶ Screenshot taken from; Leyla ile Mecnun Kesitleri, *Youtube*, 6 October 2019, youtube.com/watch?v=AHnvqgB04BM. Accessed 24 November 2020.



Figure 2.15: Mecnun and Yavuz making fun of İsmail Abi who is talking with Hakkı Dayı. (Screenshot from the 46th episode of the series.)

2.2.3.2. Magic Wand Used In Escaping Censorship

Since it has aired on the national TV channel TRT1 and has been subject to the censorship of the RTÜK, as all TV content encounters in Turkey, L&M has presented new forms of tactics to overcome these restrictions. These tactics, appreciated and internalised mostly by the Turkish youth, led to the creation of a new fandom and a new subculture. L&M fans embraced the new talking style of the characters like “Mecnun” who talks in his manner or “İsmail Abi” who has a proper accent. The tactics created to overcome the censorships like replacing alcohol, cigarettes and other restricted items by different materials, and transforming traditional curses in new forms etc. have been the object of articles and theses in Turkish academia (Keskin, 2016; Lüküslü, 2014, 2015, 2018; Özkan, 2019).

In the middle of a two-sided censorship, the L&M team invented tactics to narrate what is desired. Tüzün Ateşalp (2016) indicates the difficulty of dealing with these censorships saying, *“The heavy penalties imposed on channels that broadcast against broadcasting principles cause professionals to work under intense pressure. The units of the channels responsible for the content control of TV series “beep” swearing, sexuality, political references and slang expressions that they think may cause problems for RTÜK, and sometimes they completely dismiss them with the approval of the producer.”* The scriptwriter indicates that the obligations led them to create solutions saying, *“There are censorships applied not only by TRT but also by RTÜK. Being able to deal with both is a great success. We created another language because we had to. There’s pressure. We had to overcome it and to move away from stereotypes”* (“Aslı Şafak’la İşin Aslı - Burak Aksak,” 2019). The success of the actors is also very important in perceiving the language produced as profanity. Reflecting it to the other party that way is a great job to reverse.

In an interview Burak Aksak explained the source of his inspiration about the tactics he had invented, *'This situation came out with Mecnun, who became dolorous after Leyla went with another person in one episode. When we are in the doldrums we would go to the tavern and drink a drink, but we could not show it on the screen. The tactic of eating grapes in lieu of drinking wine came from the words of the president of the period, "Alcohol is made from fruit, eat fruit instead of drinking alcohol." and it was loved by the audience.'* ("Aslı Şafak'la İşin Aslı - Burak Aksak," 2019). Hence the metaphors used to escape the censorship attracted the attention of the audience and became very popular. Attributing different meanings to the restricted items and words L&M created a new vocabulary. The most salient metaphors used in the series are chewing gum (representing cigarettes), eating grapes (drinking wine) and other fruits like figs (rakı), plums (tequila), apricots and hazelnuts (vodka), sweetcorn (viski) etc. (Figure 2.16)²⁷. Canned drinks wrapped with newsprint paper also refer to drinking alcohol.²⁸ Lüküslü (2015) states in her study that the scriptwriter Burak Aksak noted in an interview, that since in real life people smoke and drink alcohol, a world without those is a surreal world. She comments that the 'absurdity' or the 'surreality' of the series was, in a way, imposed or reinforced by the censorships (Lüküslü, 2015). Showing the raw materials of the products and presenting the metaphors in their natural way of use in daily life, ease and make amusing the understanding of the meanings attributed to them.



Figure 2.16: İsmail Abi, Mecnun and Yavuz eating plums which signifies drinking alcohol (Screenshot from the video clip shot for the Turkish adapted song "Because I got high" of Afroman by the L&M team.)

²⁷ Screenshot taken from; Emre Yağız, *Youtube*, 30 April 2013, [youtube.com/watch?v=Z3TsNiuHDNM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z3TsNiuHDNM). Accessed 24 November 2020.

²⁸ Young people or others who don't want to show that they drink alcohol usually wrap the canned or bottles of alcohol with newsprint paper.

The jargon, invented to escape the use of swear words in the series, is an innovative and loved tool. The words or terms used as swear words are mostly based on what the scriptwriter went through in real life. One of the most popular swear words used in the series is *Duş perdesi* (shower curtain). The scriptwriter explains that the wet shower curtain touching people during the bath is very irritating and like swearing. Other curses are *ıslak tuvalet terliği* (wet plastic bathroom slippers), *damacana* (demijohn/water cooler bottle), *poşet* (plastic bag), *pipet* (drinking straw), *delik çorap* (sock with a hole) etc. One of the heaviest swear words was “Sarkozy” which also contains political criticism. Lüküslü (2015) translated the scene in which the “Sarkozy” swear word, which referenced the president of France at the time, was used:

“Brother Ismail: *Here it comes then.*

Mecnun: *I am waiting.*

Brother Ismail: *Are you ready?*

Mecnun: *Yes, my brother, send it!*

Brother Ismail: *Sarkozy!*

Mecnun: *What?*

Brother Ismail: *Sarkozy!*

Mecnun: *Sar-kozy! But no! How do you swear my brother! How does one human being swear to another like that? That is too bad of you! How do you swear like that my brother!*

Brother Ismail: *But you deserved it.*

Mecnun: *Yes I deserved it, but this one was very heavy.”*

The concept of “AT” (Horse) is constantly used in the series. Nobody knows the cause for this. The scriptwriter Burak Aksak also doesn’t know the reason for the “horse” concept, which has even been the name of the TV channel in the series “AT TV” or of a political party “AT Party”. He says, *“The ‘horse’ is used in the series for the first time in the 4th episode when Mecnun raided the engagement of Leyla with a horse, but afterwards ‘horse’ became a frequently used metaphor.”* (“Burak Aksak Söyleşisi | Marmara TV,” 2015). Mecnun frequently uses the “AT” (Horse) metaphor. Sometimes to express his feelings, *“There are horses running in my head”*, or sometimes as swearing with his inverted sentences, *“A horse are you?”* (Are you a horse?). In a scene in which Yavuz tries to warn Mecnun that there is a danger behind him, Mecnun asks, *“Is there a horse behind me?”*. This latter example shows that the “horse” metaphor is used in whatever meaning and condition. It’s a kind of game, joke, or puzzle between the series team and the audience.

The talking style, the accent, and expressions of Mecnun and İsmail Abi are also the features of the series, which are appropriated by fans and have become an element of a subculture. Mecnun talks with inverted sentences in his manner like “*Mecnun is Çınar? (Mecnun Çınar) or Love does Leyla me? (Does Leyla love me?)*”. He has an expression with a different accent “*Neeemiş?*” containing the questions of “*what, what does it mean, how and how come*”. İsmail Abi also uses this expression with a “ç” at the end “*Neeemiç?*”. İsmail Abi has an individual accent. He prolongs the word, sometimes making a question from a word via his intonation. He has an expression “*Laaaapss*”, which means saying the right words at the right moment or to make a point. He also has a gesture combined with his tongue and his hand which can mean “*yeah right!!, assume that I believe it, don’t take it serious etc.*”. In a part of an interview, Onur Ünlü responds to a question asking if the series will end in the 100th episode with a cinema movie by making a gesture of İsmail Abi which means “*that’s a lie, don’t take this claim seriously, don’t care about it*”. Then he explains that he doesn’t know anything about the final episode of the series but he finds good and cool the idea of a movie (“Onur Ünlü, Ali Atay ve Serkan Keskin Söyleşisi,” 2012). This case shows that the language created within the series is also interiorised and used by the series team besides the fans.

One of the features of L&M is the “absurd curses” used for the Erdal Bakkal character. Erdal Bakkal can be shortly described as an insidious, selfish, cunning, and stingy character. He differs from the other characters with all these features and angers them with his attitudes, and behaviors. For this reason he is often prone to cursing. In his article titled “*May your TV Series Change its Air Days*”: A Pragmatic Analysis of the Curses in the Leyla ile Mecnun TV Series, Ahmet Keskin (2016) analyses the curses used for the Erdal Bakkal character in L&M. He firstly explains that the power and influence of curses, which have been used with different functions in different periods and contexts, is always in a pragmatic framework. In all these forms of use, curses are used for reflecting the emotions and expectations of the speakers against various situations pushing them to speak. They serve anthropologically for protection and security, psychologically for relief and achievement of desired goals / results, sociologically for control, etc. (Keskin, 2016).

The technological tools used in daily life and the use of language in various contexts transfer culture to new generations on the one hand, and on the other hand change and transform it in various ways. This new form of creation, which emerged in the secondary oral culture era, created the expected effect in the fiction of L&M and its audience. Then the absurd curses became a shared humorous phenomenon by a large audience. With the use of cursing as a practical tool for creating absurd aesthetics, the audience of L&M has remembered this traditional type, and found amusement with this new and absurd type (Keskin, 2016).

Within the fiction of the L&M TV series, sometimes curses target Erdal Bakkal's moustache due to the fact that his moustache plays a decisive role in his characteristic features. When he speaks about the facts that should not be mentioned at a certain time and because of his gabbiness, curses can target his speaking ability. Because of his miserliness, curses may also be about the loss of money.

*"May they censor your moustaches, Erdal!!"*²⁹

"Erdal, I hope you have a baby-girl who looks like you, with a moustache or something..."

"Inshallah you do not find the name of the artist in the photograph while solving the crossword puzzle."

"Erdal may you wash your pants in boiling water as you forget 100 TL in your pocket."

As it's seen in the examples given above, it should be emphasized that the entanglements, which are a very "serious" type in the oral tradition and everyday life, and which have various sanctions, are re-used and transformed to create absurd humour in L&M. This re-functioning is supported by the parodying technique creating humour in an absurd and incompatible situation (Keskin, 2016).

As a result, the restrictions and prohibitions led the series team to overcome these censorship by inventing a tactic which I would call "*the magic wand*". Via this magic wand based on humour, the team overcame all the obstacles preventing them to narrate what they desire. This creation had an unexpected response among Turkish youth. Lüküslü (2014, 2015), who wrote articles discussing the "*new jargon*" of L&M and its impacts on the Turkish youth, explains this case saying that the invented new 'jargon' was actively appropriated by the young viewers of the series, and was immersed into the youth culture.

2.2.3.3. By the Power of References and Criticism!

Besides its creative new jargon, Leyla ile Mecnun is also known for the references and the criticisms pleasing most of its audience. Catching the references and criticisms in the series became a kind of play between fans. Lots of references and criticisms are poached in every episode. Lots of meanings are created and discussed among fans, even those which are not intended by the series team... The scriptwriter Burak Aksak says in

²⁹ In this curse there is a reference to RTÜK.

a TV program that he doesn't understand the references that the audience claim to see. He says, "*They say that there is a reference to a TV series that I didn't watch. Hence I don't understand the reference.*" He explains that he is not referring purposefully, but that he rather tries to include something from himself to the scenes. He gives as an example that when he writes a scene about Yavuz reading a book, he chooses a book reflecting the emotion of the character, the scene and also himself. He indicates that the references satisfy himself, and present a part from his life. But unexpectedly references begin to be awaited by the audience in every episode and they try to find a reference in every scene ("Burak Aksak Bloomberg Ht Röportajı (3.Kısım)," n.d.). The references are generally about local and foreign literature, authors, movies, books, musicians, creators, actual or past social phenomena, politicians and historical characters. Criticisms vary between actual and historical events in the history of Turkey and the world.

There are lots of references to the local and foreign movies, TV serials and dramas in every episode of L&M. The numbers that Aksakallı Dede says to Mecnun in his dream can be noted within the initial references in the first episode. Aksakallı Dede appears in the dream of Mecnun and gives him the numbers of the lottery as all dervishes like him generally do in regard to helping people in need. He gives the numbers "4, 8, 15, 16, 23 and 42" which are actually the mysterious numbers used in the famous American TV Show *LOST*.³⁰ There are references to the Turkish TV shows like *Doktorlar* (Turkish adaptation of Grey's Anatomy which is re-aired every summer), *Akasya Durağı* (Story of taxi drivers working in a cabstand), *Arka Sokaklar* (BackStreets - a Turkish detective story), *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Forbidden Love - A modern adaptation from a Turkish novel), and *Behzat Ç.* (a TV show which was popular at the same time as L&M). There is also a common episode (Season 1, episode 12) in which characters of both series play, *Cennet Mahallesi* (a neighborhood series about gypsies), *Çocuklar Duymasın* (a popular sitcom), etc. Some of the referenced foreign TV shows and movies are *Lost*, *Dr. House*, *The Sixth Sense*, *Trinity*, *Karate Kid*, *Saw*, *Spartacus*, *The OZ*, *24*, *Prison Break*, *Leon*, *Matrix*, *Titanic*, *Lord of the Rings*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Back to the Future*, *GhostBusters*, *The Hangover*, *Star Wars*, *The Ring*, etc. There are also references to poets like *Atilla İlhan*, *Turgut Uyar*, *Nilgün Marmara*, and *William Shakespeare*; and to novels of authors like *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar*, *Sait Faik Abasıyanık*, *Yusuf Atılgan*, and *Oğuz Atay*. Art pieces and artists like the tablo named *Kaplumbağa Terbiyecisi* (Turtle Tamer) painted by *Osman Hamdi Efendi*, and the Turkish painter *Bedri Baykam* are also referenced in the series.

³⁰ "*Lost*" is an American drama television series that originally aired on ABC from September 22, 2004, to May 23, 2010, over six seasons, comprising a total of 121 episodes. The show contains elements of supernatural and science fiction, and follows the survivors of a commercial jet airliner flying between Sydney and Los Angeles, after the plane crashes on a mysterious island somewhere in the South Pacific Ocean. The story is told in a heavily serialized manner. Episodes typically feature a primary storyline set on the island, augmented by flashback or flash forward sequences which provide additional insight into the involved characters." ("Lost (TV Series)," n.d.)

In the 3rd season of the series the scriptwriter Burak Aksak references Dostoyevski in a way that befits the absurd style of the series. After an embarrassing event ,Mecnun says, “I wish the ground would swallow me up” then the ground opens up and swallows Mecnun. Mecnun looks around himself and discovers a man writing with a typewriter (Figure 2.17). This is *Dostoyevski* writing his book *Notes from Underground*. In this scene the scriptwriter absurdly combines a Turkish saying with the title of a book of Dostoyevski. After this event, the “Dosto” character, an adapted modern version of the author Dostoyevski, joins the series and begins to live in Mecnun’s house.



Figure 2.17: Mecnun encountering Dostoyevski under the ground.(Screenshot from the 77th episode of the series.)

Dosto is a scriptwriter and he writes day and night (Figure 2.18). He actually reflects the scriptwriter Burak Aksak who is also writing day and night. In one scene, Dosto watches TV with Mecnun’s father İskender. In a program on AT TV, a man criticises the TV series *Nadya and Ivan*³¹ for which Dosto had written the scenario, saying “*By the way, Nadya and Ivan is a terrible drama. It’s not funny. I don’t understand how people laugh about it. It’s something like a virus!*.” Dosto protestingly asks İskender, “*Why did he criticise our TV show for no reason?*” İskender responds saying “*He made a determination in his own style. Let him think himself important.*” and asks Dosto, “*Do you know what the idler does in our culture?*”. Dosto answers “*What he/she does?*”. İskender replies “*Never mind, it’s better to not know.*” This scene reflects the scriptwriter himself and can be conceived as a response to the negative critics about L&M.

³¹ Metaphor used for L&M.



Figure 2.18: “Dosto” character as Dostoyevski (Screenshot from the 80th episode of the series.)

İsmail Abi and the stories of his ancestors, known as *İsmail Abinin Genleri* (İsmail Brother’s Genes), are an absurd reference tool of the series. As he has no family, İsmail Abi sets up stories about his ancestors and tells them to his friends when he wants to prove something or to give an example to daily events. These little stories approach ironically to the theories, stories and other inventions of reputable philosophers, actors/actresses, writers, politicians, novel characters etc. (Figure 2.19). İsmail Abi tells stories about these eminent people or film characters like *The Godfather* (*Don Vito Corleone*), *Beethoven*, *Charlie Chaplin*, *Graham Bell*, *Spider Man*, *Hippocrates*, *Steve Job*, *Bill Gates*, *Pasteur*, *Dracula*, *Vlad the Impaler*, *Christopher Columbus*, *Mimar Sinan* (*The Grand Ottoman Architect Sinan*), *Father Noel*, *Picasso*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *William Shakespeare*, *Van Gogh*, *Mona Lisa*, *Pythagoras* etc.

For example İsmail Abi begins to tell a story saying “*my big big big grandfather was...*” and we see one of the famous historical personages as his big big big grandfather, aunt or grandmother. He makes naïve connections with his daily life information and the stories, inventions or theories of these personages which requires a cultural background. In a scene in which Mecnun claims that İsmail Abi can not think like a philosopher, İsmail Abi begins to narrate the history of one of his ancestors who was a philosopher. He says, “*I accept that my grandfather is not the founder of modern philosophy, but he was his best friend.*” Then we see the grandfather of İsmail Abi as a philosopher chatting with Descartes. As Descartes speaks unceasingly the grandfather of İsmail Abi tells him to stop speaking for a while. Then Descartes responds to him “*I think therefore I exist.*” İsmail Abi’s philosopher grandfather replies to him saying “*The trees in my garden also exist but I don’t think that they can think, Mr. Descartes. Don’t think so much. I swear that you will lose your hair one by one. I mean you would*

go crazy... Come on, let's go and have tea..." Then Mecnun asks İsmail Abi, "So your grandfather prepared tea for Descartes. Did I hear truly? What did they talk about?" İsmail Abi responds to him, laughing, "They thought, contemplated, debated..." This scene is an example of the stories that İsmail Abi made up in an absurd way.



Figure 2.19: A collage of İsmail Abi's ancestors (Retrieved April 26, 2021 from <https://www.uludagsozluk.com/e/20827407/>)

Another salient feature of L&M is the criticism of global and local politics (salaries of the Turkish deputies, unfinished services of Turkish municipalities, Turkey's payables to International Monetary Fund (IMF), Turkish political mindset, political propagandas, banks' interest policies, gasoline price, long durations of TV serials the working class, colonialism, colonial democracy, thought crime, individual armament, etc.). The popular culture is also criticised in different aspects. For example, the product advertisements like *Biscolata* (biscuit with chocolate); it's known for the handsome and muscled actors producing chocolate almost naked in the advertisement); popular music songs like *Gangnam Style*, singers and music groups like *Justin Bieber*, *One Direction* etc.; popular books like *Harry Potter* (In a scene in the 3rd season Yavuz asks his girlfriend Eylül which book she read lastly. She answers "*Harry Potter*" and

Yavuz runs away); popular Turkish TV programs like *Var mısın Yok musun?* (*Deal or no Deal?*), and daytime programs targeting women audiences etc.

In the 40th episode Erdal Bakkal discovers that he pays 2% of his electricity bill as a TRT share and goes to the TRT building to object to this payment. While strolling among the rooms he opens a door and witnesses that a manager of the channel has tied the hands of six producers and tells them, ‘There are some rules here. From now on, within your series your actors cannot say “lan”³², cannot say “cow”, cannot say “donkey”. If necessary, they can say “horse”, they can say “beaver”’.³³ This example is one of the best criticisms of L&M against the censorship of TRT. It is also laughable that arabesque culture, which has been banned in TRT for years, is one of the basic components of the series. Another good example of criticism of the politics of Turkey is the scene in which the characters of the series try to go into jail.

Kaan (Little school boy friend of Mecnun with red glasses): *Let’s commit a bigger crime. Let there be something that will make more noise.*

Ismail Abi: *Okay then. Let’s go, break the frame and the glass of Erdal Bakkal’s store.*

İskender: *Oh Ismail, we robbed a bank and they didn’t put us into the prison. Would they if we take down the frame and glass of the store? Give it up for God’s sake.*

Kaan: *Let’s write a book.*

This scene is an important criticism of the political ambiance of both the past and the present day of Turkey. The references in the series are a kind of joy for the audience. Matching the references with their knowledge motivates fans and leads them to get in contact with each other. Hence their communication creates knowledge and opinion sharing platforms, online communities and closer interpersonal relationships. In the next chapter we will focus on the L&M Fandom in the scope of their fan activities and their interactions in different online platforms.

³² A word frequently used as an exclamation in rude speech. It’s translated as “man” in online dictionaries.

³³ 40th episode, between 37:55-38:13.

“LEYLA İLE MECNUN” FANDOM

The main subject of this thesis is the *Leyla ile Mecnun Fandom*¹ which has an important place in making the series a phenomenon. After becoming a phenomenon due to its unification of fans on online and offline platforms, and its sudden cancellation, the series became popular in Turkey and additionally the L&M Fandom became wider. *Leyla ile Mecnun* fans interact with the series and they respond to the developments about the series plots or other events related to the series.² Fan communities use different tools for their common purposes related to *Leyla ile Mecnun*, they interact with the series team, and they struggle against their preferred TV series' cancellation. The statement of the series director saying, “*We don't have any connections with social media pages. We don't even have a web page managed by us.*” (“Onur Ünlü, Ali Atay ve Serkan Keskin Söyleşisi,” 2012), is adequately significant to analyse the importance of the fans as well as their activities in different online and offline platforms as part of the popularisation of the series.

Jenkins (1992: 92) states that many of the most highly rated programs fail to produce the kind of institutionalized fan culture. On the other hand, he emphasizes that fictions, which are not popular or viewed by a large audience, can lead to the creation of fan communities. L&M is one such series, which was not popular and watched by a large audience, but has succeeded to have a fan community. The usage of the internet and new technologies by fans (such as fan pages and groups on Facebook, fan accounts and hashtags on Twitter, commentaries and discussions on online platforms, entries in online dictionaries, sharing of fan works on social media platforms etc.) fortified the fan identification and the unity of the fandom especially after the cancellation of the series. Social media platforms also have a role in shaping the activities of fans with their technological potentials like networking, microblogging, creating and sharing fan arts or providing information. This chapter focuses on the interaction of L&M fans with each other and the production team, their fan works, and the organizational and civic power of the fandom via the use of Internet technologies. It is the result of

¹ *Leyla ile Mecnun* fandom, means all fans from the past or the present time, adoring the *Leyla ile Mecnun* TV series, even though they have some critical approaches to the series. These fans can be alone or in interaction with other fans. They can be members of different fan communities in different online platforms or in the real (offline) world.

² It should be noted that the fans who were watching the series while it was airing could comment or advocate to change the plots, but later watchers cannot intervene in this process.

a netnographic research which is an online adaptation of ethnographic research, to explore the online culture and communities of L&M Fandom. The research continued between 2016 and 2021, aiming to gather different types of online fan activities in different social media platforms. The data is collected via Internet searches with the keywords “Leyla ile Mecnun” and following fan pages, groups or accounts on different social media platforms. Different fan activity examples, conversations and photos are noted, the screenshots of the posts are taken to avoid the data loss which is frequent in the digital world, and all the data retrieved are described in order to explore the L&M fandom and have an understanding of it. The results are categorised as 1) interactions between fans and interactions between fans & L&M production team members on different social media platforms (Facebook, online dictionaries, twitter etc.), 2) Fanworks and activities of the fandom and 3) Organizational and Civic Power of L&M fandom.

3.1. Interactions of Leyla ile Mecnun Fans

Fans actively use technological tools and the Internet technology for their fan activities. Hence they become more visible with these opportunities. They use websites and applications to communicate with other fans sharing the same interests, to find more information about their fandom objects or to share their fan works. Their use of Internet technologies can be for social networking (*Facebook etc.*) to connect with groups; microblogging (*Twitter, Tumblr etc.*) to post short entries, creating hashtags in order to communicate with people related to their fandom; blogging, by using publishing websites like Wordpress, Blogger, Wattpad or digital dictionary platforms (*Ekşi Sözlük, Uludağ Sözlük, Wikipedia*) etc. to record and share opinions, stories, fanworks, links, articles; and sharing fan works consisting of digital photos or videos about their fandom subject on *Instagram, Pinterest* or *Youtube*. The interactions of fans can be with each other or with the TV series team members such as the director, actors, producers, scriptwriter etc.; i.e. anyone contributing to the creation of the series. Below we will describe the interactions of fans in two titles: 1) Interactions between fans and 2) Interactions between fans and L&M production team members.

3.1.1. Interactions between fans

With the development of the Internet, fans have become able to connect directly and instantaneously with the object of their fandom, the media producers, and other fans via social media platforms like *Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest* or blogs and web pages. This possibility lets them create networks and communities depending on different common subjects. Those digital networks or communities serve to share fans’ creations like fictional writings or fan works (fanvids, photo collages, captions,

memes etc.) which also enable them to communicate and share their opinions about their fan works, their knowledge on their fandom objects and to discuss on these issues with others on online social media platforms without any restrictions of distance or time (Jenkins, 1992; Stein & Busse, 2012; Lachonis & Johnston, 2008).

In the scope of L&M Fandom we encounter fan pages and groups on *Facebook*; fan accounts with the names of the characters of the series or directly with the series name on *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Facebook* or *Tumblr*; web pages dedicated to the series with various information related to the different features of the series and the series team; and discussion topics on online dictionaries which contain titles about the series that enable people to discuss the series. There are also *Youtube* channels sharing all the episodes of the series, short scene videos from the series, and interviews or news about the series or the series team members. We see character accounts on *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *Facebook* cosplaying the characters of the series. There are fans writing new stories (fanfiction) related to the series in blogs and other platforms serving them to share their works, such as *Wattpad*.

The online platforms enabling fans to communicate and discuss different subjects about the series are primarily *Facebook* fan groups and fan pages, online dictionaries and *Twitter* which enables the use of hashtags. Within the framework of discussions, online dictionaries and microblogging platforms like *Twitter* give more freedom to fans and non-fans to express their thoughts freely. *Facebook* fan pages and fan groups are more conservative about the criticism of the fandom object since they are created on the basis of the common love of the series and moreover, they have some rules to obey. These features seem to impact the creation of a community and the basis of a fan culture.

3.1.1.1. L&M Fans on Facebook:

Facebook is one of the social media platforms that fans frequently use to create a community in which they can discuss issues and share fan works about their fandom object. The communication on *Facebook* fan groups is generally based on the posts shared by a fan and the likes and comments of others under these posts. Posts can vary from questions about other works of the series team or details in episodes to news sharing about the team members. These groups have their own rules which define the communication framework between group members.

Group members share quotes or scenes from the series reflecting their actual mood and the community members interact with each other by commenting on posts, asking for

a detailed explanation of their moods, giving advice or declaring that they are sharing the same mood. These are personal communications started via a quote or a scene from the series. Fans may suggest previous works by the series team members, like the previous TV series titled Ramazan Güzeldir (Ramadan is Beautiful) written by the scriptwriter Burak Aksak.³ Sometimes they ask for advice to decide to watch or not the other works of the series team members:

“Has anyone watched The Limonata movie? The trailer left me in suspense”⁴

Sometimes they share news about the works of the series team members, actors etc. They promote the films, songs, books or other activities of them; they share news about their private life like getting married, having a baby etc. Fans are very interested in details and the consistency of the narrative (Jenkins, 1992: 76). L&M fans also check the course of events, the dates and other details in the series as they watch the series episodes repeatedly. For example, they analyse that the birthday of a character written in a paper seen in an episode and the birthday marked on the tombstone in another episode are different. Then they share this finding with other fans in the group and start a conversation between fans. In another example of information sharing we see a fan, who watched the series after a while, interrogating to whom the grave belongs to, which the last Leyla was visiting in the last episode; the response from another group member was:⁵

“İ.İ.: Hafızlar⁶, I still can't help thinking about this. Whose grave is this? What did Hidayet tell Leyla in this episode? We know Eylül is dead, is it her grave or someone else? What would happen in Season 4, how would they continue? It won't go away, it won't go away from my mind ..

F. Ö.: Burak (the scriptwriter) explained this; Eylül.

İ.İ.: How can I find these kinds of things? I discovered the group afterwards, I'm not up to date as you are. I still have a lot of questions on my mind □ ”

³ Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Youtube’da Burak Aksak’ın yazdığı Ramazan Güzeldir dizisi var. 30 dakikalık bölümler kesin izleyin. Oruç tutanlar için özellikle güzel vakit geçirirsiniz :)”, Facebook, 8 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

⁴ LeylaileMecnun'uBendeOzledim (personal communication), “Limonata filmini izleyen varmı? fragman muallakta bıraktı beni”, Facebook, 9 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

⁵ Hayatımız Leyla ile Mecnun (personal communication) “Hafızlar hala bunu düşünmekten kendimi alamıyorum. Bu mezar kimin? Hidayet Leyla’ya bu bölümde ne anlattı? Eylül öldü biliyoruz onun mezarı mı yoksa başka birisi mi? 4. Sezon’da ne olacaktı? Nasıl bağlayacaklardı? Gitmiyor aklımdan gitmiyor...”, Facebook, 14 December 2015, facebook.com/groups/hayatleylailemecnun/permalink/968742236498326/. Accessed 23 December 2020.

⁶ An address form that characters use in the series which refers to “friends”.

L&M fans relate daily details, their emotions, opinions or a random saying in their daily life with the series. For instance, they match horoscopes with the series' characters and ask other Facebook group members which character they represent in relation to the month that they are born⁷ (Figure 3.1)⁸.

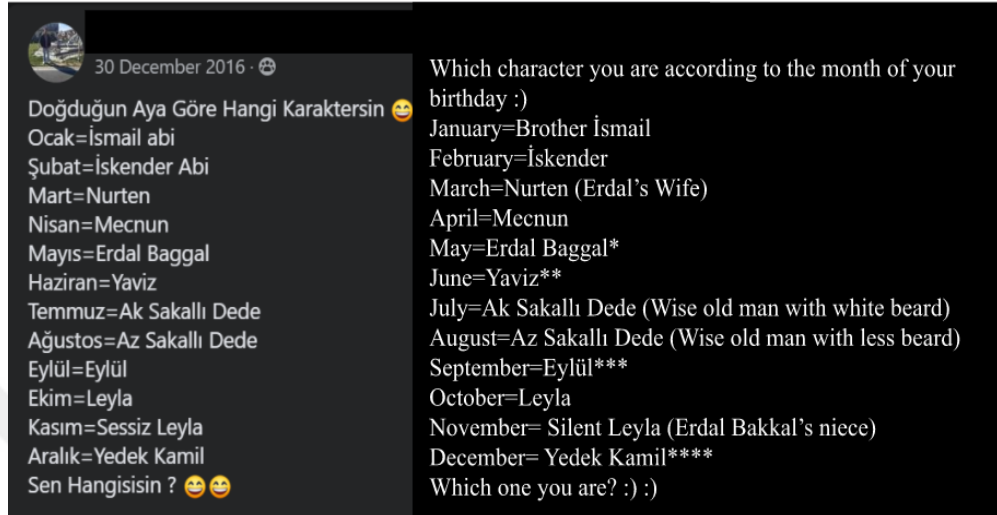


Figure 3.1: Facebook group post of a fan asking which character the other fans are matched related to the list.

Fans also visualise sayings by using pictures or videos of scenes from the series. Figure 3.2 shows an example of a post showing Mecnun looking at Leyla (the first) with love and the saying “*The most beautiful feeling in the world is knowing that you are the reason for the smile on someone’s face.*”⁹ As seen in the above mentioned examples it can be said, in short, that all communication between fans is based on or started with L&M related subjects, visuals or issues. They ask the questions in their mind, they respond to questions and share new information, discuss the issues, try to guess the reasons or the aftermath of the events, create and share fan arts etc.

Facebook fan groups generally have their rules for the members which ensures cohesion and peace within the group. The prohibition of talking about different subjects such as political, economic or religious issues besides L&M related ones seems to be important for a healthy fan community. Almost all of the Facebook L&M fan groups have *Group Rules* announced in the presentation note of their fan group page. These

⁷ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Doğduğun aya göre hangi karaktersin :)”, Facebook, 30 December 2016, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

⁸ *The word “Bakkal” is written as it is pronounced in the series and between fans with the “g” letter, “Baggal”.

**The name “Yavuz” is written as it is pronounced by Erdal Bakkal Character in the series which is also used by fans.

*** “Eylül” means “September” in English. It’s also used as a name.

**** Kamil is a football player character in the series who is always at the bench as a substitute.

⁹ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Dünyanın en güzel hissi, birinin yüzündeki gülümsemenin sebebi olduğunu bilmektir.” #AliAtay #EzgiAsaroğlu #LeylaYılmaz #MecnunÇınar #LeylaileMecnun #EfsaneÇift”, Facebook, 2 December 2020, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

rules are applied by the administrators of the groups. Fans also try to ensure that the rules are followed. Sometimes they protest the posts which are in contradiction with the group rules.



Figure 3.2: Fan post comparing a saying with a scene with Leyla ile Mecnun characters.

The fan group titled *Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim*¹⁰ is the Facebook fan group with the most members. The presentation text of the group says, “*We are a group where those who sincerely miss ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’, those who cannot forget the series, and want to keep it alive gather within the framework of a certain respect and tolerance, and can fall into grape¹¹, chit chat together.*”¹² The discussions which occurred in this closed fan group just after the Turkish local elections in 2019¹³ showed us a rule breach example caused by the declaration of different political perceptions of the fans watching the series and its consequences. We saw that fans were watching the series from different points of view. Some fans were watching the series as a love story, some as a series with a philosophical background or as a politically critical series. The debates began after the politically critical posts of some fans. After that, fans debated for or against these posts, and they shared their different points of view. These controversies led to moments where it was declared that the series is not understood by some fans. Explanations were made for the political references and the critical style of the series:

¹⁰ “I also miss Leyla ile Mecnun” is a group name mixing the titles of the two series Leyla ile Mecnun and the spin-off series Ben de Özledim (I Miss Too) produced by the same team.

¹¹ Falling into grapes refers to the friendly conversation around a table eating and drinking alcoholic beverages within the frame of the tactics used in the series to escape prohibitions. Fans use the jargon of the series as a sign of a subculture.

¹² Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim [Private Facebook group with 14.4K members], Facebook, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim/about. Accessed 29 October 2020.

¹³ In 2019 the certificate of election of the İstanbul Municipality Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu was cancelled by the power groups and the local elections in 2019 were repeated in İstanbul. Hence Ekrem İmamoğlu started a campaign with the hashtag #everythingwillbefine which was the statement of a young supporter of him. In the end İmamoğlu won the second election too.

“The series began during this government and continued with its criticism touching every field. If they did not support the Gezi events, the series would continue. Those who watched this series many times watched it because they liked the character of the actors in the series. Their real-life thinking doesn’t concern us. Now... Stop swearing at people in this group who do not fit your opinion. The group has deviated from its aim enough.”¹⁴

“Are the managers asleep? The page got to the bottom of politics. Pity.”¹⁵

“Politics is not necessarily ‘fighting’. Those who do not understand this photo¹⁶ and say to people “you do not understand L&M”, you really do not. You messed the beautiful group up by making political approaches that are not related to the series. I understand the political posts about the series, I also understand the criticism of the current news, but slogans have been shouted since the morning. I have not seen any posts that give opinions or criticize other than party posts. I’m not saying don’t do politics. In fact, I think everyone should do it, but post relevant things. This was the last place I thought I’d see that nonsense. Thanks for turning this place into a hate speech platform.”¹⁷

“Anyone can be a good viewer, but can’t watch intellectually... If you followed the agenda and watched the series on time you may have seen that the series is full of references to state misconduct. New viewers may have watched without understanding because they are far from the current agenda of those days... We cannot say that it is not intertwined with politics. Politics was the series itself. Now, when we viewers openly refer to the government, why do you say not to do politics? ...”¹⁸

We see that some fans are defending a politically free area for the fan group, they want to escape from the ugly truths of the world or the society. Some fans defend peaceful debate culture without swearing or insults. We also see an attempt to make

¹⁴ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Dizi bu hükümet zamanında başladı ve yine bu hükümet zamanında ince ve her alana dokunan eleştirileri ile devam etti. Eğer gezi olaylarına destek vermeselerdi yine devam ederdi.”, *Facebook*, 9 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

¹⁵ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Yöneticiler uyuyormu? Sayfa siyasetin dibine girdi. Yazık.”, *Facebook*, 9 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

¹⁶ A photo demonstrating the two main political party leaders hugging each other.

¹⁷ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication) “Siyaset illa kavga etmek değildir. Şu fotoğrafı anlamayıp insanlara siz L&M’yi anlamamışsınız diyenler asıl siz anlamamışsınız. Dizi ile alakalı olmayan politik yaklaşımlar yaparak güzelim grubun içine ettiniz.”, *Facebook*, 9 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

¹⁸ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Herkes iyi izleyici olabilir ama anlayarak izlemiş olamaz... Gündemi takip edip zamanında diziyi izlediyseniz dizinin devletin yaptığı yanlış uygulamalara göndermelerle dolu olduğunu görmüşsünüzdür. Yeni yeni izleyenler anlamadan izlemiş olabilir çünkü o günlük gündemden uzaktalar...”, *Facebook*, 9 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

a distinction between fans who watched the series while it was broadcasted and fans who watched it later. Another member who quitted the group or was removed from the group after this process, protested the political posts of the actual government party supporters saying *“Change the group’s name. Name it ‘I also miss Binali Yıldırım’¹⁹. I didn’t know that the IQ of L&M viewers was so low.”* This post had supporting comments from other members:

- Comment (1): *“A politically criticizing opponent series, selected as one of the world’s best absurd comedies. It’s amazing how those watching this series didn’t understand it. Although TRT realized it after 103 episodes and finished it... It requires fine intelligence...”*
- Comment (2): *“These are the audience who watched the series not at the time of its broadcast. They watched it for its melancholic photographs or drama scenes. I’m surprised that they didn’t understand that the series was criticising the government despite having watched it so much.”*
- Comment (3): *“Supporting the man who cannot write “Happy holidays students”, they question our minds. Beyond the irony :) :)”²⁰*

A member of the group defending the political opinions criticising the cancellation of the presidency of the Mayor of Istanbul in the group explains that the series itself was political and critical and adds that the reason for the cancellation of the series and the cancellation of İmamoğlu’s presidency was identical.

“So I look at what is written and it is impossible not to react. Why was L&M cancelled? Why don’t you ask yourself ‘Why did the series have to make its finale in another drama?’! Of course because it’s a political comedy... for criticizing the current power... I skip the subject of political content; the actors in it also have an opinion, a political stance... That’s why fans love this legendary series. Words like “don’t mix politics here” are very meaningless for this group. It is possible to understand that this stance is also an “anti-government, against repressive power policies” with a little intelligence. In short, the cancellation of İmamoğlu’s presidency is due to the same reason that we cannot watch L&M right now... This is why this group should have closed down if its protest #everythingwillbeveryfine was not in this group... (By the way, curses do not suit this group at all... You plastic bags, shower curtains :) :D)”²¹

¹⁹ The mayor candidate of İstanbul from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2019 local elections.

²⁰ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Grubun ismini değiştirin. Binali Yıldırım’ı Ben de Özledim yapın. L&M kitlesinin IQ seviyesinin bu kadar düşük olduğunu bilmiyordum”, Facebook, 9 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

²¹ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Yani yazılanlara bakıyorum da tepki göstermemek elde değil... L&M niye yayından kaldırıldı? Niye finalini başka dizide yapmak zorunda kaldı?! diye sormuyor musunuz hiç kendinize? Elbette ki politik bir komedi olduğu için...”, Facebook, 8 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim.

All of these comments give the clues that fans desire to belong to a fan group with other fans who share their points of view, their values and beliefs. Another group member challenges the discussions in the group with a post, sharing the election posters of the Mecnun character and ironically commenting “*If politics is free in the group, let’s see!*”. This fan makes fun of the discussions on the group wall in the same way as the series does.²²

At the end of these discussions one of the fan group moderators declares that the administrator sent the message “Everything will be fine”. After these debates some of the members were excluded from the group and some of them quitted the group with their free will. Some of the members who quitted the group opened new groups and invited the members of the former group before quitting. One of the fans reacted to the fans who created new groups saying, “*By the way, friends who reacted to the #everythingwillbefine in-group call and then formed a new group. You have a way to go until Arda’s father.*”²³”²⁴

All of these conversations show that fans tend to create fan communities united around their fandom, the love of L&M, and they try to protect the cohesion of these communities with group rules (Becker, 1963). When it comes to the violation of the group rules restricting the statement of political views or using swearing words, these group members do not accept contrarians. However other social media platforms offer fans a freer space to free speech independent from strict rules.

3.1.1.2. L&M Fans on Online Dictionaries:

Ekşi Sözlük is a collaborative hypertext ‘dictionary’ based (but not a dictionary in the strict sense) on the concept of web sites built up on user contribution in which users are not required to write correct or accurate information; it is also one of the main discussion platforms promoting L&M. Since it is currently one of the biggest online communities in Turkey with over 400,000 registered users the topics become easily popular and known. As an online public sphere, *Ekşi Sözlük*²⁵ is not only utilized by thousands for information sharing on various topics ranging from scientific subjects to everyday life issues, it is also used as a virtual socio-political community to communicate disputed political contents and to share personal views. There are 1665 pages of comments about *Leyla ile Mecnun* on *Ekşi Sözlük*, and 1038 pages

²² Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Madem grupta siyaset serbest hadi bakalım...” *Facebook*, 8 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim.

²³ Arda’s father who is referred to in this comment is a bad and generally unloved character in the series.

²⁴ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (personal communication), “Ha bu arada grup içi yapılan #herseyçokgüzelolacak çağrısı hakkında tepki gösterip de yeni grup oluşturan arkadaşlar”, *Facebook*, 8 May 2019, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim.

²⁵ Ekşi Sözlük, eksisozluk.com. Accessed 20 September 2020.

with 10371 comments on *Uludağ Sözlük*²⁶ which is the second most popular online dictionary having the same features as *Ekşi Sözlük*. These platforms provide the ability to discuss any subject with all of its aspects being available and open to discussion. Hence in contradiction with the fan pages and fan groups on Facebook, we can witness both positive and negative comments about L&M and all related subjects with this TV series.

Table 3.1: Categories of the topics about L&M on Ekşi Sözlük online platform.

Topic Categories related to L&M TV Series	
1.	Personal feelings, effects of the series on their daily lives and discoveries about the details
2.	Common difficulties or cases that L&M fans encounter in their daily lives.
3.	News related to the house used in the series or the commercial goods about the series
4.	Details of the series
5.	Praising the series and declaring best of lists about the series
6.	Specific episodes or scenes in the episodes of the series
7.	Campaigns about the renewal or a movie of the series
8.	Specific characters in the series
9.	The final of the series
10.	Fan fictions and alternative finals or scenes in episodes.
11.	Quotes from the series:
12.	Discussions about the summits and/or meetings of the fans with the series team members or the reunions of the fans and their activities
13.	Comparison of L&M with other TV Series in different aspects
14.	Critics and dislikes about the series

There are more than 100 different topics about L&M in *Ekşi Sözlük*²⁷. These topics vary from the personal feelings and findings about the series to the comparison of the different aspects of the series with other series (Table 3.1). Some examples of the topic categories are as follows:

- Topics on personal feelings, effects of the series on their daily lives and discoveries about the details of the serials: *“L&M watching tendency when you feel down”*, *“The person that forces you to watch L&M”*, *“Loving tea after watching L&M”*, *“The fact that parents don’t laugh at L&M”*, *“The fact that it’s been 6 years since L&M end”*, *“How I met L&M”*, *“What remains in mind from L&M”*, *“The fact of remembering L&M in the middle of the night”*, *“Living the life in L&M style”*, *“The period with Behzat Ç, L&M and İşler Güçler”*, *“Catching a reference in L&M”*, *“To not watch L&M”*, *“The campaign for the return of L&M”*, *“A person who never watched L&M”*, *“The cancellation of*

²⁶ Uludağ Sözlük, uludagsozluk.com. Accessed 21 September 2020.

²⁷ Search made on Ekşi Sözlük with “leyla ile mecnun” key words on 30.06.2020. (“leyla ile mecnun”, *ekşisözlük*, *eksisozluk.com/*. Accessed 30 June 2020.)

L&M”, “The fact of being reminded of ‘lahmacun’²⁸ when someone says *L&M*”, “*Ekşi Sözlük* author who doesn’t watch *L&M*”, “*L&M* without Leyla” etc.

- Topics on the common difficulties or cases that *L&M* fans encounter in their daily lives: “*Narrating L&M to someone who doesn’t know it*”, “*Being a L&M fan in 2018*”, “*L&M’s abstract in one sentence*”.
- Topics on news related to the series like the price of the house used in the series or the commercial goods about the series: “*The fact that the house used in L&M is 6 million \$*”, “*L&M T-shirts*”, “*Commercial breaks in L&M*”.
- Topics about the details of the series: “*L&M cues*”, “*L&M cues that make you split*”, “*Street cats in L&M*”.
- Topics praising the series and declaring best of lists about the series: “*The reason why L&M is the best series*”, “*The fact that L&M is the best TV series in the universe*”, “*L&M is the best TV series in the universe*”, “*Best scenes of L&M*”.
- Topics opened to discuss specific episodes or scenes in the episodes of the series with other authors of the platform: “*The scene of fart in episode 93 of L&M*”, “*L&M episode 17*”, “*The revenge scene of Yavuz in L&M*”, “*L&M episode 102*”, “*L&M episode 5*”, “*L&M’s unaired final*”, “*L&M new year special*”, “*The best 10 L&M episodes for the user of the dictionary*”, “*The 17/25 detail in the 91st episode of L&M*”, “*L&M episode 104*”.
- Topics like campaigns about the renewal of the series or a movie: “*L&M movie*”, “*The transfer of L&M to the National Channel*”, “*L&M TV series becoming a movie*”, “*The return of L&M legend*”, “*The return of L&M*”, “*L&M will resume/restart*”, “*Let L&M be aired on the Internet*”.
- Topics about specific characters in the series: “*The grocer in L&M*”, “*Arda Character in L&M*”, “*The woman who continuously says “Honey” in L&M*”, “*The son of the florist in L&M*”.
- Topics about the final of the series: “*The final of L&M*”, “*The revenge of the final of L&M*”, “*Breaking Bad’s final versus L&M final*”.
- Topics sharing the fan fictions and alternative finals or scenes in episodes: “*L&M final’s alternatives*”, “*Adding a new character to L&M TV series*”, “*L&M fiction of the author of the dictionary (EkşiSözlük)*”, “*What would happen if Leyla ile Mecnun were married*”.
- Topics requiring quotes from the series: “*Aphorisms from L&M*”, “*L&M styled swearings*”, “*Leave a quote from L&M to the night*”.
- Topics discussing the summits and/or meetings of the fans with the series team members or the reunions of the fans and their activities: “*L&M 4th season fan made trailer shootings*”, “*L&M chatting on 9 January 2012 at Gazi (university)*”, “*The summit of “we’re watching L&M”*”, “*Nostalgic L&M Summit*”, “*L&M summit with Burak Aksak*”, “*Kireçburnu L&M Summit*”.

²⁸ An analogy arising from sound simulation.

- Topics comparing L&M with other TV Series in different aspects like “*The resemblance of L&M and Beşik Kertmesi*”²⁹, “*The IMDB ratings of L&M and GoT*”³⁰, “*L&M versus Characters of Futurama*”.

There are also topics that criticize the series directly. These topics are generally opened by the haters of the series that don’t understand the fans of the series: “*The fact that L&M final is junk*”, “*To unlove L&M*”, “*The fact that L&M is a mediocre poor quality TV series*”, “*L&M is an exaggerated balloon*”, “*The fact that L&M is an exaggerated TV series*”, “*Persons who don’t like L&M TV series*”, “*The association of who unlove L&M*”, “*L&M loafs*”, “*The unbearable repulsiveness of the house in L&M*”, “*The fact that L&M is not funny at all*”.

Discovering, catching and sharing the references in the L&M TV series is one of the most practiced activities of the fans. There is even a website dedicated to the references of *Leyla & Mecnun*³¹ besides the topics on online dictionaries or hashtags in other social media platforms³². Topics about the discoveries of the references of the series are one of the most popular discussion subjects in the online dictionaries and other online platforms. As anything can be criticized and discussed on online dictionaries, we see that fans or viewers who are trying to discover every reference in the series and share them in the discussion boards on every platform are also criticized by the online dictionary users. There is a particular title “*Leyla ile Mecnun reference detection team*” (*Leyla ile Mecnun gönderme tespit timi*) opened to criticize the fans who try to find every reference in the series and write them on social media platforms. Some of the online dictionary users criticise them with emphasis on what they are missing by saying:

“After the friends who formed this team, there are many people who started to dislike the series because this situation has become such that the person feels the obligation to follow the series and the dictionary in parallel. It’s said, “Man! Erdal Bakkal raised his hand, I wonder where he was referring to”, they open the dictionary (Ekşi Sözlük) and thousands of different reference detections appear for that hand raise scene. Ok, we understand that you’re highbrowed but should we be a little calm? It is almost like the dictionary has turned into a blog that can be followed at any moment like football match headlines. What can we say? Let’s hope the best for us...” (27.03.2012, 10:05, cerquanne)³³

²⁹ The topics vary as “L&M versus (different TV series names like Yalan Dünya, Akasya Durağı, Alemin Kralı, Ekmek Teknesi, İkinci Bahar, Sultan Makamı, Ezel, Tutunamayanlar, Yedi Numara, Avrupa Yakası, Geniş Aile, İşler Güçler, Behzat Ç.)”

³⁰ Abbreviation of the TV series “Game of Thrones”.

³¹ leylailemecnungondermeleri, “Leyla ile Mecnun Göndermeleri”, *blogspot*, 9 October 2011, leylailemecnungondermeleri.blogspot.com/. Accessed 22 November 2020.

³² “leyla ile mecnun’un inanılmaz göndermeleri”, *uludağsözlük*, uludagsozluk.com/k/leyla-ile-mecnun-un-inan%C4%B1lmaz-g%C3%B6ndermeleri/

³³ “leyla ile mecnun gönderme tespit timi”, *ekşisözlük*, 27.03.2012, 10:05, by cerquanne, ekşisözlük.com/leyla-ile-mecnun-gonderme-tespit-timi--3311425. Accessed 30 June 2020.

“Let something be popular! I wonder if there is any other nation who loves to exaggerate everything as much as we do. Moreover, the sad part is that you miss half of the series to make a show of how you catch the references and to say ‘look how careful and intelligent I am’.” (27.03.2012 10:23 ~ 10:24 ucamayan penguin)³⁴

All of these communication examples show that fans or non-fans can freely interact with each other in the online dictionaries. These platforms permit everyone to start or join a discussion about the L&M TV series in every possible perspective in contrast with the closed Facebook groups which have strict community rules. Fans can gather under the topics freely whenever they want and they have the freedom of speech without restrictions. Another platform that fans can interact via a link that unites them like *hashtags* is *Twitter*.

3.1.1.3. L&M Fans on Twitter:

Fans use the microblogging platform Twitter to communicate with each other and reach the attention of other users via hashtags. Twitter enables fans to create fan accounts with the series name or the names of the characters, and share short texts, photos and videos with hashtags. Hashtags are the main tool to gather fans on Twitter. Fans use hashtags to facilitate the search of information about the series and reach all of the posts containing the keywords they use for search.

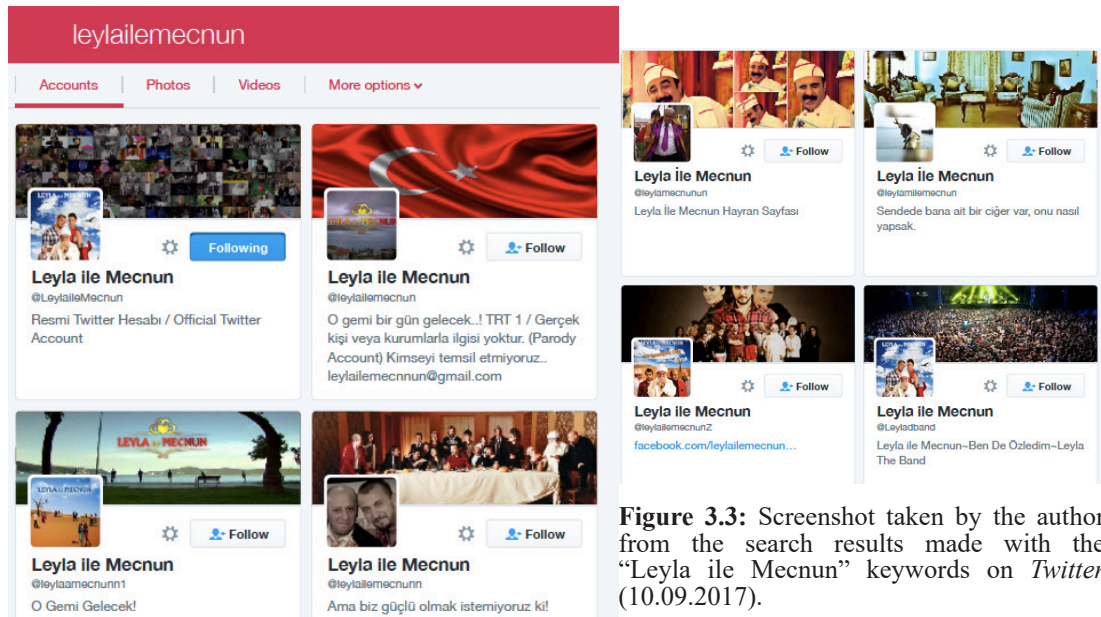


Figure 3.3: Screenshot taken by the author from the search results made with the “Leyla ile Mecnun” keywords on *Twitter* (10.09.2017).

³⁴ “leyla ile mecnun gönderme tespit timi”, *eksisözlük*, 27.03.2012 10:23 ~ 10:24, by ucamayan penguin, eksisozluk.com/leyla-ile-mecnun-gonderme-tespit-timi--3311425. Accessed 30 June 2020.

Twitter accounts related to L&M series have increased over time. There were 63 fan accounts containing the keywords “Leyla ile Mecnun” in 2017, however in 2020 there are more than 200 open and private accounts containing these keywords. As the Internet technology enables new audiences to watch all of the episodes of the series, new fans are born and they’ve created new accounts. Hence the number of the character accounts have increased and seem likely to increase even more in the future (Figure 3.3).

Character accounts using the name of L&M characters were more than 50 in 2017 and in 2021 there are hundreds of character accounts of *İsmail Abi*, *Erdal Bakkal*, *Mecnun*, *Hırsız Yavuz*, *Gotik Leyla* etc. Fans generally share photos with quotes from these characters in their accounts. They cosplay the characters online by speaking and writing as though they were them. They share photos or videos of the characters they like most. They create new collage photos and videos from the series archive. They use hashtags to communicate with each other. They organize hashtag campaigns and make the series a *Trending Topic*³⁵, hence the series becomes more visible by the Turkish and the world *Twitter* users. After the cancellation of the series fans organized hashtag campaigns using hashtags like:

#WeMissLeylaAndMecnun,
 #AMondayWithoutLeylaAndMecnun,
 #LeylaAndMecnunOnceAgain,
 #LeylaAndMecnunTvSeriesOfHearts,
 #LeylaAndMecnunAsAMovie etc.

Fans synchronously watch the series and use *Twitter* to discuss and comment about the events in the episodes instantly via hashtags. Hashtags for L&M were sometimes chosen by fans or by the series producers, but fans generally use hashtags with the name of the series with different capitalization variations like #LeylaİleMecnun, #leylailemecnun, #Leylailemecnun, #leylailemecnunquotes etc. Hashtags are also related to the specific characters, mottos or events in the episodes like #ismailabi, #erdalbakkal, #thatshipwillcomeoneday, #mecnunçınar, #leylailemecnunmeans, etc. The official *Twitter* account of the series @LeylaİleMecnun, with 137K followers in 2020, announced on 25.12.2012 that the hashtag #leylailemecnunmeans (leylailemecnundemek) was used 23423 times. In 2020 we still see that this hashtag is reused with a new campaign of re-watching the series reruns in TRT1 on the same day, Monday, with the announcement “Leyla ile Mecnun Watching Party Continuous!”³⁶.

³⁵ The most used hashtag (a word, phrase or topic) related to a subject on *Twitter*.

³⁶ Atçılar Birliği (@AtKonseyi), “Leyla ile Mecnun İzleme Partisi Devam Ediyor! Pazartesi saat 23.50’de 2. Bölümü ile TRT1’de”, *Twitter*, 14 June 2020, twitter.com.

Twitter hashtags are used for sharing the opinions and feelings about the series freely without any restriction. These hashtags can serve as a tool to understand fans' reasons for loving L&M, their preferred characters, the meaning of the series for them etc. In parallel with the online interactions fans also interact offline to share their fandom with others who have the same passion.

3.1.1.4. L&M Fans' Offline Interactions:

Online social platforms provide fans the chance to meet other fans easily. Once they get in connection on social media platforms, they can gather offline. L&M fans usually meet with each other at the locations where the series is shot. The series team members also attend these meetings as it will be explained in the next section.



Figure 4.4: Photograph of fans waving to the Bosphorus like İsmail Abi character in the series.

The most frequented location that L&M fans visit is the Kireçburnu coast where İsmail Abi waves to the ships while waiting for his father. Fans come together on this coast, they have picnics while talking and sharing their enthusiasm about the series and trying to get to know each other better (Figure 3.4)³⁷. They also visit the house of Mecnun and the grocery of Erdal Bakkal, take photos of the buildings and share them with comments about their actual conditions.

³⁷ Leyla ile Mecnun Replikleri - Goy Goy (Personal communication). "Eskilerden kalan :)", *Facebook*, 19 November 2020, facebook.com/groups/437937386324726/



Figure 3.5: Image showing the difference between the old and actual condition of Erdal Bakkal's grocery.

A fan shows the condition of Erdal Bakkal's grocery in a creative way by using a mobile phone (Figure 3.5)³⁸. As the house of Mecnun was conserved since it was decorated in the series until 2020, the owners opened the house to visits like a museum. Fans were visiting the house after paying 5 Turkish Liras each. In 2020 the house is used by another Turkish TV series, hence the furniture of Mecnun's family is displaced. There is a café in Kadıköy-İstanbul, decorated with the furniture from Mecnun's house and it is visited by fans too.

The offline meetings are usually organized by the members of Facebook fan groups. Since they have a common interest, accept the rules of the community, and share a common fan culture they gather offline to develop their friendships, and to get to know each other better. There have also been interactions with fans and the series team members on social media and offline meetings.

3.1.2. Interactions between fans and L&M production team members

TV series fans are generally trying to attract the attention of the series producers or anyone who contributes to the creation of the series (Jenkins, 1992). They sometimes try to impact their opinions or just show that they love and support them and their works. The interaction between L&M fans and the team members is worth discussing in this framework.

³⁸NN(@yildiz_nazl), "#LeylaileMecnunUnutulmazGözlerimdoluyor/#LeylaileMecnunisUnforgettable My eyes are filling up", *Instagram*, 20 June 2016, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 07 July 2016.

The interaction between L&M fans and the series team begins with the “Ekşi sözlük summits” which gathered together the series team and fans. Members of the online dictionary organized visits to the series set³⁹, they set up special chat meetings with actors etc.⁴⁰ Actors were in interaction with them since *Ekşi Sözlük* is a creditable platform with its users that we can describe as an intellectual and educated young generation of Turkey. Fans from other platforms like *Facebook* were also in connection with the series team. They were trying to find out the dates and places of the series shooting schedule. They were sharing this information with other fans on the fan pages and groups on *Facebook*. Fans could intervene in the flow of the narrative by catching the attention of the series team with their comments and hashtag campaigns on social media platforms. The discourse of the scriptwriter in an interview shows that fans affected the decision of the scriptwriter to send away the two Leyla(s) at the end of the second season and include another Leyla in the third season.

Fans also organized offline meetings in the Kireçburnu coast with the series team and fans. They were watching the opening or final episodes of the seasons together (Figure 3.6). Those events were also the subject of news. An article written about the opening ceremony of the third season says:⁴¹



Figure 3.6: Picture taken by the author during the opening ceremony of the second season in Kireçburnu coast /Tarabya (03.09.2012)

³⁹ “kireçburnu leyla ile mecnun zirvesi”, *ekşisözlük*, eksisozluk.com/kirecburnu-leyla-ile-mecnun-zirvesi--3274092?p=2

⁴⁰ “leyla ile mecnun zirvesi”, *ekşisözlük*, eksisozluk.com/leyla-ile-mecnun-zirvesi--3281257?p=5

⁴¹ “Leyla ile Mecnun’a Açıkavada Sezon Açılışı”, *beyazperde*, 4 September 2012, beyazperde.com/haberler/diziler/haberler-53527/. Accessed 29 November 2020.

“Open Air Season Opening for Leyla ile Mecnun

#welcomeleylailemecnun

Leyla ile Mecnun, who said hello to its third season with its 62nd episode last night, was watched with interest on TV as well as in Kireçburnu, the neighborhood of Leyla ile Mecnun. The 3rd Season Opening Event of Leyla ile Mecnun, organized by a fan, was held at Haydar Aliyev Park on the Kireçburnu coast. Supported by the Sarıyer Municipality, the organizers, the actors and director of the series Onur Ünlü also participated, and the event was free.”

Actors and other team members were invited to the universities by several university clubs for conversations with university students (Figure 3.7). Fans were sharing their enthusiasm with the actors, director and other team members of the series, asking them questions about the series or their personal lives, and offering them handmade presents during these meetings. The director, actors and other members of the production team were also learning about the reactions of the fans during the watching ceremonies of the opening and closing episodes of the series and the organizations by the universities.



Figure 3.7: Picture of an invitation poster (Taken by the author in the garden of Istanbul University on 02.05.2013).

Since the 51st week, the producers have used *Twitter* hashtags in the series. Every episode had a hashtag to be used by fans in social media. Fans were interacting with each other and the series team via these hashtags. Actors were also using the hashtags while watching the series. The scriptwriter Burak Aksak was actively using his *Twitter* and *Facebook* accounts. He was sharing quotes from the series or his opinions in a poetic way. He was also sharing scenes and photos from the films that he was watching. Fans were poaching his tweets and posts and trying to find out which film or book they were. These findings were leading fans to make assumptions about the connection of the books or films with the references made in the series.

The interactions of the series team on social media platforms with each other excites fans as well as journalists. Journalists make news from these interactions. In one of the mainstream media newspapers, an article was written about the possibility of the return of the series by referring to the social media interaction between the series actors. It's said that, "*Leyla ile Mecnun's Mecnun, Ali Atay tagged Serkan Keskin (İsmail Abi) and Burak Aksak, the scriptwriter of the series, on Twitter with the comment 'İsmail abiiii', which is identified with the series. This post excited the L&M lovers who were crestfallen by the fact that the series was already finished before even a finale.*" (Orman, 2018). Fans are also commenting on the tweets of the actors when the actors refer to the series. The actors Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan (Mecnun's father) and Cengiz Bozkurt (Erdal Bakkal) frequently use their social media accounts and interact with fans. For example; Ahmet Mümtaz Taylan celebrates the birthday of *Leyla ile Mecnun* on *Twitter* every year with a reference to the series. Fans become very happy to see that the actors do not forget about L&M and give importance to the series as fans.

Fans interact with actors by organizing charity campaigns for their birthday. In 2019, we see that fans organized a donation campaign for the birthday of Ali Atay (Mecnun) with a message shared in the Facebook group.⁴²

"ALİ ATAY-BIRTHDAY SPECIAL "LÖSEV"⁴³ DONATION CAMPAIGN"

As you know, April 20 is Ali Atay's birthday! This year we thought of a meaningful gift for his birthday event, and decided to start a donation campaign on behalf of LÖSEV!

⁴² Hayatımız Leyla ile Mecnun (Personal Communication), "Ali Atay - Doğum günü özel 'LÖSEV Bağış Kampanyası'", *Facebook*, 23 January 2019, [facebook.com/groups/hayatleylailemecnun/permalink/2117173308321874/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/hayatleylailemecnun/permalink/2117173308321874/)

⁴³ Lösemili Çocuklar Vakfı (LÖSEV) is a foundation established to assist children with leukaemia and blood patients to meet all their needs, especially health and education, as well as to establish and operate national level treatment, as well as education and research institutions on hereditary and acquired blood diseases. (Lösemili Çocuklar Vakfı (LÖSEV), "Amacımız", *Lösev*, losev.org.tr/v6/sayfa/amacimiz-3. Accessed 26 December 2020.)

We have 3 months ahead of us and our duty is to share the link and pictures I share below and make everyone we know donate (namely our relatives, friends, even L&M actors) within 3 months, and of course you can make a donation yourself!

The last donation date is April 17! Because on the birthday of Ali Atay on April 20, he will receive a special Certificate for donations made by us, his adoring fans! Thus, it will be a special gift for Ali Atay and we will support our brothers and sisters at LÖSEV!

WE ARE WAITING FOR YOUR SUPPORT! ...”

These kinds of gifts empower the relations between fans and the actors. This example also shows the sensibility of the fans towards the disadvantaged groups in the society. Another interaction between L&M fans and the series team was via the music band named “Leyla The Band” which was founded by some actors and the director of the series (Figure 3.8)⁴⁴. L&M is also known for its songs which became popular during the broadcast time of the series and especially after its cancellation. The group had lots of concerts in different cities of Turkey. Fans were going to the concerts and meeting the actors. They were singing the famous songs of the series together.



Figure 3.8: Leyla The Band

Social media provides fans and the producers with platforms to connect easily. Fans try to take the attention of the actors, the scriptwriter or the director of the series. They try to be seen by them and try to show their love for L&M. Fans frequently use social media platforms like *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Pinterest*, *Tumblr* or *YouTube* to share their fan works as gifts.

⁴⁴ Leyla The Band Photo, *uludağsözlükgaleri*, galeri12.uludagsozluk.com/532/leyla-the-band_812901.jpg. Accessed 22 November 2020.

3.2. Fan works and Activities of L&M Fandom

The Internet and social media have facilitated the connection of fans and their potential to share their fan works within their fandom. They can easily and individually create their works, share them and comment on them collectively in fan groups on social media. They can reach the producers of their fandom objects via social media and also reach a wide number of fans. L&M fans usually create original photo and video collages as gifts to the fan community. They also integrate the series features into their hand works/artworks, or their daily events. Fan accounts created on social media are also frequently seen as an online role-playing tool. Sharing different items related to the series is one of the preferred fan activities. There are also fans writing fan fiction related to L&M even though their number is not as much as foreign fans writing about their own fan objects.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the references of the L&M TV series are one of the features embraced by fans. Lüküslü (2018) also emphasizes that the jargon of the series is used in daily conversations and there are lots of references to the series on social media. Fans share the references which they discover using web sites, blogs, videos, social media posts etc. We can see websites or YouTube channels citing all discovered references in the episodes of the series. For example, a fan created a blog page dedicated to the references of the series⁴⁵, some fans created lists of best references of the series, some of them try to find out the undiscovered references and share them as a success sign on social media platforms, and some fans created blogs with the best catchwords from the series.⁴⁶ Posts and articles about the series features⁴⁷ are frequented in all social media platforms as well as local and national journal websites. A local writer in an online local webpage narrates his adventure with the L&M TV series saying that it was the first time that he has broken his ritual of firstly reading the book of a TV series or a movie before watching it and stating the features of L&M in his article (Yılmaz; 2018, April 18). We also encountered articles in national journals during the airing dates (Baytar, 2012) and mostly the days following the cancellation news of the series (Meriç, 2018).

As one of the most exercised activities, L&M fans often share photos taken with the actors or have their photos taken in the places where the series was shot. They, especially after the final of the series, go to the film locations of the series on the birthday of L&M and wave to the sea like İsmail Abi to commemorate the series and show their love and loyalty to the series. They also share their photos with

⁴⁵ leylailamecnungondermeleri, "Leyla ile Mecnun Göndermeleri", *blogspot*, 9 October 2011, leylailamecnungondermeleri.blogspot.com/. Accessed 22 November 2020.

⁴⁶ Mecnun Çınar, "Leyla İle Mecnun En İyi Replikler", *blogspot*, February 2013, mecnuncinar.blogspot.com/2013/02/leyla-ile-mecnun-en-iyi-replikler.html. Accessed 22 November 2020.

⁴⁷ @umit06, "Leyla ile Mecnun", *Steemit*, 2018, steemit.com/tr/@umit06/leyla-ile-mecnun. Accessed 18 November 2020.

sincere messages containing their opinions and feelings about the series like, “*Leyla ile Mecnun is the story of those lost in their desert. So it’s my, your, our story. Leyla ile Mecnun is not only Leyla ile Mecnun. It’s a brother, a father, a friend, a grocery. Leyla ile Mecnun is life itself. And for this reason it will never be forgotten.*” (Figure 3.9)⁴⁸. The horse brought to the seaside is also worth noticing as one of the references to the series’ most popular elements.

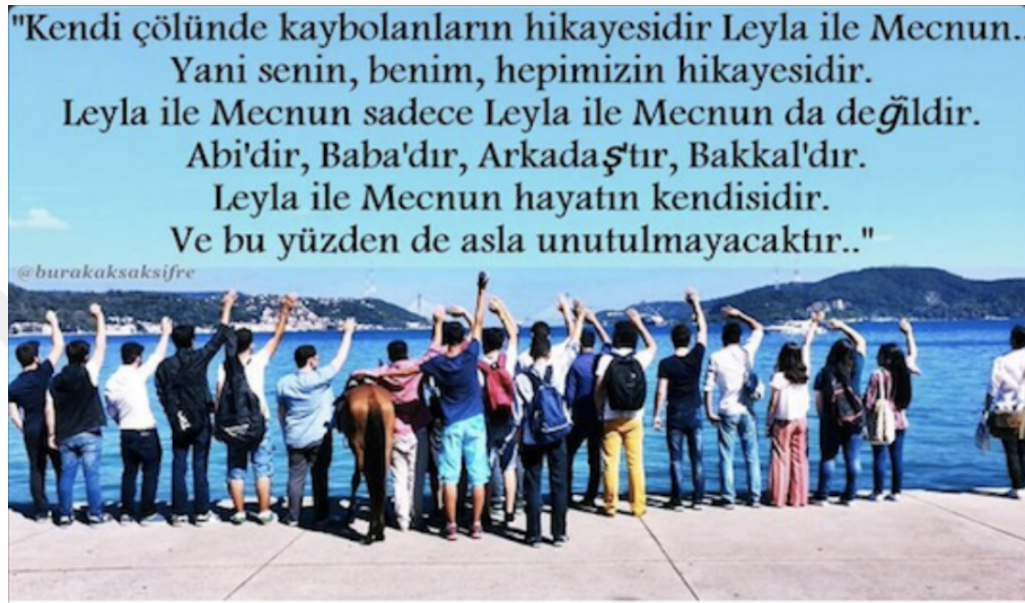


Figure 3.9: Fans on the Kireçburnu coast waving to the sea with hope like İsmail Abi on the fourth birthday of Leyla ile Mecnun.

Lots of active fan accounts on *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and other social media platforms can be still be found, even if it’s been more than seven years since the end of the series. There are websites⁴⁹ and blogs⁵⁰ created to share information about the series, its film locations and conditions, videos, quotes, playlists of the series’ songs and photos from the show. Also there have been radio programs⁵¹ broadcasting songs from the series and new fan works containing dialogs with the songs from the series in the background, at the same day and same time of the show (Every Monday at 10:30pm). Fans prepare lists of the best scenes from L&M, quizzes with questions evaluating the knowledge of fans about the series, lists of best quotes, lists of quotes from the popular characters of the series, and lists of the common features of the characters and the fans that they then publish on famous websites, such as like www.onedio.com.⁵²

⁴⁸ Berkehan, “#İyikiDoğduLeylaileMecnun”, *Instagram*, 10 February 2016, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 22 May 2016.

⁴⁹ [leylailemecnun](http://leylailemecnun.web.tv/), *web.tv*, leylailemecnun.web.tv/. Accessed 18 November 2020.

⁵⁰ - “Leyla ile Mecnun Hakkında Her şey Burada”, *Blogspot*, 24 June 2013, leylailemecnundizii.blogspot.com/. Accessed 18 November 2020.

- Leyla İle Mecnun, *Tumblr*, leylailemecnunh.tumblr.com/#/blog. Accessed 18 November 2020.

⁵¹ Nurlan Hacızadə, “Bekleyenlerin Radyosu Hoop FM”, *Soundcloud*, soundcloud.com/hoopfm

⁵² Eren Ç., “En Sevilen 22 Leyla ile Mecnun Sahnesi”, *Onedio*, 04/07/2014, 00:46, onedio.com/haber/en-sevilen-22-leyla-ile-mecnun-sahnesi-329938

Fans share their handicrafts related to the series. For example, the grocery of Erdal Bakkal is popular in the framework of these handicrafts. One of the fans made a miniature of the grocery of Erdal and shared it on a closed Facebook fan group with a message saying “*I would also like to mention that my miniature is the most beautiful and special miniature in the world and adorns the most beautiful corner of my house.*”⁵³ Another example is from a fan who shared the photograph of a grocery imitated from Erdal Bakkal’s Grocery in Eskişehir city with a comment advising new products to sell in the grocery like the ones in the series (Döner, shisha and orange juice) (Figures 3.10 and 3.11)⁵⁴.



Figure 3.10: The photograph of the handmade miniature of Erdal Bakkal.



Figure 3.11: The photograph of the imitated Erdal Bakkal grocery in Eskişehir.

⁵³ Leyla ile Mecnun Replikleri - Goy Goy (Personal communication), “Şunu da belirtmek isterim ki; benim minyatürüm dünyanın en güzel, en özel minyatürüdür ve evimin en güzel köşesini süslemektedir”, Facebook, 19 November 2020, facebook.com/groups/437937386324726/

⁵⁴ Leyla ile Mecnun Replikleri - Goy Goy (Personal communication), “Çay var, sallama. Ama bide döner asıp nargile, portakal suyu falan da mı koysalar?”, Facebook, 19 November 2020, facebook.com/groups/437937386324726/

Erdal Bakkal's grocery is so popular and loved that one fan decorated one of the walls of his house like the grocery and shared its photo on a Facebook group (Figure 3.12)⁵⁵. Some fans sell their handicrafts, like the model of the grocery of Erdal which can be transformed into a night lamp and miniatures of other characters, in social media groups (Figure 3.13).⁵⁶



Figure 3.12: Image of a corner of a fan's home decorated like Erdal Bakkal's grocery.



Figure 3.13: The model Erdal Bakkal's grocery for sale on social media.

⁵⁵Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim (Personal communication), "Salonumun duvarını Erdal Bakkal gibi dekore ettim", *Facebook*, 12 January 2017, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

⁵⁶ Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim (Personal communication), *Facebook*, 20 December 2016, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

“That ship will come one day!” is a motto that has become an element of L&M fan culture. This slogan has been written in various places by L&M fans. The fans who encounter this sentence, which refers to hope, photograph them and share them with hashtags on their social media accounts (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook etc.). These hashtags can consist of the name of the series, the names of the characters of the series or the sentence itself (#Thatshipwillcomeoneday, #LeylaileMecnun, #İsmailAbi, #Mecnun, #ErdalBakkal, etc.). The comments written under the shared photos give information about what the fans are hoping for. This hope is mostly in the form of a resumption of the series one day. Fans also share their photos or their own fanworks via these hashtags. In these posts, accounts related to the series can also be tagged. It is possible to comment or like the photo of Instagram users who have an open account. This is how fans communicate and interact around their fandom.



Figure 3.14: Image shared on Instagram referring to hopes with the “That ship will come one day” motto.

The sad story of İsmail Abi waving to the ships passing through the Bosphorus with the belief that his father, who is in fact dead, will come on a ship one day became one of the main themes of the series, “the hope”. One of the most used elements in fan posts is the “That ship will come one day!” motto which refers to hopes (Figure 3.14). This motto is frequently written on paper boat images⁵⁷ but it’s also seen on the street walls, school walls or on other various surfaces. One example of the motto appears on

⁵⁷ rana, “#ogemibirgüngelecek #ismailabi”, *Instagram*, 22 November 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 07 January 2016.

a paper boat that can be seen in the Instagram post of a student sharing his/her hope to pass the exams (Figure 3.15)⁵⁸.

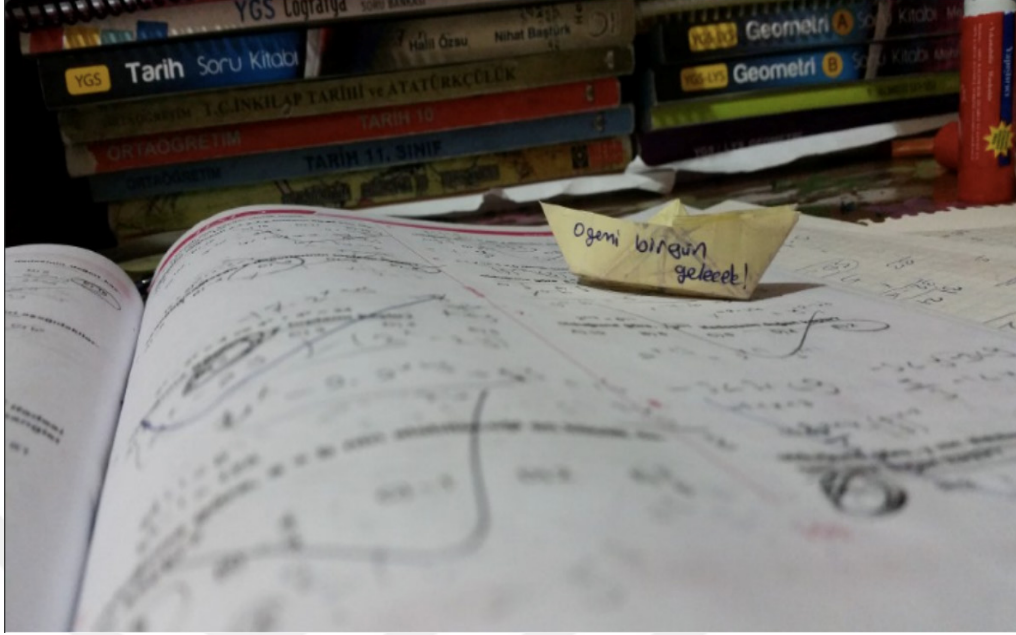


Figure 3.15: Image of an Instagram post of a student referring to the hope of passing the exams.

Another example is the post of a fan showing an image with the motto on a school garden wall and the drawing of one of the famous scenes between İsmail Abi and Mecnun talking to each other from a long distance (Figure 3.16)⁵⁹.



Figure 3.16: Image shared on a post in Instagram referring to the Leyla ile Mecnun TV series using the motto “This ship will come one day!” and the drawing of İsmail Abi and Mecnun characters in their famous scene speaking from a distance.

⁵⁸ BUKET, “#ygs ümitlerim... #ogemibirgüngerlecek #leylailemecnun @LeylaileMecnun @LeylaileMecnun @LeylaileMecnun”, *Instagram*, 15 December 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/p/BKJ1K1K1K1K/). Accessed 07 January 2016.

⁵⁹ Zeynep Özdmr, “#ogemibirgüngerlecek @atayaliko #KaragümrukOrtaokulu”, *Instagram*, 1 November 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/p/BKJ1K1K1K1K/). Accessed 07 January 2016.

There are images shared with social media posts which show the motto written on different surfaces. An Instagram post shows the motto written on a university lecture hall desk in Warsaw with the comment saying “A desk in the university lecture hall in Warsaw. Turkish power.” (Figure 3.17)⁶⁰.



Figure 3.17: Image showing the motto “That ship will come” on a university lecture hall desk in Warsaw.

One of the most interesting places where the slogan is written is the wall of a prison. The slogan apparently represents the hope of the prisoners (Figure 3.18)⁶¹.



Figure 3.18: Image shared with the comment saying “Hope is sometimes on the walls of a prison.”

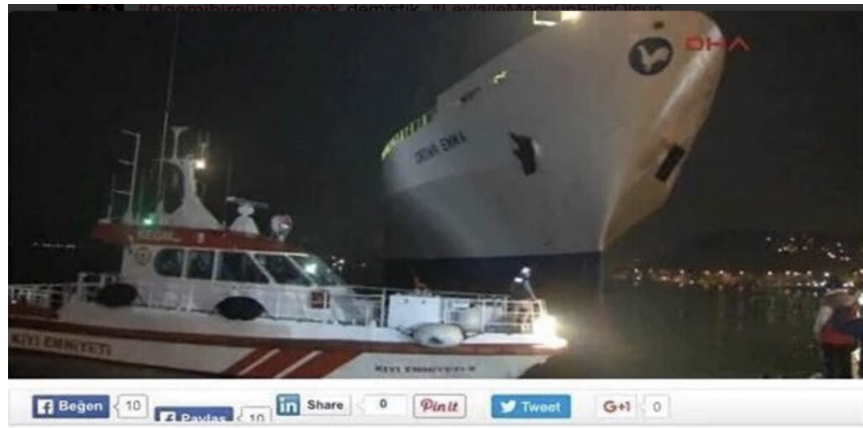
⁶⁰ Naile Ç., “Varşova’da üniversitenin amfisinde bir sıra :) :) Türkün gücü #^leylilemecnun #ogemi-birgüngelecek #ismailabi”, *Instagram*, 12 November 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/p/BQvXZzZgXp/). Accessed 07 January 2016.

⁶¹ Kazım Baş, “Umut bazen Cezaevi duvarlarındadır. #OGemiBirGünGelecek @LeylailMecnun”, *Instagram*, 15 April 2016, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/p/BQvXZzZgXp/). Accessed 01 July 2016.

Fans sometimes use the motto #thatshipwillcomeoneday to do irony and create memes⁶². In one example, a fan adapts the motto to a politician's photo waving to an empty area and shares the image with the adapted motto "That public will come one day" (Figure 3.19)⁶³. In another example, a fan announced that the ship had come by using a new headline saying, "A Panama-flagged dry cargo ship ran aground 5 meters from the shore in Sarıyer Kireçburnu." with the comment "We told that #thatshipwillcomeoneday" (Figure 3.20)⁶⁴.



Figure 3.19: Meme showing a politician waving to an empty area with the adapted motto from L&M, "That public will come one day".



Sarıyer Kireçburnu'nda Panama bandıralı bir kuru yük gemisi kıyıya 5 metre kala karaya oturdu.

Figure 3.20: Image showing a ship ran aground on the shore of Kireçburnu where İsmail Abi waves to the ships while waiting for his father.

⁶² "Meme" is an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online especially through social media. ("Meme", *Merriam Webster*, merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme. Accessed 22 November 2020)

⁶³ Eda_kurall, "#ogemibirgüngercek :)", *Instagram*, 29 November 2015, instagram.com. Accessed 07 January 2016.

⁶⁴ Bağlaç, "#Ogemibirgüngercek demiştik. #LeylaileMecnunFilmOlsun", *Instagram*, 6 December 2015, instagram.com. Accessed 01 July 2016.

Caricaturists also use the elements of L&M when criticizing actual political events. As we see in Figure 3.21, İsmail Abi waves to the democracy ship saying “That ship will come one day”.⁶⁵ In the series we essentially know that the ship will never come but expected anyway that it will come one day.



Figure 3.21: İsmail Abi waving to the democracy ship. A caricature criticizing the lack of democracy in the country.

Fans sometimes express their disappointment or sadness in the form of “*That ship did not come İsmail Abi*” version of the motto. A fan shared a photograph of the message written on a wall near the road (Figure 3.22)⁶⁶.



Figure 3.22: “That ship did not come İsmail Abi”

⁶⁵ İbrahim Özdamak, “O gemi mutlaka gelecek / That ship will certainly come”, *İbrahim Özdamak*, 4 October 2019, ibrahimozdabak.com/2019/04/10/ismail-abi/

⁶⁶ Ayşegül Okumuş, “Aynen öyle... #leylamecnun #ismailabi”, *Twitter*, 11 June 2015, twitter.com. Accessed 01 July 2016.

The effects of the series are also seen in digital games. Fans share the elements in digital games related to the series on social media platforms. For example the grocery of Erdal is seen in a Turkish digital game called “The Last One” (Figure 3.23)⁶⁷. In another example, a fan shares the image of a man waving to an ancient ship, like İsmail Abi, from a digital game with the #Thatshipwillcomeoneday hahstag (Figure 3.24)⁶⁸.



Figure 3.23: Image showing the grocery of Erdal in the digital game called The Last One.

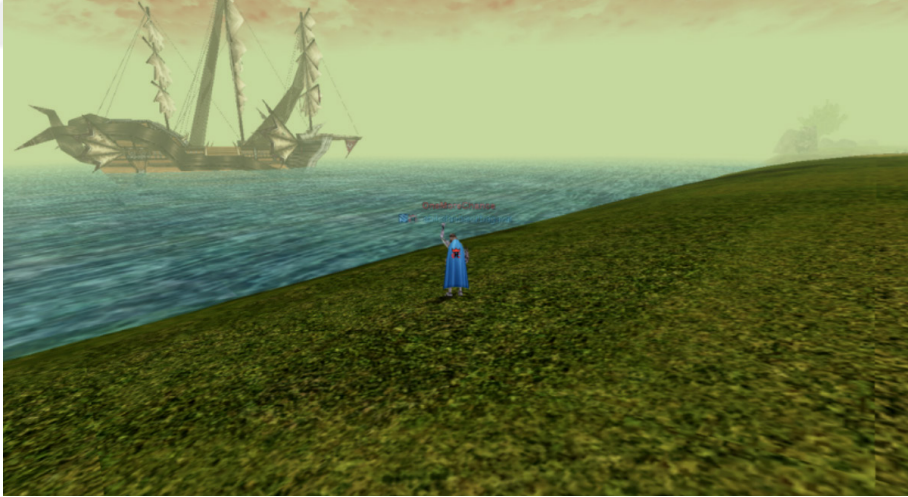


Figure 3.24: Image of a man waving to a ship referring to İsmail Abi in a digital game.

Sometimes fans re-enact the scenes of the TV series, photograph them and share them with other fans. They sometimes create collages of their photos and the images of the series characters. For example, a fan went to the Kireçburnu shore and shared a collage of his photo taken in the place where İsmail is waving to the sea with İsmail Abi’s image with the same pose. He writes as a comment, the lyrics of one of the

⁶⁷ Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim (Personal communication), “Oyunun ismi The Last One”, *Facebook*, 12 January 2017, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim

⁶⁸ İlker, “#ogemibirgüngelecek :)", *Instagram*, 10 November 2015, instagram.com. Accessed 07 January 2016.

popular songs of the music group Leyla The Band: “Whoever goes back? Will this pain go away? Is ‘What is left unfinished’ worth something?” (Figure 3.25)⁶⁹. Fans also act out the scene between Mecnun and İsmail Abi by talking to each other from a distance without the need to approach (Figure 3.26)⁷⁰. After the pandemic, fans interpreted this scene as the vital social distancing precaution and praised the level of foresight of the L&M creators.⁷¹

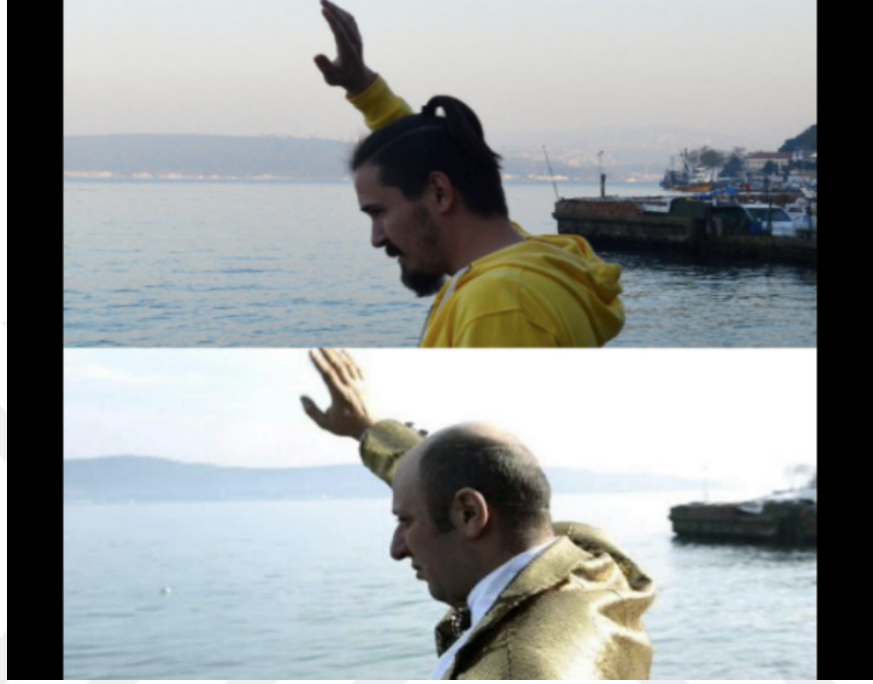


Figure 3.25: Example of a fan photo collage.



Figure 3.26: Two fans acting out the scene between Mecnun and İsmail Abi.

⁶⁹ Sinan Ersan, “Giden döner mi? Bu acı geçer mi? Yarım kaln da bir şey eder mi? #LeylaileMecnun #ogemibirgüngelecek #İsmailAbi”, *Instagram*, 16 November 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 01 July 2016.

⁷⁰ #VSCOTurkey, “-İsmail Abi!, -Hoop! #ogemibirgüngelecek #leylailemecnun #ismailabi #istanbul #vSCO #vscocam #vscoturkey #vscotür”, *Instagram*, 17 June 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 01 July 2016.

⁷¹ Hayatımız Leyla ile Mecnun (Personal communication), “The guys have foreseen the future. Social distance ☺”, *Facebook*, 10 September 2020, [facebook.com/groups/HayatimizLeylaileMecnun](https://www.facebook.com/groups/HayatimizLeylaileMecnun)

Some posts consist of pictures drawn by fans which bring together the basic features of the series. As can be seen in Figure 3.27, the most popular scenes of the series (such as gathering in front of Erdal Bakkal, talking to each other on the Kireçburnu shore, waving to the sea, etc.) and the basic images of the series are used and drawn. It is seen that there is a ship with the slogan of the series “*That ship will come one day*”, friends waving to the ship, and the “horse” element that has become one of the main images of the series.



Figure 3.27: The drawing of a fan using the main elements signifying L&M.

The post is shared with the comment “We were not Van Gogh, but we drew a lot too, brother.” and the hashtags #ErdalBakkal #Thatshipwillcomeoneday and #Hoop which refers to the talks of İsmail Abi and Mecnun from a distance from each other at the Kireçburnu coast when Mecnun calls out to İsmail Abi and receives the answer “Hooopppp” from İsmail Abi.⁷²

⁷² Mustafa Beğ, “Bi Van Gogh değildik ama biz de çok resim çizdik be kardeşim #ErdalBakkal #OGemibirgüngelecek #Hoop”, *Instagram*, 20 November 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/p/1234567890/). Accessed 07 January 2016.

Fans with the artistry of painters draw charcoal paintings of their favourite characters in the series. For example, an artist painted İsmail Abi and Erdal Bakkal in black and white (Figures 3.28 & 3.29).⁷³



Figure 3.28: İsmail Abi's picture drawn by a fan.

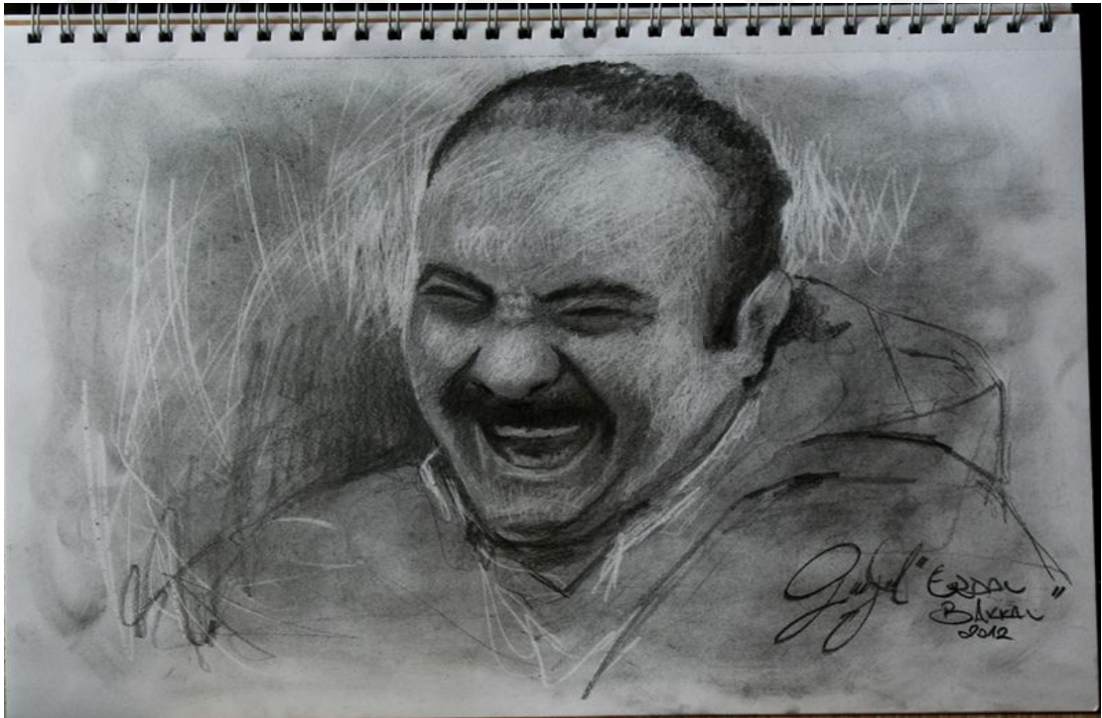


Figure 3.29: Erdal Bakkal's picture drawn by a fan.

⁷³ - Mehmet Çağlar, "Leyla ile Mecnun - İsmail Abi", *Deviant Art*, 12 April 2012, [deviantart.com/mehmetcaglar/art/Leyla-ile-Mecnun-Ismail-Abi-5-365-295668605](https://www.deviantart.com/mehmetcaglar/art/Leyla-ile-Mecnun-Ismail-Abi-5-365-295668605). Accessed 07 October 2020.

- Mehmet Çağlar, "Leyla ile Mecnun - Erdal Bakkal", *Deviant Art*, 12 April 2012, [deviantart.com/mehmetcaglar/art/Leyla-ile-Mecnun-Erdal-Bakkal-6-365-298859666](https://www.deviantart.com/mehmetcaglar/art/Leyla-ile-Mecnun-Erdal-Bakkal-6-365-298859666). Accessed 07 October 2020.

Fans who are engaged in handicrafts can use scenes and quotes from the series on their works and can later present them as gifts. The “that ship will come one day” slogan of the series is also one of the main subjects of surprises made to the series fans. The relatives of fans who buy a cake for the birthday of their loved ones write this slogan of the series on the cake and surprise them (Figure 3.30)⁷⁴. Another fan creates a photo collage with a present (a miniature ship in a bottle) and the image of a note in addition to the birthday cake photo with #thatshipwillcomeoneday written on it and shares it (Figure 3.31).⁷⁵



Figure 3.30: Image of a birthday cake with the motto and the hashtag of the L&M TV series.



Figure 3.31: The photo collage with the note: “It’s not about the ship, we like to wait.”

⁷⁴ Mehmet Taştan, “Ablamlardan doğum günü sürprizi ☺ #doğumgünü #sürprizi #17aralık #smile #leylailemecnun #OGemibirgüngelecek”, *Instagram*, 17 December 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 01 July 2016.

⁷⁵ Akıllı bir deli, “En güzel doğum günü sürprizi #OGemibirgüngelecek”, *Instagram*, 19 November 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 01 July 2016.

In another example, a fan's brother/sister paints İsmail Abi on a wooden tray as homework for his/her wood painting course with the comment "Homework present from sister/brother. She/he is a creative and thoughtful sister/brother" (Figure 3.32).⁷⁶



Figure 3.32: Image of a hand painted wooden tray with the hand waving scene of İsmail Abi and the "That ship will come one day" slogan.

Fans use their creativity to link actual events and the series. The banner of the Facebook group "*Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim*" is a good example since they adapted the series poster to the world agenda about the COVID-19 pandemic. The slogan of the pandemic, #StayHome, is written on the poster on which we see the characters of the series wearing masks (Figure 3.33)⁷⁷. One of the slogans of the series is also adapted as "*the story of those who are lost in their own home*" by replacing the word "desert" with "home".

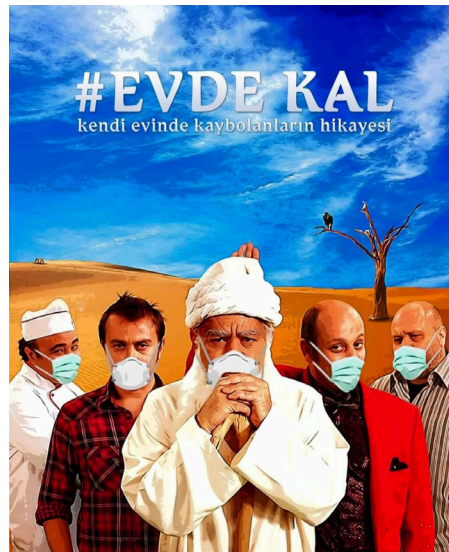


Figure 3.33: Poster created by fans and used as a Facebook group page banner.

⁷⁶ SiyahKADIN, "Gardaştan ödev hediyesi... yaratıcı ve düşünceli bir gardaş #OGemibirgüngelecek", *Instagram*, 15 April 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 01 July 2016.

⁷⁷ Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim (Personal communication), *Facebook*, 6 April 2020, [facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim](https://www.facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim) on Accessed 23 November 2020.

Another post is about the use of the “That ship will come one day” motto in an online quiz application called “Trivia Crack”. It’s a general knowledge question asking the missing part in the motto “That ... will come one day”. Answer choices contain words related to the main elements of the series (Figure 3.36)⁸⁰.



Figure 3.36: Image of a general knowledge question based on the motto “That ship will come one day” in an online quiz application.

Another interesting use of the motto is on a school report. The classroom guidance teacher in a school uses the motto as part of his/her comments about the student: “Despite all the negativity, the faith and hope in your heart should not diminish! You are alive as you hope and do not forget: That ship will come one day” (Figure 3.37)⁸¹.

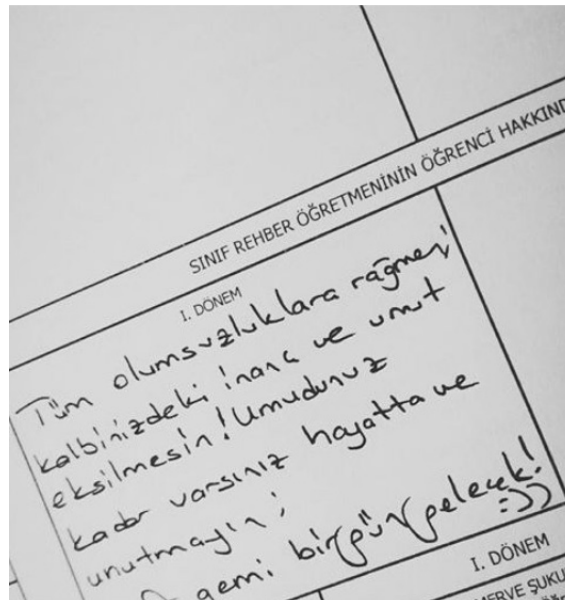


Figure 3.37: Image of a school report with the motto “That ship will come one day” written by a teacher.

⁸⁰ Şeyma, “#OGemiBirGünGelecek”, *Instagram*, 27 June 2015, [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com). Accessed 01 July 2016.

⁸¹ No name, “O Gemi Bir Gün Gelecek! #leylailemecnunfarklıydı”, *Twitter*, 28 January 2015, twitter.com. Accessed 01 July 2016.

A fourteen year old fan made the miniatures of the characters of the series to be used in a stop motion technique⁸². The producers accepted his offer and 2 minutes of the 100th episode was produced in stop motion technique (Figure 3.38)⁸³. The stop motion part is shared on the official YouTube channel of the producer with a thank you note to the fan⁸⁴. Fans also create lists of the songs of the series soundtracks or songs used in the series on different digital music platforms like *Spotify*, *Soundclouds* under titles like “*Leyla the Band*”, “*Soundtracks of Leyla ile Mecnun*” etc.



Figure 3.38: Image of the miniatures used in the stop motion technique.

Fans who watch the series over and over again make posts stating that they still watch the show and cannot forget it. In Figure 3.39, a fan who is obviously watching the series again shares a photo of the ending scene of an episode with the comment “*On 17 June 2016 we are still at the same place*”⁸⁵. In the photo, Mecnun, the main character of the series, stands alone in the dark.

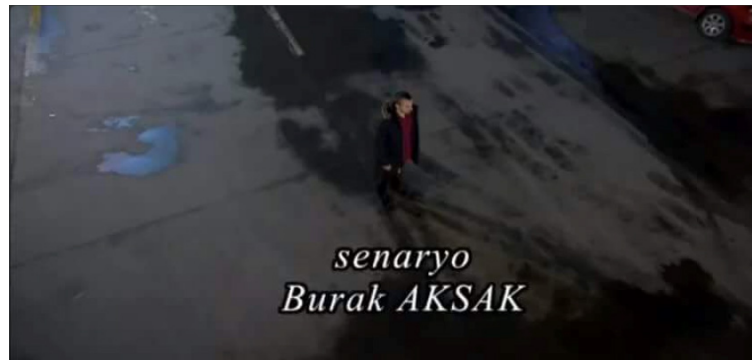


Figure 3.39: Image of Mecnun standing and waiting in the dark, like the fans who are waiting for the return of the series.

⁸² “Leyla ile Mecnun’a Stop Motion”, beyazperde, 29 May 2013, beyazperde.com/haberler/diziler/haberler-56196/. Accessed 29.11.2020.

⁸³ İsmail Abi, “Herkese günaydın güzel Bi gün geçirmeniz dileğiyle #leylailemecnun #leylailemecnunfarklıydı #leylailemecnunfans”, *Twitter*, 29 May 2026, twitter.com. Accessed 23 November 2020.

⁸⁴ “Leyla ile Mecnun – Stop Motion”, *Youtube*, 28 May 2013, uploaded by EfLÂtun Tv, youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=BNYcbAcjjDU. Accessed 23 November 2020.

⁸⁵ Aliiii Q7, “9 February 2011 – 17 June 2013. 17 Haziran 2016 biz hala aynı yerdeyiz. #LeylaileMecnun #Ogemibirgüngelecek”, *Instagram*, 17 June 2016, instagram.com. Accessed 01 July 2016.

Some of the fans create online stories/books on web sites like *Wattpad* which allows them to create, share and read new contents. The website also allows users to share their artistic talents like covers, trailers, and icons for people's profile pictures. All users can interact with each other by commenting on created contents in clubs of special categories (e.g. fan fiction, romance, science fiction, adventure, fantasy, humor, non-teen fiction, teen fiction, classics etc.), listing their favorite books, and sharing stories on other social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter etc.)⁸⁶. There are 9 profiles containing the keywords 'Leyla ile Mecnun' but no works are published these profiles, though there are fans who published their fictions under their personal profiles. They create and share books consisting of the quotes from the series which are separated into titles that represent the emotions or characters (İsmail Abi, Mecnun etc.), or they write new fanfictions. Below there are examples of introduction notes for the fan fictions.

*"You will have a lot of fun with the scenes and quotes from the LEGEND TV series with legendary actors, which was cancelled 2 years ago. Note: Even if you haven't watched this series, I suggest you take a look at the book. It contains funny and amusing quotes!"*⁸⁷

*"For L&M Lovers, I Will Write This Story to Keep It Alive Again. L&M Quotes Will Be Included in This Story. L&M guys Come Here! Good Readings Hacıi⁸⁸ :)"*⁸⁹

*"**Profile note:** I'm writing here to collect in a book domestic and foreign TV serials and films by putting my own fiction into play. If you like my books, you can vote and write your suggestions in the comments section. Stay well. **Note for the fan work:** It is the re-edited version of Leyla ile Mecnun TV series in my opinion. I recommend you to read."*⁹⁰

There are fan fictions based on the main character Ali Atay and his wife⁹¹, fan fictions continuing from the last episode⁹² or from the 90th episode (63 parts fan fiction)⁹³, and diaries written from the mouths of the series characters like *"The Diary of a Small Grocery"*⁹⁴ narrating events from the perspective and mouth of the series

⁸⁶ LouVendetti, "What is Wattpad?", *wattpad*, wattpad.com/36887232-welcome-to-wattpad-what-is-wattpad

⁸⁷ "LEYLA İLE MECNUN REPLİKLERİ (Story with 37 parts)", *wattpad*, by VvaldezZ, wattpad.com/135433553-leyla-ile-mecnun-replikleri-28-ismail-abi

⁸⁸ "Hacıi" is a popular way of addressing in the series.

⁸⁹ "Leyla ile Mecnun Replikler", *wattpad*, 06 May 2016, by @-Sudy-, wattpad.com/story/71130949-leyla-ile-mecnun-replikler

⁹⁰ "Leyla ile Mecnun", *wattpad*, by YÇelik, wattpad.com/610573009-leyla-ile-mecnun-birinci-b%C3%B6l%C3%BCm. Accessed 23 June 2020.

⁹¹ "GökyüzüMavisi", *wattpad*, by bircandogan, wattpad.com/209957481-g%C3%B6ky%C3%BCz%C3%BC-mavisi-1-b%C3%B6l%C3%BCm. Accessed 23 June 2020.

⁹² "Leyla ile mi Mecnun?", *wattpad*, by ozkcan, wattpad.com/148018438-leyla-ile-mi-mecnun-105-b%C3%B6l%C3%BCm-kald%C4%B1%C4%9F%C4%B1-yerden. Accessed 23 June 2020.

⁹³ "Sen de mi Leyla?", 29 June 2015, by SelinU, wattpad.com/story/59029003-sende-mi-leyla. Accessed 23 June 2020.

⁹⁴ Erdalbakkalcay, "Bakkal, E. Küçük Bir Bakkal'ın Günlüğü", *Wattpad*, 26 September 2015, www.wattpad.com/

character Erdal Bakkal. Sometimes we come across articles inspired and written solely by a soundtrack of the series and dedicated to the creator of the music: *“The title of this story is dedicated to Ali Atay, the person I never knew, who made music for the TV series Leyla ile Mecnun.”*⁹⁵ Another fan of the series wrote an alternative final for L&M and this alternative final is published in a popular website with his permission.⁹⁶

Video making is one of the main works of fans. Fans create video collages of scenes, music and other features of the series. They also visit the set places of the series and make videos introducing the set places of the series with their comments. Videos are used mainly in *Youtube* channels or on social media groups, fan pages etc.... One of the most popular *Youtube* channels about the series is the channel named “METONYA TV” which refers to the country name that the first Leyla’s father founded in the series. The channel is administered by the founder and administrator of the most popular *Facebook* fan group “Leyla ile Mecnun’u Ben de Özledim”. The introduction message of his *Youtube* channel is as follows:

“Standing out with its unique collage videos, metonya TV is in development. For now, our channel, which only stands on Leyla ile Mecnun, can make room for other videos in the future. Of course, our prerequisite is always that the videos belong to us, they come out of our hands. To follow our pages:

<https://www.instagram.com/leylailemecnuntr>

*<https://www.facebook.com/leylailemecnuntr>”*⁹⁷

The administrator creates original collage videos from the scenes that can be categorised under the same themes. Some category examples are “Bed talks”, which include scenes where all the male characters somehow sleep in the same bed in addition to their funny talks; “Kireçburnu Çakalları/Kireçburnu Jackals” scenes that show the characters as members of a mafia gang and the absurd and funny events they live; “unknown scenes” which refer to the scenes that are not used in fan videos by other fans and also which attract new viewers; “tea literature” gathering all the scenes related to drinking tea and mottos like *“Could a guy giving tea ever be bad?”*, *“Tea should be drunk at Erdal Bakkal”*; “references” showing all references to politics, to the popular culture (films and dramas) or to themselves. Other category titles are “guest actors”, “gossips”, “favorite scenes”, “absurd scenes”, “Mecnun Çınar’s ego”, “relations between characters”, “whispers”, “reactions” (scenes of the funny reactions of the characters to the events), “misunderstandings”, “transitions of emotions” (scenes

story/47488319-k%C3%BC%C3%A7%C3%BCK-bir-bakkal%27%C4%B1n-g%C3%BCnl%C3%BC%C4%9F%C3%BC-istersen”, *wattpad*, 26 October 2018, by Yunus Emre Atalay Ergen, *wattpad.com/story/165628302-istersen*. Accessed 23 June 2020

⁹⁶ Serra İdil Çavuşoğlu, “Olaylar Olaylar! İşte Leyla ile Mecnun’un Alternatif Finali!”, *onedio*, 10 March 2017 - 18:36, *onedio.com/haber/olaylar-olaylar-iste-leyla-ile-mecnun-un-alternatif-finali-760847*. Accessed 23 June 2020.

⁹⁷ Metonya TV, *Youtube*, 22 July 2014, *youtube.com/c/Metonya/about*. Accessed 24 November 2020.

that make you laugh while crying or being sad), “fears”, “situation comedy” (scenes making fun of situation comedies), “The issue of censorship” (scenes referring to the censorships in different life areas), “sad moments”, “the funniest scenes”, “foreign languages” (characters speaking in foreign languages like Mecnun speaking English with Indian accent), “duets” (scenes where the characters sing songs, and the video clips in the episodes), “nicknames and addressing” (Hafız, Hacı), “imitations and accents”, “self-talks”, “curses and swearings”, “clichés and imitations” etc. This fan detects and gathers every feature of the series in videos consisting of collages of scenes. This feature of the channel increases the viewer numbers and the follower numbers provide income for the Youtube channel owner. The channel had 45K followers and received 9.729.511 views by 24 November 2020⁹⁸. Another example of fans making videos is the video blog (Vlog)⁹⁹ of a fan introducing the set places of the series with his memories and comments¹⁰⁰ on Youtube on 27 October 2020. This is an example of the mix of pilgrimage¹⁰¹ and video making activities of fans.

Websites or blogs gather different works about the series presenting the characters, best scenes, best quotes from the characters of the series¹⁰², the features of the series like the curses used in the series¹⁰³, the characteristic features mostly of the series’ more popular characters like *Erdal Bakkal*, *İsmail Abi* etc.¹⁰⁴, and lists of the funny, emotional, amusing sections from the series¹⁰⁵. There are also online quizzes consisting of questions asking which character said the quotes in the questions: “*Leyla ile Mecnun is a series whose every scene is engraved in mind with every line and much is missed. Let’s see how much you dominate the show?*”¹⁰⁶. There are also platforms like “neokur”, which allow fans to comment about the series, films or books¹⁰⁷. L&M fans also use this platform to talk about their opinions and feelings about the series or share their favorite quotes from the series¹⁰⁸.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ According to the Cambridge Dictionary “video blog (Vlog)” is a record of your thoughts, opinions, or experiences that you film and publish on the internet. (The Cambridge Dictionary, “video blog (Vlog)”, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/vlog. Accessed 25 November 2020.)

¹⁰⁰ “Kireçburnu Vlog/Leyla İle Mecnun dizisinin çekildiği yer !! Sarıyer Kireçburnu”, Youtube, uploaded by BANADAİR, 27 October 2020, youtube.com/watch?v=8ztIGVrVyP0. Accessed 24 November 2020.

¹⁰¹ Fans visiting the set places of their favorite series.

¹⁰² Sefa Genç, “Dizi Karakterleri”, *blogspot*, 3 February 2013, mecnuncinar.blogspot.com/. Accessed 07 October 2020.

¹⁰³ Onur Şahin, “Dizilerin Şahı Leyla ile Mecnun’un Erdal Bakkal’ına Edilmiş 28 Afili Beddua”, *onedio*, 02 September 2019, onedio.com/haber/dizilerin-sahi-leyla-ile-mecnun-un-erdal-bakkal-ina-edilmis-28-afili-beddua-673399. Accessed 24 November 2020.

¹⁰⁴ Hilal Şefkatli, “Erdal Bakkal’ın Ne Kadar Özgün Bir Karakter Olduğunun 15 Kanıtı”, *listelist*, 20 April 2015, listelist.com/erdal-bakkal-leyla-ile-mecnun/

¹⁰⁵ pompac, “Leyla ile Mecnun Replikleri”, *wattpad*, wattpad.com/93784710-leyla-ile-mecnun-replikleri-mecnun-%C3%A7%C4%B1nar. Accessed 07 October 2020.

¹⁰⁶ senad, “Leyla ile Mecnun Dizisinin Efsaneleşmiş Repliklerini Kimin Söylediğini Hatırlayabilecek misin?”, *onedio*, 05 December 2017 16:12, onedio.com/haber/leyla-ile-mecnun-dizisinin-efsanelesmis-repliklerini-kimin-soyledigini-hatirlayabilecek-misin-798663. Accessed 24 November 2020.

¹⁰⁷ “Leyla ile Mecnun Dizi İncelemeleri”, *neokur*, neokur.com/dizi/138715/leyla-ile-mecnun/dizi-incelemeleri

¹⁰⁸ “Leyla ile Mecnun Dizi Replikleri”, *neokur*, neokur.com/dizi/138715/leyla-ile-mecnun/dizi-replikleri&ss=2

We have seen that fans use the technological developments both to create, share, gift or sell their fan works (photo or video collages, videos, captions, memes, caricatures, games, alternative histories, fanzines etc.) or to interact with each other. From another aspect, these opportunities serve as a chance or provide the ability to create pressure groups between fans. Fans can get organized, start campaigns and struggle for their fandom objects.

3.3. Organizational and Civic Power of L&M Fandom:

Since they can communicate instantly and independent from time and place, fans have more opportunities to interact, produce, disseminate, and reach producers and other influential people. These opportunities also enable fans to easily act individually or organized in groups, hence to have civic power to influence other influential individuals and institutions like producers, TV channels etc. (Jenkins et al. 2013; Bennet, 2014). Within the scope of the Leyla ile Mecnun TV series and its fandom we can observe such an organizational and civic power struggling for their fandom object. This kind of organizational power of fans occurred mainly after the sudden cancellation of the series in 2013. Fans also got organized during the broadcast duration of the series with the aim to change the narrative and the actors, or acted together to make the series one of the best TV serials in IMDB. Actually, the organizational potential of L&M Fandom can be linked with the political potential of the series itself (Lüküslü, 2018).

Famous for its political allusions as a TV series, the L&M team comprising the scriptwriter, actors and the director have a political and critical stance in their personal lives. They form their view on public issues and don't hesitate to criticize via their social media accounts, their artworks etc. For instance, they shot a parody video about the Gezi Park titled "Leyla ile Mecnun Actors – STAND UP - The Association of Park Gezi"¹⁰⁹ to protest the cutting of the trees. The scriptwriter was asked during an interview if this video, which was shot to support the Gezi Park, had an effect on the cancellation of the series. He responds that the video was shot between the actors before the Gezi Park movement and added that he doesn't know if it was influential for the cancellation decision (Meriç, 2018). In cohesion with the activist feature of the series team, fans of the series got organized and protested the cancellation of the series in every possible way. While Jenkins (1992) exemplifies with the *Alien Nations* fan community that all the efforts of the fan community could not result in the return of their series, the efforts of the L&M fan community succeeded to make the series return in 2021 after eight years of its cancellation.

¹⁰⁹ "Leyla ile Mecnun Dizi Oyuncuları - AYAĞA KALK - Taksim Gezi Parkı Derneği", *Youtube*, uploaded by Taksim Gezi Parkı, 26 March 2013, [youtube.com/watch?v=FGABerzC4lw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGABerzC4lw). Accessed 25 November 2020.

3.3.1. Online Campaigns

Fans organized online petitions and campaigns to have the attention of TRT1 for the return of the series and other institutions for their alternative proposals about the series. One of the main tools that they used are the hashtags in different social media platforms and online campaigns by tagging the institutional or individual social media accounts of the persons in charge.

There are 15 online petitions/campaigns started by fans on change.org¹¹⁰, after the official declaration of the banishment of the series. The first online petition was started on August 2013 and the last one on 08 May 2020¹¹¹. The titles of the petitions generally express the claims of the fans (e.g. restart of the show, a cinema movie of the show) and their suggestions of solutions to the banishment of the show (e.g. broadcasting the show in another TV Channel etc.). One of the petitions, started on 13 March 2016, was appealing to Netflix to add “Leyla ile Mecnun” into its contents, after the streaming service had become available in Turkey. We are not sure if this petition had an impact on Netflix, but Leyla ile Mecnun was added to the Netflix Turkey content on 21 September 2016 with English subtitles.



Figure 3.40: The tweet announcing the coming of the “Leyla ile Mecnun” book saying “#LetLeylaileMecnunBeABook you wanted this :) Even if not know, one day surely”.

Another news about Leyla ile Mecnun is the publication of its book version. It’s known that fans have a role in the publication of the book written by the scriptwriter of the series with the same title, *Leyla ile Mecnun*, in April 2018. The author announced the coming of the book on his Twitter account, emphasizing the role of L&M fans by using the campaign’s hashtag, #LetLeylaileMecnunBeABook, on 27 August 2016 (Figure 3.40)¹¹².

¹¹⁰ Change.org is an international online signature campaign platform established to cause positive social change. The platform was released in Turkey, on 28 August 2012. (*Change.org*, 28 August 2012, change.org/tr/change-org-gercekleri-ve-iddialara-yanitlar. Accessed 25 November 2020.)

¹¹¹ “leyla ile mecnun”, *change.org*, change.org/search?q=leyla%20ile%20mecnun&offset=0. Accessed 25 November 2020.

¹¹² Burak Aksak, (@burakaksak), “#LeylaileMecnunKitapOlsun bunu siz istediniz :) şu an değilse bile bir gün mutlaka”, *Twitter*, 27 August 2016, 23.12.2020, twitter.com/burakaksak/status/769572418906165248. Accessed 23 December 2020.

Even after eight years of the banishment of the series, there were still hashtags with hundreds of tweets and social media campaigns about #leylailemecnun. Other most used hashtags about the series are;

#WeMissLeylaAndMecnun,
 #AMondayWithoutLeylaAndMecnun,
 #LeylaAndMecnunOnceAgain,
 #LeylaAndMecnunAsAMovie,
 #LeylaAndMecnunTvSeriesOfHearts,
 #LeylaileMecnunWas Different.

We also encounter ironic campaign ideas on Facebook fan groups like the one which proposes to lobby the TV8 Media Patron Acun Ilıcalı to make him restart L&M. It's an ironic idea with its references to the actual magazine news and the series characters' behaviors:

*"Friends, we need to somehow make Acun's daughter watch 'Leyla ile Mecnun'. The man who brought the TV series 'Sihirli Annem (My Magic Mother)' back can also bring 'Leyla ile Mecnun' back again. While making this plan, you can be sure that I squinted like Mecnun."*¹¹³

This call is related to the news about the media patron Acun Ilıcalı who restarted the "Sihirli Annem" TV series in his private TV channel because his daughter is a fan of it. This fact leads L&M fans to create new absurd ideas as Mecnun and his friends do in the series with one of the moves that Mecnun realizes when he has new plan ideas. These online hashtag campaigns and petitions can be interpreted as the indicators of the idea that the audiences on the Internet and online platforms (Netflix) are still watching the series and with the coming of the new fans the use of these hashtags will not end easily.

Another result of the online and offline lobbies of L&M fandom was their success in attracting the attention of a private TV Channel (Star TV - the first private TV channel in Turkey) right after the cancellation of the series. The producers couldn't use the same characters and the same subject in a new series since TRT didn't give the rights of the Leyla ile Mecnun TV series. However, they created a new project titled "*Ben de Özledim / I Missed Too*" that refers to L&M. *Ben de Özledim* evolved around the real lives of the actors after the cancelation of L&M, their new roles, projects, and problems they encountered etc.

¹¹³ Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim (Personal communication), Facebook, 9 December 2020, facebook.com/groups/LeylaileMecnunuBendeOzledim on 20.12.2020.

Since L&M couldn't make its final due to its sudden cancelation, the series team had declared a final in the new series *Ben de Özledim*. We learn the reality about *Leyla ile Mecnun* during a scene in *Ben de Özledim*. A conversation between the actors, scriptwriter and the director of the previous series who are the current actors of the new series proposed a finale to L&M which created new debates within the fandom. According to this final, Mecnun is sick and confined to bed for years. His mother left him with his father as in the real scenario and his father, İskender, takes care of him. It's Mecnun who imagines everything. İsmail Abi is a gold fish in a bowl, Aksakallı Dede is an injection, Yavuz is the shade of the tree in front of the window and Erdal Bakkal is a saltcellar (Figure 3.41).



Figure 3.41: Fanwork picturing the final of L&M (Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/mejnunaliatay/status/620658355263131648/photo/1>)

Some fans accepted this final and some others disagreed with this version of the final. There are 32 pages of comments in *eksisozluk.com* under the title “*leyla ile mecnun’un finali / the final of Leyla ile Mecnun*” and the last one was written on 01.11.2020 at 08:00 pm¹¹⁴. Fans and even non-fans commented about the alternative finals of the series.

¹¹⁴ “*leyla ile mecnunun finali*”, *eksisozluk*, eksisozluk.com/leyla-ile-mecnunun-finali--4085615?p=32. Accessed 25 November 2020.

3.3.2. Offline Reactions

The reactions of the audiences to the banishment of the series are presented in virtual as well as in real life. Fans of the series showed their disapprobation against the banishment by waving from the Kireçburnu coast, like the way İsmail Abi does in the series. Waving at the Kireçburnu coast means that they are hopeful that the series will start again referring to İsmail Abi's father who will also come one day on a ship¹¹⁵. The fans of Leyla ile Mecnun do the same thing and keep alive their hope that “*One day their series will start again!*” (Figure 3.42).



Figure 3.42: Picture of the L&M fandom saying goodbye to the series after its cancellation (Retrieved from https://www.istanbulgercegi.com/sevenleri-leyla-ile-mecnun-icin-trtye-el-salladi_52189.html)

As a result, it is seen that lots of different social media platforms are used within the L&M fandom activities. Fandom activities like preparing post contents from videos or photos; creating artworks like paintings, woodwork, and handworks; or visiting the set places are exercised individually or in a community. Having a common interest for the same subject, fans interact between each other and also with the series production team to show their love or to influence them with their desires about the narrative.

The context of the series and the characteristics of the personas and the conversations between the characters influence the way that fans interpret the text and create and share meanings. Fans reflect their thoughts and emotions using the quotes, jargons or mimics of the characters in the series. Different social media platforms provide different opportunities influencing the fan activity styles to socially engage. Hence we saw that L&M fans can act individually or in fan communities. They use hashtags in *Twitter* or *change.org* to struggle for their fandom object; they freely criticise or praise the series on online dictionaries like *ekşi sözlük* etc.; they use platforms like *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *Blogs*, *Pinterest* etc. to share their emotions or scenes

¹¹⁵ In the series his father is dead but before his death he says to his son, İsmail Abi, that he is going to work on a ship and one day he will come back. Since the day his father has gone, İsmail Abi keeps his hope alive and waves to the ships passing through the Bosphorus.

from the series from their personal accounts, character accounts or accounts with the name of the series. The need for sharing their fandom via different fan works lead them towards the most appropriate platforms. Some of the fans just want to share their work and some others need to interact deeply with other fans in an interpretive community.

L&M fan communities are founded mainly on Facebook as this platform provides the opportunity to create closed groups. We saw that fans interact with each other in these groups and these groups have their own rules within the framework of the common fan culture. Fans who do not obey the rules can have problems and disagreement can arise within the groups. These disagreements show that there are differences in the receiving style of the text by fans. Jenkins (2018: 42) explains this situation saying that *“Fandom is a conflicted space and does not speak with a single voice; there are also diverse fan communities, not simply because of different tastes and interests, but also because of different norms, values, ideologies, and practices.”* On the other platforms fans communicate via hashtags but they don’t have strict rules to obey. There is more freedom in these platforms both for fans and non-fans. All these observations show the effect of the “medium” on fan activities, which, as Baym (2000) defends, is not the only variable affecting the development of online fan communities.

Fans who come together to share their fandom then create online or offline interpretive communities. As a result of making meaning of a text in similar or related ways those communities develop distinctive patterns of interpretation, different modes of social interactions and behave in a consensus. Hence these common features or core values give us the clues of a subculture shared by a group (Baym, 2000; Becker, 1963; Jenkins, 2018; Stein & Busse, 2012). As seen in the L&M fan interaction examples, fans having a common way of understanding of L&M came together and these common understandings led to a common fan culture even if there can be some disagreements. In this context, the next chapter is focusing on the Facebook L&M fan groups to discover their common shared fan subculture; their common and differing activities, interpretations, fan work producing styles or group rules; their voyage into the fandom; and the levels of their entrance to the fandom. In overall the *modus operandi* of the L&M fan groups in Facebook and the common meanings shared by fans will be scrutinised.

L&M FAN COMMUNITIES' MODUS OPERANDI ON FACEBOOK

The discovery of the L&M fandom involves learning, understanding, or describing information about the L&M fans interacting with each other within online or offline fan communities/groups. To this end, there is a need to directly observe and participate in the L&M fan groups, and act in the natural flow of their daily online group lives. The flexibility of the qualitative research allowed a change in the direction of the study after following the clues leading to the aim of this study. In the beginning of this study, confusion about which part of fandom topics to examine in the context of L&M fandom led to the efforts to examine everything during the observations. The research began with the examination of the fan products, then turned to the relationships among the fans and, finally, a decision was made to meet with the administrators of fan groups and pages to better understand these relationships, as well as to narrow the research area. Prior observations made on many online Facebook L&M fan groups as a member, showed that interviewing some group members in addition to the administrators of the Facebook fan groups and pages would serve to learn more about the fan group's functioning. In this chapter the results of interviews held with Facebook fan pages/group administrators and members are provided, covering a lot of ground about their L&M Fandom journey, in addition to this the modus operandi of the fan communities are scrutinised.

4.1. Data Collection Method and Tools

With the intent of exploring the modus operandi of the L&M fan communities on Facebook and having a deeper insight about the L&M fan subculture, it was decided to conduct semi-structured interviews as a data collection method within the qualitative research method approach. As a qualitative research approach serves to reveal the reality as constructed in the mind of the knowers and situated in cultural and historical contexts, it is hence expected to obtain culturally specific information, to describe variations (values, opinions, behaviors etc.), individual experiences, group norms, to develop a detailed understanding of fans' perspectives on their fandom, and to explain relationships within the research subject (Creswell, 2013; Neuman, 2009; Mack et al., 2005; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). With semi-structured interviews, interviewees' viewpoints would be more likely to be expressed than in a standardized interview or a strictly prepared questionnaire (Flick, 2009: 150).

In order to homogenize the conditions of the research and as it would be difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews with all of the fans from different places, it was preferred to offer to make the interviews via video/phone calls or face to face interviews in case of possibility to meet. A guide questionnaire, consisting of three categories under 1) demographic information, 2) discovering L&M and becoming a fan, and 3) inclusion to the L&M fandom titles has been prepared in order to conduct the semi- structured interviews. The first category has questions about the participants' sex, ages, occupations and degrees of education. The other two categories are oriented towards describing fans' first encounter with the series and their journey into the fandom via open-ended questions. The second category contains questions to describe how they encountered the series, what the series meant to them and how they became fans. The third and the most important category is about their inclusion to the fandom with questions related to the connection with other fans, shared meanings, ways of participation to fan communities etc.

4.2. Sample Selection

Purposive sampling is chosen as the sampling strategy for this study. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample. Within this framework, a particular focus has been on the particular characteristics of participants of the study who are identified according to preselected criteria relevant to the research question(s) (Crossman, 2018, September 28). The administrators of fan groups on social media platforms, and admins of fan pages on Facebook related to the '*Leyla ile Mecnun*' series have been chosen to conduct semi- structured interviews and obtain reliable answers to the research questions. Aiming to identify the fans (admins on Facebook) with which interviews will be conducted, a search was made on Facebook with 'leyla ile mecnun' keywords between 15 November 2018 and 23 November 2018. '*Leyla ile mecnun*' has been chosen as the search keyword with regard to restricting the sample number. After listing the groups and pages, a membership request was sent to closed groups on Facebook, and fan pages on Facebook were followed. Fan pages and fan groups who are not compatible with the study's context have been eliminated. The elimination criteria were the relation of the themes with the series, the creation dates of the groups/pages and the number of members. Then all the admins of the groups and fan pages were contacted for an interview. The results of the search on Facebook are as follows:

After searching the keywords 'leyla ile mecnun' on Facebook, 15 fan pages and 103 fan groups containing the words of the series' title have been found.

Fan pages: 15 fan pages have been found via search on Facebook¹. Three of them were eliminated because of their irrelevance to this research. After determining the fan pages to be included in the study, it's been seen that most of them (N=7, %47) were created within the first year (2011) of the series broadcast. According to the results retrieved from Facebook search with 'leyla ile mecnun' keywords², the first fan page was created on 28 February 2011 with the title 'Leyla ile Mecnun TRT1' (with 9608 followers and 9988 likes). However the fan page titled 'Leyla ile Mecnun' (created on 21 July 2011) has the most followers (134.780) and likes (131.792). The last fan page was created on 18 April 2018 (38 followers and 19 likes). However, the fan page titled 'Leyla ile Mecnun' (created on 21 July 2011) has the most followers (134.780) and likes (131.792). The last fan page was created on 18 April 2018 (38 followers and 19 likes) with the title 'LEYLA İLE MECNUN' (the only title with block letters). One of the fan pages has been removed from the list due to its creation date being marked as 2010. Since the series was broadcast in 2011 it was not proper to include this page in the research. One of them was not related to the series and the other one was not available during the message sending dates. In the end, admins of 12 fan pages were selected to be asked for an interview.

Fan Groups: 103 groups containing the keywords 'leyla ile mecnun' have been found on Facebook³. 62 of them were closed groups, and 41 were public groups. There were 18 fan groups with more than 100 members, 8 groups with more than 1000 members and 3 of them had more than 10.000 members. The first fan group was created on 14 April 2011 (71 members) and the last one on 11 February 2018 (3.120 members). The closed group named '*Leyla ile Mecnun Replikleri*' (created on 15 February 2014) has the most member numbers (19.580 members). The other two groups with more than 1000 members are '*Leyla ile Mecnun Replikleri - Goy Goy*' (created on 8 September 2013, 17.709 members) and '*Leyla ile Mecnun'u Ben de Özledim*' (created on 7 May 2014, 15.728 members). Two of the groups with more than 1000 members were eliminated because they do not have a relation with the series. In the end admins of 6 Facebook groups were selected to be asked for an interview.

As it took time to wait for being accepted to the groups and seeing if they are related to the 'Leyla ile Mecnun' series, time passed between the Facebook search for the samples and the sending of the messages. In total 25 persons have been identified as the potential participants to whom the message of invitation to the study would be sent.

¹ Results are retrieved from Facebook search with 'leyla ile mecnun' keywords on 23.11.2018 at 14.57h.

² Search realized on 23.11.2018 at 14.57h.

³ Results are retrieved from Facebook search with 'leyla ile mecnun' keywords on 23.11.2018 at 13.25h.

4.3. Research Process

Messages were sent, between 5-11 February 2019, to the admins of 6 fan groups with more than 1000 members (13 accounts) and fan page admins (12 accounts)⁴ mentioned above⁵, 25 accounts in total, so as to gain acceptance of their participation in the research. More specifically, they have been asked to participate in the research after explaining the nature and the scope of the study. In the meantime, one of the fan pages wasn't available. Finally, 12 respondents [5 of the fan page admins, 7 of the fan group admins (one of them was the admin of both fan page and fan group)] were willing to participate in the research. In time, 4 of the admins couldn't schedule a meeting for the interviews and 1 of them wanted to conduct a written interview but it wasn't productive and couldn't be finished. In regard to supporting the information retrieved from the administrators about the Facebook fan groups, the names of active fan group members have been asked to the admins as a snowball sampling. The names of 5 active group members were given by admins and a message was sent to them. Bennet (2018) warns the fan studies researchers about the researchers attitudes telling that, *"Fans can be suspicious, especially if the researcher is an "outsider" to the fan community but they're mostly very welcoming of researchers"*. All group members (some of them were ex-moderator or administrators) accepted the interview and they were quite helpful. The reference of the admin was efficient in contacting them.

Conclusively, interviews were conducted between 8 February and 17 March of 2019, with 12 persons in total (7 admins and 5 active group members) until the responses began to repeat each other and the information received was provided by other interviewees. Discussions took place on video/phone calls or face-to-face and lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes. Interviews were mainly recorded in order to help the researcher analyse the data gathered. All participants were informed about the research conditions before the interviews and their informed consent has been granted. Additionally, all the participants were told, as Bennett (2018) advises in her book chapter on surveys in fan studies, that any quotations or information obtained via the research will be reported anonymously, with no attribution to any specific individuals. The names of the interviewee are not mentioned in the results and they are indicated according to the numbers of interviewees.

⁴ Fan pages are not preferred since they don't give as much interaction and participation chance to all the members. It's only the administrator who can share posts. Followers of the fan page can only like these posts and comment on them or send contents to the administrators to ask if they would like to share on the page.

⁵ Messages have also been sent to anonymous accounts, which are marked as 'admin' of the fan pages or fan groups.

4.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis is made with a computer based qualitative data analysis program called MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2018 (Release 18.1.1). A thematic data analysis involving a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set is realised (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First of all, as a step to familiarize with the data, the audio/video records of the interviews (11 audio, 1 video) have been uploaded to the program, and all the records (approximately 480 minutes) have been transcribed for analysis. After the transcription, all data have been coded in order of questions (899 coded segments) and initial codes are generated in a thorough, inclusive and comprehensive process. The coding system has been organized under 3 main titles; 1) Demographic information, 2) Discovering Leyla & Mecnun and becoming a fan and, 3) Inclusion to the L&M Fandom and its modus operandi on Facebook (Appendix-C). Codes are reviewed and new sub themes are defined and named as the next step.

4.5. Results

Responses given to the open ended questions are grouped under three main titles. The first set of questions aimed to receive demographic information about the interviewees. Then a second set of questions was asked to provide detailed information about their first encounter with the *Leyla ile Mecnun* TV series, the meaning of the series and its effect(s) in their daily life, and their first fannish activities. The last set of questions is about their fandom journey. How they become a fan group member, how they interact with other fans, their inclusion history in the L&M Fandom and the functioning of the fan communities.

Table 4.1. Titles resulting from the interview analyses

1) Demographic information
2) Discovering Leyla & Mecnun and becoming a fan • Encountering the series • Reasons for watching L&M
3) Inclusion to the L&M Fandom and its modus operandi on Facebook • Information seeking and interaction • Community Rules • Fan group activities • Interpersonal Relationships • Coherence and Durability in Fan Communities • Professional Development • Fans' critical approaches

4.5.1. Demographic Information

According to the analysis, interviewees consist of 6 women and 6 men. Interviewees are aged between 19 and 28 years. Most of them are 22 years old (N=5). In terms of their education levels, 5 interviewees have graduated, 6 of them are university students, and one of them is an open high school student⁶. Two interviewees are handicapped. Related to their work status, there is one software developer, one law apprentice and one call center customer representative. Two of the interviewees were not working or studying.

In relation to their social media account activities, it's seen that some interviewees experienced multiple roles in both Facebook Fan Pages and Fan Groups. All interviewees are members of a Facebook Fan Group. While some of them are administrators of both a Fan Page and a Fan Group, some of them experienced both administration and moderation of a fan group in the past. In this case it's assumed that the received information are the results of a wide range of experiences which offer the opportunity to look at the L&M Fandom from a broader perspective since its beginning.

4.5.2. Discovering "*Leyla ile Mecnun*" and becoming a fan

Aiming to have detailed explanations of the interviewees' L&M fandom, questions about their first encounter with *Leyla ile Mecnun* TV series, the reasons for watching the series and the impacts of the series in their daily life were asked. Moreover, in order to acquire more detailed information about their L&M fandom journey, some questions related to their past TV watching experiences are also asked - such as if they generally like watching TV, if they watch any series in the present, their preferred genres and the unforgettable series that they had watched .

The results of the interviews show that most of the fans (67%) generally like watching TV serials. Most of them who like watching TV serials (62%) don't use television but use the Internet instead. They also mostly prefer to watch foreign TV series in lieu of Turkish TV series. Just one of them does not watch foreign series and prefers to watch mostly qualified Turkish comedy serials⁷. Interestingly, one of the interviewees stated that they never had a television in their house. He still does not watch television and also doesn't know about any Turkish and foreign TV serials

⁶ Interviewee number 9 (who passed away after a while) was studying at an open high school because she was handicapped and confined to bed. She couldn't continue her studies for a while.

⁷ As interviewee number 9 was confined to bed, she was passing most of her time watching the series. She emphasised that she was re-watching mostly the old Turkish comedy series because of their superior quality. She didn't like dramas or other genres.

besides ‘L&M’ and another Turkish series called ‘7 Numara’⁸ that he watched online before ‘L&M’. Emphasizing the originality of *Leyla ile Mecnun*, they all say that Turkish TV serials are generally the same kind and do not suit their interest.

“I have stopped watching serials after L&M, and two more series from the same team. But none of them have satisfied me as L&M...” (Interviewee 6)

“I like watching serials but not Turkish ones. They all suck.” (Interviewee 10)

The common feature of all the interviewees is the comedy genre, which makes them laugh and think at the same time. When we notice the other serials they used to watch, we see that they watched other works from the same team who shot L&M as well as similar contents.⁹

Aiming to learn about their first encounter with the series the interviewees were asked how they had heard about the series and when they had begun to watch it. Only 4 of the interviewees began to watch the series, which aired in 2011, during the first season. 2 of them began to watch it during the second season and 6 of them watched the series after its final. 6 interviewees discovered the series by coincidence. All who have watched the series during its airing period met it via a promotion on TV, an advice of their entourage or by running into an episode on TV. One of the interviewees narrates his first encounter with the series as follows:

“I saw the advertisement video on TRT1. When I read the title ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’, I’ve thought directly about the work of Fuzuli¹⁰. I had judged the series saying ‘There was only this one left!’. I thought it was a period series. Thereafter I watched the first episode and it didn’t gratify me because I wasn’t used to this genre. Then I continued to watch every week and it became an irreplaceable thing on Monday nights. I was buying stuff like chips, chocolate, sunflower seeds and coca, coming home in the evening, going to the lounge, and watching the series. My family was sitting in the kitchen and the lounge belonged to me on Monday nights. It was very special....” (Interviewee 6)

It’s worth noting that interviewee 6 has created a watching ceremony for himself and he has got the respect of his family.

⁸ ‘7 Numara’ is a Turkish series aired on TRT1 at the beginning of the 2000s. It was evolving around the life of University Students in a sincere atmosphere.

⁹ The series mentioned like Behzat Ç., Ben de Özledim, Beş Kardeş, Kardeş Payı, 7 Numara, Avrupa Yakası, Şubat etc. are almost the same genre which are realized by people who share the same mindset or world view.

¹⁰ Fuzuli is one of the most precious Turkish poets who has written the ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’ myth.

Interviewees who watched the series after its final episode were influenced by their entourage, news about the series' sudden final after the Gezi Movement, and news about the new series called *'Ben de Özledim'* shot by the same team. Two of the interviewees began to watch the series while trying to escape from studying for the exams in the school. One interviewee began to watch it after she explored the music video of a song of the series on Youtube.

"I've heard the song and liked it very much. I've searched online to find it. After finding it, I learned that it was a song from the series. There were advice videos on the automatic playlist on Youtube including scenes of the series titled as 'Leyla ile Mecnun', 'Leyla ile Mecnun-The death of Leyla'... I've watched the scene about the death of Leyla and it impressed me. It even made me cry!!! Thereafter I have decided and began to watch the series." (Interviewee 11)

This case shows us the impact of the sentiments created by songs and plotlines of a TV series and also the role of the online advice lists in curating audiences towards a text or a fandom.

As the first step of becoming a fan of the series, all of the interviewees indicated that they've watched all of the 104 episodes of the series. Bacon-Smith (1992), who realized an ethnographic case study with a group of women who were part of *Star Trek* zine fandom, also expresses that becoming a member of a fan community, begins with being a committed reader/viewer. One of the interviewees declared that he had watched all of the episodes six times. They also all watched different episodes of the series multiple times. As the series episodes can be watched separately, fans watch randomly the episodes of the series in their free times. Another one pointed out the business life as the reason for not being able to watch all episodes of the series again and again, but he stated that he was following the shared videos on a Facebook fan group and that was refreshing his memory (Interviewee 1). As it is stated as a key factor of being a fan, all respondents know lots of details about the series and they're never tired of watching *Leyla ile Mecnun* (Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992). Interviewee 7 explains this situation as follows:

"I've watched the entire series 2-3 times in 3-4 months. Escaping from studying, I was even watching it in school. I was downloading the episodes and watching them continuously... As the end of the world has come and I will never be able to watch it again." (Interviewee 7)

Although the reasons for watching the series can change, it's seen that the common part for every fan is to watch all the episodes and seasons of the series one or more times.

Reasons for watching L&M

The responses of the interviewees about the meaning of L&M for them, the reasons for watching it, and then becoming a regular audience or a fan can be discussed within the frame of the *Uses and Gratification Theory* (UGT). UGT assumes that individuals are aware of their needs and are goal-oriented in their use of media; people are capable of assessing value judgments of media content and have the initiative to link needs and gratifications to a specific choice of medium. These needs can be classified in 5 titles as 1) be informed or educated, 2) identify with characters of the situation in the media environment, 3) simple entertainment, 4) enhance social interaction, 5) escape from the stresses of daily life (Katz, Blumberg, & Gurevitch, 1973).

The reason why the interviewees love *Leyla ile Mecnun* and why they are internalising the series so much is mostly explained by its sincerity. All interviewees indicate that the reality of the series is reflecting themselves. They're relating the text to their lives and finding themselves in the characters of the series. They're feeling in their neighborhood while watching L&M. The words most cited while describing the place of L&M in their lives and the reasons why they love this series so much are sincerity, friendship, love, naivety, passion and neighborhood. Jobs, attitudes and speeches of the characters are familiar to the interviewees. All these explanations can be matched with the need to identify with characters of the situation in the media environment within the Uses and Gratifications Theory. One interviewee explains the difference of the series saying that, "*The series is not shot in mansions. There are no chateau or big houses The dresses, attitudes, conversations or jobs are very familiar with our daily lives. There is a grocery!!!*" (Interviewee 8). They are all indicating that L&M is not to be compared with other classical Turkish dramas.

There are no clichés in L&M like high & low, CEO's, intrigues, mafia, violence, obscene scenes or a scenario evolving only around two characters, but rather there are scenes ridiculing them. As one interviewee indicates, "*There is nothing such as 'leading role'. Every character can take the series a step forward.*" (Interviewee 4). Even if there are criticisms about the excess of male characters in regard to gender equality, the series takes care of the balance between the characters' presence in the episodes.

It is seen that L&M is also viewed as an information source or an intellectual gratification tool. One interviewee explains this issue as follows:

“There are lots of things that I’ve learned via L&M. The series contains lots of references to books, films and more¹¹ ... There are films that I’ve seen there and watched. And also books that I’ve heard about and read. The series led people to read books. Yavuz reads books to his girlfriends during three seasons. He was reading books because his first girlfriend in the first season was blind. He continues to read books and poems to his new girlfriend too. This encourages people. There is also a book exchange practice in the series. Yavuz leaves the book of Turgut Uyar¹² titled ‘Göğsü Bakma Durağı’ to the grocery of Erdal. Other people come and take the book. Someone leaves a book, another one takes it... So there are useful things...” (Interviewee 11).

The references made to movies, books, musicians, and even for political events, or the world agenda can be used as a personal or intellectual development or gratification tool.

The features of the scenario such as its philosophy, social messages, metaphors that are used to escape from the censorship of RTÜK, new swearing, the togetherness of comedy and drama, and the absurdism are all indicated as the quality and originality factors of the series. One interviewee explains the escape from RTÜK censorship saying that, *“The series uses its proper sensors. Chewing gum means cigarettes; alcohols have their own names. They use other words like demijohn, pochette etc. in lieu of swearing. You never hear the ‘Biiiip’ sound.”* (Interviewee 10). Another interviewee emphasises the absurdity of the series saying, *“It’s full of surprises. The perfect syntheses of the good and bad, the intertwinement of comedy and drama... You smile and laugh like we do in our lives. It’s unpredictable what’s going to happen!!! One day he (Mecnun) goes into space, one day he falls into the desert. One day they enter into the brain of Mecnun. They are going to the future and to the past...”* (Interviewee 6). Sudden emotional changes in the series are also stated by an interviewee saying, *“The series makes you suddenly laugh while you’re about to cry. That is very impressive...”* (Interviewee 9).

Interviewees indicate their social message discoveries within the text, which can be accepted as the details to be explored by fans. One interviewee says, *“There are lots of messages about violence against women, animals, messages about plagiarism etc. in*

¹¹ We can see the imitations of scenes from popular films (Godfather, Titanic, Reservoir Dogs etc.) or a character reading a book of a valuable Turkish author in L&M.

¹² Interviewee 11 indicates that she didn’t know that author before. She began to read his books via L&M.

the series. There are lots of messages in every episode. The third season is a pick about the messages. Every time I watch, in every minute of the episodes I notice a message. I say 'Woww that was a reference to that movie...' In other words, as I improve myself, I understand that there are more messages in the series...' (Interviewee 11).

As it's explained by Stuart Hall in his Encoding/Decoding Theory (Hall, 2005), every interviewee has their version of reception of the series. One interviewee explains his point of view as the philosophy of the series, saying; *"The series already has a basic philosophy. You have to continue your life even if there is something unfinished! In fact all of the 104 episodes are about it. The change of Leyla(s) or other things... In other words the series ended with this insight."* (Interviewee 5). Another interviewee states what she receives from the text by saying:

"While watching L&M, I explored and realized that every person has an unshown part that he/she hides in himself/herself. For example, if I see someone that I don't know and is dressed like İsmail Abi, I would think that he is crazy! Or if someone tells me about Mecnun who is falling in love with a girl and then with two other girls at the same time, I would think that he's quick to fall in love! But as I watched L&M, I can think that he is suffering. L&M taught me that nothing is like it seems. It brought me that perspective. I destroyed my prejudices" (Interviewee 7).

Interviewee 9 stated interestingly that she gained the power to struggle with her disease via a character of the series saying, *"I've learned to be patient thanks to İsmail Abi¹³. I can be more calm like him and be patient."* (Interviewee 9). This situation can be commented on as a healing effect of the series, which is created by a fan by identifying with a character of the series.

Some features and characters of the series have affected interviewees' personal abilities, attitudes or professional developments in their daily lives. It's seen from the results that interviewees learn a lot from the series, imitate characters, develop their intellectual aspects, discover lots of details, etc. One interviewee stated that she has come out of her shell via the L&M TV series saying, *"L&M maybe has made me act more naturally. I could be shy among people before. But after watching them, I can say that I communicate a little more easily."* (Interviewee 8). Another interviewee indicated that he began to cook after seeing the character Iskender in the series, but he also emphasized that he would like to be like another character, saying: *"I began to cook like İskender. I wasn't wearing a kitchen apron like him but I was really interested*

¹³ Interviewee 9 was handicapped and confined to bed. She suffered a lot because of her diseases. She was taking İsmail Abi as an example because he also was suffering from something (the absence of his father). İsmail Abi was patiently waiting for the ship that his father told him that he would return with.

in cooking. But I wish I could be like Erdal in economical issues :D" (Interviewee 4). It can be commented that fans take the characters of the series as role models, they act like them or wish to be like them.

Some of the interviewees say that they were acting like the characters and talking like them. They are still using the metaphors or swearing of the series in their daily life. One interviewee gave an example of a term she was using, *"I was using speeches from the series. I'm still calling my dad 'Baboli'¹⁴ for example."* (Interviewee 9). Another interviewee indicates that his sense of humor has changed after watching the series: *"L&M led my sense of humor. Not in the meaning of imitating them but I loved the absurd humor more. Things that didn't make sense to me are funny now. The nonsense of something is funny to me now. That let me see the humor in serious affairs and the seriousness in funny things. I can find humor in serious issues and serious issues in humor."* (Interviewee 5). That example shows that the perspective of the fans can also be affected by the series.

As they all are affected by the series, fans know lots of details and seek more information about the series or everyone in connection with it, and they try to share their knowledge, views and watching experiences with others (Fiske, 1987; Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992). In the next section the first connections of the interviewees with other fans, the features of their friendships or relationships, the way they construct their fan communities and the rules or other elements constructing a new subculture among them will be discovered. The interviewees will be referred to as "fans" hereafter.

4.5.3. Inclusion to "*Leyla ile Mecnun*" community and its *modus operandi*¹⁵

The first connection of the new fans with other fans and the journey of the fandom are presented in this section. New fans are motivated to search for more information about the series and to share their fandom with other fans. In this regard the motivations and ways of interaction of fans will be explained, the dynamics of Facebook fan groups will be found out via information retrieved from the interviewees who have experiences in different groups. Findings will include the role(s) of fans in the fan community like sharing different sorts of posts related to the series, sharing information about the events like meetings on the live stage where the series is shot, informing new group members about the details, uploading all episodes of the series, commenting under the posts, organizing competitions, making surveys etc. The journey of a fan in this group can end up with new friendships, relationships or professions.

¹⁴ Mecnun was calling his father İskender as 'baboli' in lieu of 'baba'.

¹⁵ The way in which something operates or works.

Information seeking and interaction

Fiske (1987), states that viewing the primary text is extended by a range of secondary texts about the series, its actors/stars, writers, and producers. Results of this study show that L&M fans, too, search for more information about the actors, their new or other ongoing projects (movies, theatre plays, albums etc.), developments in their personal lives (marriage, child, relationships) etc. In the frame of the Internet world, this kind of information serves to animate fan groups and pages even after several years and provides continuance to fandoms. One of the fans gives an example to this situation as follows:

“Fans of the series don’t abandon the series whenever or wherever. For example; Burak Aksak (the scriptwriter of the series) made a movie ‘Bana Masal Anlatma’. Fans immediately share the teaser of the movie or any information about the movie. They all watch the movie, promote the movie and encourage other people to watch it too. They give their support in many ways. And this spiritual/moral support will never end in my opinion. In other words, it will continue for a long time. Even me, I’m thinking of making my children watch the series. I have reserved all the 104 episodes. I don’t want them to be deprived of the series.” (Interviewee 10).

Shade, Kornfield, & Oliver (2015) explain the search for more information about the series on the Internet, while or after watching it, with the term “Media Migration”. Some activities such as purchasing a previous season on Blu-ray; reading a book that the program is based on; chatting about the program online; surfing the Internet for more information, “extra features”, spoilers or details about the actors, writers etc.; sharing discoveries, reactions or views with others via social media immediately during or after viewing; talking to others about it the next day at work/school; making a YouTube video about the series; buying an app that relates to the program; and a variety of other actions can all be listed as migration activities.

In his seminal book “Textual Poachers”, Henry Jenkins (1992), states that the desire for connection is at the heart of participatory culture and fans are cultural producers who take part in the community-making process. In our study, all fans reported that they recommended the series to their entourages and tried to make them watch the series. These efforts can be explained by the desire to have someone to talk and chat about the episodes, share findings about the references they catch etc. during or after watching L&M. Fans who don’t have someone in their entourage to talk or share information about the series are going online and joining online communities for information seeking, criticism and collective interpretations. Bury (2018) also finds

a similar “*need to communicate*” in her study results. She indicates in the end of her study that “... *findings do suggest that social media and app/mobile technologies hold out the possibility of participation to committed viewers, and the opportunity for participatory fans to move a little further along the continuum*” (Bury, 2018: 130).

All participant fans of this study searched information on the Internet about the series and became a member of a fan group or a fan page on Facebook to obtain more information about the series, in other words they joined an online fan community. Becoming a member of a fan community can involve different things, such as choosing to only follow the posts, giving “likes” or commenting on a post, sharing posts, becoming a responsible member of the group (like administrators who observe if members follow the rules) or animating and rejuvenating a group. In time, some of them created new fan groups or fan pages, some of them became an administrator or moderator after gaining the trust of the former administrator, and some of them became an active member of the fan community.

The desire to share their fandom, having free time, and thinking about being able to do better than other fans in terms of creating fannish works (fan production) are stated as the first initiator effects to create a fan page or a fan group on Facebook. One of the fans (Interviewee 2) indicated that he took over a fan page, which was inactive and re-animated it. He also emphasized the pleasure and the motivating effect of having likes and positive comments about his posts on the page. Moreover, he added that it was better to share his viewing experiences and fannish works with others, in lieu of watching the series alone. Another page administrator (Interviewee 4), decided to create a fan page to share more videos of better quality. Additionally, he said that he wanted to share videos consisting of different scenes of the series and diversify the shared scene scale of the episodes. He was disturbed to see the same scenes from other video providers. He indicated that, “*It was nice to see that my friends who watched the series later shared my posts on their personal Facebook accounts. Of course, that makes me proud*” (Interviewee 4). While talking about the other fan groups’ administrators he also stated that the administrator of the most popular group in time has given up the effort to provide new fannish works to the group since he wasn’t getting enough likes and comments. This situation shows us that administrators or other active members of the groups are motivated by the comments and likes from other fans.

Results also showed that administrating or moderating a fan page or group, and even being an active member requires a great amount of labor and free time. All fans who indicated “having free time” as a reason for creating or administrating a fan page or group are or were students. One of them (Interviewee 1) stated that he has no time to take care of his fan page since he is currently working as a software engineer. Another

fan (Interviewee 10) indicated that she became an administrator after the former administrator had a professional job and then, he did not have much time to manage the fan group. Relying on the information received from the fans, it can be said that fan groups on Facebook are more active and they present a more participative platform for fans. While fan pages let only the administrators to share a post, in fan groups, everyone is allowed to share a post and comment on the posts. That is to say that fan groups on Facebook provide a more participative environment and this can mean less labor for the administrators.

Community Rules

It's important to note that all fan pages and fan groups on Facebook have their proper usage rules. For example, groups or pages can allow or restrain the selling of fannish products, sharing information about other series, posting political contents, using swearing or inviting people to private Whatsapp groups etc. There are sanctions for the violation of rules like being removed from the group or page. Moreover, most members expect respect for the rules and cooperate with administrators by complaining about the abuses by tagging the users who do not follow the rules. One group administrator gives an example of the implementation of rules, saying, *"Some people were promoting different pages or products besides the series. Page members were complaining about them and I was deleting these kinds of posts."* (Interviewee 9). Another group member gives another example, *"Members were reporting violations of rules. In any case, administrators were directly blocking them. Some of our close friends were removed from the group like this..."* (Interviewee 6). Louisa E. Stein (2018: 86) supports this finding indicating, *"Each interface used by fans develops and maintains its own community norms, expectations, and limits of code and culture. In some cases, fans will use a given interface in a way consistent with its officially stated intent. In other instances, fans use interfaces in unintended, negotiative, and even resistant ways"*. In this case, we can assume that Leyla ile Mecnun fans are mostly consistent with the official stated intentions of the Facebook L&M fan pages or groups.

Fan group activities

Differing in some aspect of activities from other international fan community practices, the main activities of L&M Facebook fan groups/pages consist of sharing different sorts of posts related to the series or information about the events like meetings on the live stage where the series is shot, informing new group members about details, uploading all episodes of the series, commenting on the posts, organizing competitions, and making surveys.

Sharing different kinds of posts like scenes from the episodes, illustrations, animations, photos with the series' actors, screenshots of tweets from the social media accounts of the production team members, posts relating to the meaning and importance of the day, quotes from the characters (CAPs), information about the actors' new projects, music of the series, photos from the series locations or objects related to the series, photos of their pets named with characters names (gold fishes as İsmail etc.), collages from the scenes, screenshots from Whatsapp dialogues, and so on, are all stated as and constitute the main activity of the group. Regarding post sharing, one of the fans stated his point of view about the videos of scenes from the episodes saying, *"Looking at the posts from the episodes on the group refreshes my memory. I feel like rewatching the series."* (Interviewee 6). Another fan stated that she likes sharing quotes of the series saying, *"Once, I had a page of quotes about Korean serials. As I became a fan of L&M, I wanted to share my preferred quotes on the fan group and became a group member."* (Interviewee 8).

The backstage of the episode uploading activity is explained by a fan as, *"We have uploaded all episodes of the series in cooperation with other fans. It requires labor but I love to work in solidarity with other fans."* (Interviewee 7). Working in solidarity with other fans brings the feeling of a community. They spend time together even though its online, and they manage to get to know each other. These practices are usually discussed with the term "gift economy". Even the "gifting" concept has mostly evolved around fan fictions in the literature; fans harvest the gratification, pleasure, and social connectedness which satisfies their emotional and social needs by producing fan works as a great contribution to the community, with no monetary return. Fans become a "Big Name Fan" or achieve a status within the group by producing and sharing more fan works. On the other hand, the effusive commenters are seen as a good contributor (Stanfill, 2018; Wang, 2013). This is also the same case in L&M Facebook fan groups, albeit with a difference: There are no fan fictions in the community but there are collages, videos etc. consistent with the original text. Comments and likes have an important role in being an active and respected fan community member. One of the fans expresses this situation as, *"For example, fans who were regularly active in the group were more in sight and popular. These fans were more respected and their posts were getting more likes. Even they have records by getting the most likes. There, you see that more people are active in the group and they get more comments and likes."* (Interviewee 10). Batur (2020: 212) asserts in her study that there is a status difference between fans originating from the closeness to famous persons. The fans who are closer to the famous person and who can reach him/her are one step ahead of the fans who continue to experience their admiration from afar and this creates a status.

Competitions and surveys are also used as important activities to revive the fan community. Fans organize spontaneous competitions in the fan community. They share a scene from an episode of the series and quiz other fans about which episode the scene belongs to. Also, they ask about the mistakes in an episode, or the name of a flower in a scene... Everyone searches for the answers. While searching they get more attracted to the series, they learn more and more about the episodes, characters and lots of details. “... *When you try to know more about the series, you love it more and you get more involved. You can find new and qualified scenes and details to share... As you watch more, you become more addicted... I wanted others to know what I know!!!*” (Interviewee 7). Baym (2000: 88-89) classifies these activities as being among the informative activities known as ‘trivia’. Sharing the tweets of the actors or the scriptwriter on the Facebook wall is also a kind of competition. Who shares the first, wins... Group administrators also benefit from the analytics features of Facebook. They get the lists of members who share, comment or like more posts and share the lists weekly or monthly on the Facebook wall of the groups. Surveys are also used to animate the groups. Asking their favorite season, favorite episodes in a season or their favorite character of the series also activates the members.

L&M fans are also organizing offline meetings at the sites where the series is shot and announce the dates of the meetings on the Facebook fan groups. They are meeting there, discovering more details about the series environments, discussing, getting to know each other, and taking photos to share on the Facebook group. Williams (2018) emphasizes in his study that fan tourism can offer fans opportunities to learn more about fan objects, allows them to forge and maintain connections with imagined worlds, engage in face-to-face interaction and experience a sense of community with other fans. All of the abovementioned activities bring to mind the idea that they conduct fans toward new friendships, relationships or professions.

Interpersonal Relationships

Fans who feel a special connection with other fans, establish new friendships and relationships thanks to the fan community. As they are fans of the same text, all fans affirm that they have a special connection with other fans. They express that they have multiple things in common to talk, laugh or cry about. They also think that they have lots of common points, such as the same attitude of mind. One fan explains this situation saying: “*You’ve never met but it’s like you have known each other for a long time. I’ve found people who make me really feel like this. If someone is watching L&M we have lots of things to talk about. ... The habits of a person who really watched and loved L&M resemble mine.*” (Interviewee 5). Another one states, “*When I meet someone watching L&M, the chat continues through the series. Other people around*

us stay excluded from the conversation while we ask each other ‘Which episode do you like more? Which scene? Which character? etc.’ (Interviewee 3).

The common values make fans feel a sense of belonging to a community in which they can have conversations with new friends who share a common language, as well as a common wit and sense of humor. One of the fans expressed the community as “*a family with solidarity*”. Başlar & Tüzün Ateşalp (2019) also explain in their study that PuzzleSubs managers frequently repeated the “family” image in in-depth interviews. This situation can be explained by the saying “*Like Likes Like*” and sustained by the results of Johnson’s (1989) study. According to the results of this study, being pleasant, polite, and easy to talk to increases a person’s ability to attract potential friends but when similar values, interests and backgrounds are added to these factors the likelihood of friendship rises further (Johnson, 1989).

“While an outsider can’t understand what we are talking about or why we laugh at the catchwords we share in the group, we can understand each other and laugh at the same things. We really do have a common language... It’s a language that only the audiences of L&M can understand!” (Interviewee 10)

In the L&M case, similar values and interests seem to boost the possibility of friendship and the creation of interpretive fan communities (Jenkins, 2018), and also a fan culture (Becker, 1963; Hebdige, 1979; Jenkins, 1992).

Moreover, fans create core groups of friends in the Facebook groups. They get in touch in their daily lives and create new core groups using the Whatsapp application beyond the Facebook fan pages and groups so as to communicate directly. If the common values, interests or backgrounds are completed with other factors to have a relationship, they begin new relationships. As mentioned above there are couples in the fan community who knew each other via their L&M Fandom. One of the three couples that we knew during the interviews, is engaged and two of them are continuing their relationships. One of the fans who has a relationship with another fan says, “*I’ve only seen M.... face to face from the group members because he is my boyfriend. I’ve never seen the other group members face to face. But when I tell people about the group, I’m saying that we have a group called ‘Leyla ile Mecnun’. They organize meetings, it’s there that I met my boyfriend and they are very frank people etc. I feel that I belong to the group.... I’ve never seen anyone get hurt or upset. We really have frank relations in this group. It’s been like this for years.*” (Interviewee 7).

Coherence and Durability in Fan Communities

The coherence in fan communities is an important issue for the durability of the community. The formation story of “Hayatımız Leyla ile Mecnun” Facebook fan group is an example of the results of a disagreement within another group. When groups are not consistent with fans expectations fans leave an online community and create another community by inviting other fans that share the same point of view. This was the case for the creator and first administrator of “Hayatımız Leyla ile Mecnun” Facebook fan group and some of the other members from the former Facebook group, who were not happy with the quality of the posts and conversations. Bury (2009) also emphasizes a similar situation giving the example of the Usenet, which is seen by some as the original Internet community. When America Online (AOL) gave its subscribers open access to the Internet in 1993, many long-time Usenet participants complained bitterly that the presence of the AOL subscribers increased the number of groups and quantity of posts dramatically while degrading the quality of discussion (Bury, 2009: 309–310). As fan communities are mostly interpretive communities these examples show the importance of common sense in the continuity of fan communities.

Professional Development

Another impact of the fandom and fan practices is about the professional development of fans. Fans who develop their skills or learn new skills in video producing, editing or other fields of Internet technologies within the scope of their fandom can apply these skills to their professional lives and their professional career can be determined via their fandom. Three fans of the community indicated that they have determined their professional career via their fandom:

“L&M oriented me to the movie sector. I’ve wanted to study literature but in time I’ve decided to study something I like more. I was already preparing videos and collages at high school for L&M. If I’m studying in the radio and television department at the university and earning money by doing montage, it’s all thanks to L&M. This series motivated me and showed me a target. And now I’m walking to this target.” (Interviewee 6)

“I was trying to share different videos from the series on my fan page. Videos which were not posted before. The others were generally posting the most popular scenes. Within that period I’ve improved myself and got an education in video making. Now I’m giving professional support about this issue.” (Interviewee 4)

Fans' critical approaches

It should be emphasized that L&M fans don't always see things in a positive way. There are different aspects that they do not understand and/or criticize in the fandom. They sometimes criticize other fan pages or fan group administrators or members, and their fan works. Another issue they criticize is people taking advantage of their fandom or fake fans benefiting from the fandom, an issue which will be discussed in the next chapter.

"You cannot agree with everyone in fan groups. There was a member who was always complaining about the like counts in his posts. He was saying that he was taking pains with his posts, but the members were not appreciating him enough. For example, I reacted to his attitude. There were discussions like this. People don't have to like his posts.... We have never had such a strategy in the group. We didn't care about the numbers of followers or the likes. Ok, I may have thought about it a little bit, but the other administrator never cared about such a thing. Hence we said let's do it, those who like what we do would already like it. In other words, it's a voluntary activity. People don't have to like it because you're doing it. We should understand that." (Interviewee 10)

"I follow some accounts on Twitter. Fans do not work devotedly. Maybe it's me who sees this way. Their fan works seem all the same and repeat each other. They share the same jokes with the same photos. They are stereotyped. There are accounts for İsmail Abi character. I don't purposely follow them but their post shows on my wall. I view them and press the like button sometimes. I try to remember the episodes of the scenes. There are GIFs and videos in general on Twitter." (Interviewee 7)

Criticisms for other fan accounts on different social media platforms like Twitter or Instagram shows that fans are observing other fans and they are not isolated within their interpretive communities.

DISCUSSION

The present study is designed to explore the patterns and motives of the long lasting L&M fandom within the framework of participatory culture and to understand the dynamics of a fan subculture occurring over time. In this chapter I discuss the journey of the L&M fandom, taking into consideration the results of the exploratory netnographic research of the online L&M fandom universe, the results of the semi-structured interviews and other fan studies research. In the first part, I discuss the L&M fandom in the framework of participatory culture. In the second part, I continue with the modus operandi of the L&M fan communities on Facebook and then I examine the subcultural features of the L&M Fandom in the last part.

5.1. L&M Fandom in Participatory Culture

With the developments in Internet technologies, fans gained more visibility and ability in four key areas accompanied by the participatory culture. Firstly, they easily communicated with each other, shared information, opinions and contributed to online platforms. Secondly, they became more creative with the technological tools and the support and comments of others on different platforms. Thirdly, they easily and voluntarily shared their knowledge with others, mentored the novices in social platforms, or searched for new information. And finally, they engaged in communities, they got more connected to each other, and felt that they belong in a community which can be organized for a purpose or to create civic power (Bennet, 2014; Jenkins et. al, 2009). All of these developments had an impact on the long-lasting L&M fandom in different aspects and the creation of a fan subculture, which succeeded in rebroadcasting the series after eight years.

5.1.1. L&M Fans' Interactions

To explore the L&M online fandom universe, a netnographic research was carried out between 2016 and 2021, with a view towards a general understanding of how L&M fans use different social media platforms. As mentioned in the third chapter, L&M fans used lots of different online platforms (Figure 5.1), which offer several utilities with different purposes. The results of the netnographic research of the L&M fandom showed that L&M fans interact with each other and also with the production team members of the series including the actors, the scriptwriter, the producers etc. Those interactions take place both online and offline. The main online platforms observed and taken into consideration in the perspective of L&M fandom interactions are Facebook, Online Dictionaries, and Twitter. Online interactions with fans are also given information about the offline interactions between fans, and between fans and production team members.

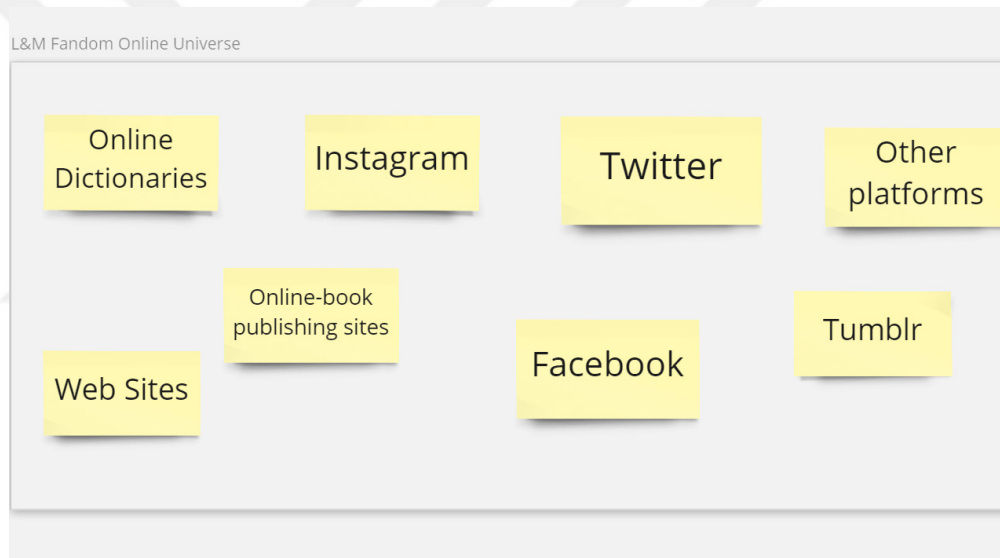


Figure 5.1: “Leyla ile Mecnun” Fandom Online Universe

The features of interactions differ on different platforms and platforms can be used not only by fans, but by regular or irregular viewers, and anti-fans who interpret the series in different ways. Hence, L&M fans' interactions have praising or critical features with varying levels on different digital platforms.

Social media platforms like online dictionaries or Twitter are more geared towards serving the expression of the opinions of the users individually and enable them to discuss freely with other users, whether it be a praise or a criticism for the fandom object. Fans or non-fans can freely interact with each other on the online dictionaries. These platforms permit everyone to start or join a discussion about the L&M TV series in every possible perspective. As mentioned in the third chapter discussion, topics vary in many themes like; personal feelings, effects of the series on their daily lives and

discoveries about the details, common difficulties or cases that L&M fans encounter in their daily lives, news related to the house used in the series or the commercial goods about the series, details of the series, praising the series and declaring “best of” lists about the series, specific episodes or scenes in the episodes of the series, campaigns about the renewal of or a movie of the series, specific characters in the series, the final of the series, fan fictions and alternative finals or scenes in episodes, quotes from the series, discussions about the summits and/or meetings of the fans with the series team members or the reunions of the fans and their activities, comparison of L&M with other TV serials from different aspects, and criticism and dislikes about the series. In this research it is seen that online dictionaries and microblogging platforms like Twitter give more freedom to L&M fans and non-fans to express their thoughts freely within the framework of interactions. In her study examining the participative narrative attitudes of the social media users while watching the Turkish TV series called *Uçurum*, Akınerdem (2012) found that Ekşisözlük writers sometimes write as if they are talking to the scriptwriter and sometimes imagine themselves as the subject of the narrative by positioning themselves as a character in the narrative. On the other hand, L&M fandom Facebook fan pages and fan groups represent a more restricted area for fan interactivity in some aspects.

Having the opportunity to express themselves on different social media platforms as they desire, fans or other viewers of L&M discuss different aspects of the series by predicting, explaining or imagining alternative, with different interpretive styles. In their study analyzing fan theories as interpretive processes of virtual communities within participatory culture, Amo & Garcia-Roca (2021) identify three different modes of agreed collaborative textual interpretations. In *predictive theories*, not necessarily fans but users with a significant intellectual, emotional and social involvement with the narrative or cultural product aim to advance and deduce possible future narrative actions in the canon. *Explanatory theories* are canonical interpretations that enhance and (over) subscribe meaning to the events of the available canon. The complex process is detailed before the outcome via semiotic mechanisms favoring the interpretative proposals and exploring the subtext, nuance, or implicit content linked to characters, functions, and narrative actions. Being the least common and the most complex mode, *alternative theories* offer unique, personal, improbable, and creative visions of the fictional universe. Differing from fanfics, the characters, the fictitious world in which they are placed, and the story narrated in the canon are kept without including new narrative elements. Within the framework of this study, we can say that L&M fans are more likely to interpret the series via predictive and explanatory theories.

As they are created on the basis of the common love of a fandom object, Facebook fan pages and fan groups are defined as interpretive communities of the L&M Fandom

which have their own group rules and actions. Fans tend to create fan communities united around their fandom and the love of L&M, and they try to protect the cohesion of these communities with group rules. There is a practicability difference between fan pages and groups on Facebook, in terms of fan communities. Fan groups on Facebook provide more space for fan participation. Fan pages only let the administrator to post on the wall. The role of the fans in fan pages is restricted to likes, comments or requesting the administrator to share their fan works. This circumstance seems to result in the numbers of fan groups being higher than fan pages. This is supported by the numbers of fan pages and fan groups detected in this study, besides the statements of the interviewees. Interviewee 3 emphasized that fan groups were more dynamic than fan pages and that's why he chose to create a fan group. On the other hand, the options of closed and public groups in Facebook are also a variable which influences the features of a fan community. The modus operandi of L&M fan communities on Facebook is discussed in the next part.

Social interactions of L&M Fandom can occur either between fans or between fans and the production team, which includes everyone in the production process of the series. As mentioned before those interactions can be online or offline. Social media provides fans and the producers online platforms to connect easily. Besides interacting with each other, fans try to take the attention of the actors, the scriptwriter or the director of the series from the production team members. Fans organize online and offline activities or create fan works, to be seen by them and to show their love for L&M. Some of the production team members respond to fans but these interactions are not only initiated by fans. Production team members also start interactions with fans via their social media posts. The following example shows that online and offline interactions are interwoven. Fans who know each other from the online platforms meet offline and this communication process extends to an offline interaction with the production team members, like actors of the series.

“We try to meet the actors besides the series context. Once, we went to the theater play of Serkan Serkin (İsmail Abi) with friends from the fandom. It was a friend from the group who offered me the ticket to the theater play. When we got there we met two of the series actors.” (Interviewee 5)

In the L&M fandom universe, all communication within the participatory culture is based on or started with L&M related subjects, visuals or issues. Fans ask the questions in their mind, they respond to questions and share new information, discuss the issues, try to guess the reasons or the aftermath of the events, create and share fan arts etc. Fan works are one of the important initiators of interactions on online platforms and in fan communities.

5.1.2. Fan works and Information Sharing in L&M Fandom

The preferences of L&M fans to use online platforms depend on different variables. Fans can choose to act individually or in a group and also in anonymity via character accounts, accounts with the name of the series or with their personal accounts. The use of online platforms also depends on the fan activities. L&M fans prefer to use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Pinterest primarily to share quotes, screenshots or short video collages from the series, all in the form of fan works. These social media platforms or websites are used to share the episodes of the series, to give information and synopsis of the seasons or the episodes, information presenting the characters, and to gather news about the series and the production team members etc. Additionally, online-book publishing sites are also used to publish fanfictions or alternative fan theories by fans which are not high in number in the L&M fandom. Lamerichs (2018) says that fans join a variety of creative and social activities to show respect to their fandom objects; he expresses different kinds of fan activities as follows:

“Creatively, fans publish written stories (“fanfiction”), sew costumes of their favorite characters’ outfits (“cosplay”), design different types of games, and make visual art and videos, among other outlets. Thus, fans produce different types of narratives and objects and express themselves through play and performances. Through these homages, fans mediate existing symbols, plotlines, characters, and settings. These fan creations are heavily inspired by the existing text or “source text”, but they also create new textual relationships.” (Lamerichs, 2018: 13-14)

Considering that fanfictions are the most practiced fan activity around the world, it's seen that they are not frequent in L&M Fandom. The netnographic research and the interview results show that fanfictions are very few in number (as in Wattpad), and as mentioned in the interviews, fanfictions were not welcomed within fan groups on Facebook. Another infrequent fan activity in L&M fandom is the cosplay. Only one fan, which is mentioned by the interviewees, was literally cosplaying İsmail Abi. He was wearing shiny costumes and having the same haircut, at the offline fan meetings and he was talking like him with an accent. The characters of the series are mostly cosplayed online by fans, via character accounts on social media platforms. They act like characters by writing dialogues that the series' characters would say, on those accounts.

The information flow about the L&M TV series and its production team members is important as a fan activity, this having continued during the broadcast process and even after its cancellation. L&M fans share news about the works of the production

team members, promote the films, songs, books or other activities done by them, or share news about their private life like getting married, having a baby etc. One of the reasons for this information flow is explained by one interviewee as *“We embrace all other projects of the series actors like a friend, brother or sister.”* (Interviewee 5). The main search for spoilers or the predictions are frequently seen at the end of the seasons. Some of the interviewees (2, 3, 4, 7) follow other big L&M fan groups on Facebook to see what other fans do. Interviewee 3 indicated that he enjoys every post, especially posts related to the genes of İsmail Abi in other L&M Facebook fan groups. Interviewee 2 tells about his observations, saying:

“It’s really interesting... There is a grocery called Erdal Bakkal in İzmir. When the book of the series was published there was a fan who was very content with this. He/she walked around with the book everywhere. One day he/she brought the book to a children’s park and rode the book on a swing... For example, there is a group gathering at Kireçburnu every year. They have a picnic and wave to the sea like İsmail Abi. There was a friend who reached Burak Aksak at the TÜYAP book fair and taped a voice message for his/her group.”

As explained earlier the most practiced fan works in L&M fandom, are the video collages, GIFs and memes originating from the text. In their study, which describes the memetic transformation, Wiggins & Bower (2014) argue that memes are means of continuing a conversation by members of participatory digital culture; they also define three categories of meme development. According to them, non-parodied messages from the original texts (spreadable media) are remixed and transformed into emergent memes. Those emergent memes are circulated rapidly in participatory digital culture and become memes. In this framework we can argue that L&M fandom’s fan works are generally emergent memes which are created in many different ways and contexts. Those emergent memes are used as a way both to express themselves and to continue conversations in interpretive communities. L&M fans mostly use the mottos of the series and adapt them with visuals in different contexts or they use a visual from the series and adapt it with different emotional expressions.

We can say that L&M fandom fan practices resemble the online practices of other Turkish fans. Yazıcı (2019) made a content analysis-based research on Instagram fan pages of the most popular five Turkish TV series of 2018. She found that fans generally share short videos (1 minute duration) or photos of the scenes, videos of the actors behind the scenes or pictures of the shooting scenes. She adds that there are also posts with content production with added texts and music to the original content, and collages. The followers of the pages are actively involved in the page with their comments, likes and shares. In addition, images from past TV series of the actors are

included on the fan pages. She indicates that there are also advertisement posts on the pages, although not very often. She concludes that content production is mostly carried out with series scenes, but contents produced by fans themselves are also shared periodically (Yazıcı, 2019).

Fanworks and fan practices are mostly conceived as gifts to the fandoms by fans. In this study we saw that L&M fans try to provide the most original fan works in their groups and work in solidarity to serve the fan groups by adding new information related to their fandom object from multiple perspectives, adding all the episodes of the series on the Facebook fan groups or on other websites by sharing their links. They also share the wallpapers and calendars containing elements from the series and other utilities created by them. Başlar & Tüzün Ateşalp (2019) studied the gift giving practices of the Turkish fan community named ‘Puzzle Fansub’ to understand the dynamics of the digital gift giving culture. As the anime genre is not accessible through mainstream media in Turkey, anime fans undertake the subtitling practices and produce subs which are seen as gifts to the fan community and to the anime lovers.

Referring to the changing relationship between media producers and their audiences, ‘participatory culture’ changed the concept of gift-giving activities of fans. These changes resulted in fan or fandom exploitation or the professionalization of fans (Morrissey, 2013; Fuschillo, 2018; Stanfill, 2019). L&M fans can be critical about the attitudes of the entertainment industry and the post-events developed after the cancellation of the series. Interviewee 4 explained this awareness saying:

“This sector is cruel indeed. In other words, they are caring only for the money, in the background. They laugh at the mass, they make fun of them. They turned the fandom into a money source. They organized concerts. They hold the mass in their hands. They earned money and then turned their back. This is the principle of life. I have never dared to turn my fandom into a professional job. I have never applied to the producers and told them I can be your Social Media Manager. They are usually the visible side and we are the oppressed party.” (Interviewee 4)

L&M fans also have a critical approach about the exploitation of the fandom both by producers and other fan-resembling people who are called fake fans.

“There is an account named İsmail Abi on Twitter. The administrator of this account benefited from the series and gained lots of money. He attracted fans to this account. Then he published a book. It was a silly book. Its name was ‘Waiting for the absentee’. He took the waiting concept and merged it with İsmail Abi and he sold his books. He organized autograph sessions. The book was sold in popular bookstores. In sum, he benefited from the series.” (Interviewee 4)

“In social media people try to get followers. There are some of them who benefit from L&M, they use and use the series, you know... Nowadays there are fan-resembling people creating fan groups to get followers and get benefits.”
(Interviewee 7)

“For example, there are big L&M fan-resembling pages with 155000 followers or members. You message them to ask their support for a hashtag campaign - like ‘Let L&M come back’, ‘L&M birthday’ or or ‘L&M as a book’ - to make the series Top Trending. They are directly asking for money...”
(Interviewee 10)

Those statements show that L&M fans are not blinded by their affection for the series, and the last quote can be conceived as an explanation for why I didn’t have answers from fan pages with high member numbers for this research. Another study held in Turkey, examines the fanworks of the *Kardeş Payı* series. They reveal that most of the people who produce charcoal drawings, cartoons, photoshop works and illustrations and share them with the official account of the series are people who do professional drawing and earn income from these works. These people make their production visible on the pages of popular TV serials. In such examples, fans/users have the potential to make their own advertisements by taking advantage of the popularity of the series and indirectly to earn commercial profits through their production (Tüzün Ateşalp & Başlar, 2015).

Within the framework of L&M fandom, products with photos of the characters and quotes from the series on them are produced and sold by personal commercials but not by an official organization. Some of the special products (like the handmade model house of Erdal Bakkal’s house and shop merged building) were sold via Facebook fan groups that permitted the sales within the group rules. Jones’s (2014) examination of E. L. James’s 2012 *Fifty Shades* trilogy shows that a tension exists between fans who subscribe to the notion of a fannish gift economy and those who exploit fandom by using it to sell their pulled-to-publish works. This study demonstrates a tension between two modes of fan expression: sale of artworks appears to be an acceptable practice in fandom, but the commercial sale of fanfic, even when marketed as original fiction, is widely contested. Jones (2014) explains that *“This exploration of the debates that have taken place in fandom over the ethics of pulling fan fiction and publishing it as original work draws on the notion of the fannish gift economy, which postulates that gifts such as fan fiction and fan art have value in the fannish community because they are designed to create and cement its social structure.”* This example carries the gift-giving subject to another discussion level.

Fannish work has been a major incentive for fans to learn new skills and try out new platforms (Ellcessor, 2018). Fans from international fandoms enhance their writing or other skills in fandom and then become screenwriters, film-makers, special effects workers, or other creative professionals after learning relevant skills in fandom (Stanfill, 2018). During the second season of the series, one of the L&M fans became the official social media manager, and managed the official Facebook and Twitter accounts of the series. He also organized meetings where fans had the chance to watch the series with the director and actors at Kireçburnu coast, the location where most scenes of the series are shot.

As some practices require some basic digital literacy and related skills, fandoms can contribute to professional fans or precede new professions. Başlar & Tüzün Ateşalp (2019) indicate that the cultural production of *Puzzle Fansub* requires a certain amount of grammar, language skills and technical knowledge. Therefore, such communities are areas where expertise and talent are also demonstrated. L&M fandom practices also influenced the professional career choices of some fans. L&M fans are generally young and practice their fandom when they're at the early stage of their life. This study showed that fan practices can influence the professional life of fans as seen in the examples of the interviewees 4, 5, and 6. They have chosen their career based on the practices and feelings of their fandom.

5.1.3. L&M Fandom as an Organizational and Civic Power

The growth of a small-scale fan group, the struggle of fans to make their voices heard for a cancelled TV series and its re-release was possible via communication activities executed within the scope of participatory culture continually for a long time. With participatory digital culture, fans expressed their dissatisfaction with the series' cancellation. They tried to reach relevant people from the film production industry in order to try to re-broadcast the series, and they also informed them about the solutions that they found. Additionally, they organized online petitions or hashtag campaigns in different social media platforms. L&M fans believe and emphasize that they have influenced the plotline of the series, the entrance of the series to the IMDB list, the broadcast of Ben de Özledim TV series and the publishing of Leyla ile Mecnun book. The influence of fans on the publishing of the book is also affirmed by Burak Aksak as mentioned in the third chapter.

“I believe that we were influencing the scenario. The first Leyla was already gone. She was a little innocent next to Mecnun. The other Leyla's came and the story focused on them. But the characters were not fitting well. ... The third Leyla had a different accent... Hence she wouldn't stay in the series if there would be a fourth season. We are the reason why those Leylas didn't last a long time in the series.” (Interviewee 4)

As an example of civic organization and power of fandoms L&M fans narrated their action on online campaigns.

“There was a fan page calling us to list L&M in the IMDB’s Worldwide TV series list. We all increased the scores of the series. We succeeded and the series became famous worldwide. We heard that a Chinese TV channel contracted TRT for the series. English subtitles of the series are written.” (Interviewee 4)

Lachonis & Johnston (2008) also indicate that fans of the TV show *Lost* had an influence on the show saying, *“One of the most amazing aspects of the Lost phenomenon has been the creators’ responsiveness to fans. While there has never been admission to tweaking the overall storyline to meet the taste of the Internet base, the creators have admitted that character deaths, the end of repeats, time slots and even the end of the show have all been influenced, in part, by dominant trends in fan opinion.”*(p.121) The campaigns for the series *Fringe* (Guerrero-Pico, 2017) and *Veronica Mars* (Hills, 2015; Booth, 2014) can be cited as examples of organized fandoms. The participatory culture made L&M fans’ struggle visible. The series turned into a phenomenon with effective methods and strategies on social media and L&M fans convinced a producer of a digital platform that the series would make them money. Although their number was not as much as the international fandoms, L&M fandom’s success, as a local/native fandom, is remarkable. On the other hand, we should emphasize again the influence of the political developments in Turkey, which caused the cancellation of the series and the link of these developments with the L&M fandom activism.

In sum, we can say that in participatory culture, fans can prefer to praise or criticise the fandom object, to engage in a community with members who share common values issued from their fandom object or to interact in an interpretive community, to share their fan works in different art styles like scratchings, paintings, videos, captions, sculptures, graffities, etc, or to get organized and have civic power for a common purpose like L&M fans did after the cancellation of the series.

5.2. The Modus Operandi of L&M Fandom on Facebook

As Becker (1963) explains, a society has many groups, each having their own set of rules and every kind of these groups has certain common understandings and thus a culture. The same can be said for the L&M fandom. There are lots of L&M fan communities which construct the L&M fandom, with different sets of rules, interpretations or appropriation styles. The interpretation and appropriation of L&M in different ways can occur as a “conflict of generations”. This refers to the point where Hebdige (1979) emphasizes that the meaning is in flux and the significance is between

the text and the subject who interprets it. As it is explained in the third chapter, fans who watched the series during its broadcast time interpreted and still interpret the series with the agenda of those days. On the other hand, fans who began to watch the series after a while can choose to interpret the series from a romantic point of view, without the impact of the political issues. Everything seems good when there are no political comments on Facebook fan groups and fans only share posts about the series itself. But arguments begin when there is a political comment linked to the agenda of Turkey or the world, in a group where political views are forbidden to be expressed. These arguments can occur between fans from different political views or just fans who do not belong to any political stance and only desire to experience their fandom in a peaceful community.

As it is seen in the examples given in chapter three; the violation of the Facebook L&M fan group rules showed that fans interpret the series differently and the debates on the violation of the group rules end up in different ways. The violation of the restriction of the political statements, occurred in a closed fan group just after the Turkish local elections in 2019. The discussions following this violation showed us that fans were watching the series from different points of view. Some of them were watching the series as a love story, some as a series with a philosophical background or as a politically critical series. We also saw that some fans, who want to escape from the truths of the world or society, defend a politically free area in the fan group. Some fans defend a “peaceful debate culture” without swearing or insults. Furthermore, in terms of the reception of the series, some fans make separation between fans who watched the series while it was broadcasted and fans who watched it later. In international literature those distinctions are discussed generally on the basis of gender, class or race (Stanfill, 2011; Gatson & Reid, 2012). The arguments in L&M fan communities prompt the creation of new sub-communities, a concept which is addressed by Fish (1980), within the fandom. In the end, since the L&M TV series is the common interest of all fans, it can be argued that L&M fans have a common fan subculture occurring around the love of the series, even though there might be some interpretational differences between the communities.

Within the framework of L&M fandom, Facebook fan groups facilitate the creation of interpretive fan communities which enable fans to share their common feelings and thoughts about the series and its characters. The option of closed groups in Facebook make this platform more attractive for fans who want to create and share an interpretive fan community with like-minded fans sharing the common feelings and interpreting ways with others. But the common passion is not always enough to gather fans and make them stay together. Another crucial element of fan communities, besides the same passion, is to have a common interpretation with others which refer to an interpretive community.

Finding out how and why fans have a tendency to join or to create a fan community on Facebook, requires understanding the first steps towards L&M fandom. According to the results of this study, within the frame of Facebook online social platform, the L&M fans' fandom journey begins with encountering the L&M TV series as a viewer. This can be by coincidence (while zapping, on social media posts etc.) or by recommendation of someone else (friends, relatives, etc.). After or even while watching the series, fan candidates who like the series search for someone to talk about the series and share his/her admiration for the series' different components. Yegin (2006) emphasizes this text-based 'talking about it' process as a dominant source of pleasure for fans in his study. This social engagement process is driven by multiple factors. If L&M fans can't find anyone around them they firstly try to convince their entourage to watch the TV series (playing the fan curator). One of them expresses this fact saying *"We were on the first 10 on IMDB. What would be more than this for a Turkish TV series? I watched legendary series like Sherlock, Vikings. They are almost impeccable series. It's extraordinary to be among these series. I encourage people by indicating the IMDB issue while recommending the series. I want that even if they criticize the series, they should do it knowing this fact"* (Interviewee 11). To be listed on IMDB makes L&M fans proud and they use it as a persuasion tool. Secondly, they search for more information about the series via the Internet (it's actors, shooting locations, detailed info about the scenes etc.). Their Internet research generally ends by joining a fan group or a fan page to socially engage with the text and interact with other audiences. Another option is to create their own fan page or fan group to share and disseminate their fandom.

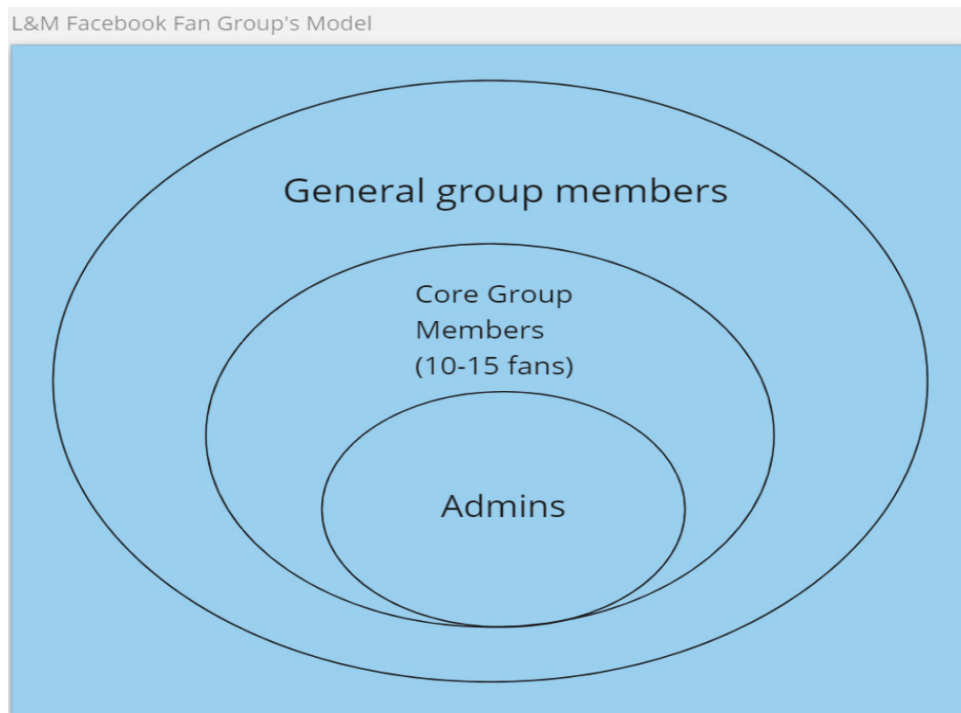


Figure 5.2: "Leyla ile Mecnun" Facebook Fan Groups Model

The general model of the Facebook L&M Fan Groups, contains three different actor zones that are called 1) General group members, 2) Core group members, and 3) Administrators (Admins).

The first zone is called “General group members”. Members in this zone only follow shared posts and leave comments or like posts never or rarely. Most of the interviewees indicate that they feel timid after joining the Facebook fan group. One of the fans (Interviewee 8) explained that she was only reading the posts or liking them. She emphasized that this condition depends on the personality and not knowing anyone in person in the group or not feeling ready to interact with others by participating in the discussions or sharing anything as a post. She also adds that in time, after following the active members and seeing that they would not have prejudice on newcomers, she felt ready to participate actively in the group and interacted with them. As mentioned before, interpretive communities are based on the opinion sharing, predictions, parodies and other varieties of interpretations. Fans use personalization, character interpretation and speculation as the main interpretive practices. An interviewee narrates the social engagement of L&M fans on social media as follows:

“For example, we were talking about the characters that we embraced, or the flow of the events in the episode when the series was airing on TV. We didn’t admire only one of the actors/ actresses or didn’t open fan pages for them. The story of the series and characters were well developed. We were admiring the text itself or its characters and we were chatting about the series, the continuity of the scenes. We never said that we wouldn’t watch the series if one of the actors is not in the cast anymore. There were instant episode critics. Further, there were fans contacting Burak Aksak just to tell him to make changes in the scenario....”
(Interviewee 4)

On the other hand, there are also noninterpretive social or informative activities in interpretive communities. In the case of L&M fandom Facebook groups we see that, depending on their personal characteristics, fans can join the interpretive community with noninterpretive activities. New members observe the community, refrain from acting in the group, and content themselves with reading the updates, spoilers, sightings, and trivias. Booth & Kelly (2013: 65) give a fan example which fits the prototype of the General Group Members: *“Arthur reads discussion boards, but doesn’t post to them”*. Baym (2000) calls these type of members ‘Lurkers’, who read or follow the flow of posts without ever contributing, or contributing rarely.

The second zone is called the “Core group members” which consists of approximately 10-15 persons who are the most active ones. They share posts frequently, leave comments for almost every post, and they also help to animate the group and to apply the group rules. Baym (2000) also describes a “core group” in her study but her description is more convenient with the administrator’s zone of this study. Core group members seem to be loyal to their groups. One of the interviewees indicated that she unfollowed all the fan groups and pages on Facebook to concentrate on her own group. Another interviewee admits that she finds it as a betrayal to follow or become a member of another Facebook fan group but she observes some accounts on Instagram to understand if they are doing different fan works.

“I see it as a betrayal :) But I follow some accounts on Instagram. In other words, I wonder what they are doing. They don’t do anything different than us. Photos, collages, quotes... But I don’t follow accounts with a big number of followers because they are using these accounts for promotions. And I don’t like it.” (Interviewee 11)

The relationship of the core group members of L&M fan communities, goes one step forward towards an offline friendship. As L&M fans interact frequently in the group, fans become friends after a while and also have private Whatsapp groups to talk to each other in their daily lives. Besides, some of them, mostly who live in the same cities, meet and see each other face to face. After citing all the troubles she went through in a period of her life, Allysson Beatrice (2007: 12) explains the importance of the fandom in her life with the following paragraph:

“Fandom has been a constant through all of this. Fandom takes care of my cat when I go on vacation. I sit in the waiting room to take fandom home after wisdom teeth removals. Fandom comes to get me at LAX in the middle of the night when my flight is delayed for eight hours and my luggage has been sent to Australia by mistake. I bring Liquid Plummer to fandom when its toilet explodes. Fandom brings me ginger cookies and sits with me on my stoop when I stupidly lock myself out of my apartment. Fandom, friendom, and familydom all run on a gradient line in my brain. There’s no hard shift between the “doms”; they just bleed into each other like watercolors on cheap paper.” (Beatrice, 2007:12)

Baym (2000) discusses the online engagement issue in her study, by stating the concerns about the isolation of people who don’t have successful identities or social lives offline and the decrease of face-to-face interaction needs. Then she concludes that these concerns are oversimplifying and underestimating the complex structure of online communities which can intertwine with offline interactions. She asserts that:

“The online group can provide social support for people experiencing difficult times offline. ... Furthermore, relationships that develop online can and do move offline, sometimes outlasting their participants’ involvement in the groups through which they met. Online worlds develop affective dimensions and experiences, and these feelings, situated in the bodies of group members, do not distinguish between virtual and real.” (Baym, 2000: 205)

The intertwinement between online engagement and offline lives is very important and significant in L&M fan groups. As mentioned in the previous chapter, fans who know each other via online Facebook fan communities are furthering their relationships via private chats in groups in different online social media applications like Whatsapp or via offline fan meetings organized by other fans. Fans who meet in person can keep seeing each other one by one or in tiny groups. These friendships can end in closer relationships as it’s seen with the engaged or married couples among L&M fandom. According to the information retrieved during the interviews (Interviewees 2 and 9), the possibility of connecting with other fans via social media and joining a fan community is crucial and life saving for the handicapped fans. One of them mentioned that he has met his girlfriend within the online L&M fan community. He also emphasized that when two people are sharing the same passions, ideas or feelings it’s possible to get together even if it’s from a distance. Otherwise, friendships in the communities can remain online, as it’s stated by an L&M fan *“We have heart-to-heart talks in the group as close friends who have known each other for a long time but who have never met face-to-face.”* (Interviewee 12). It can be summarized that fans are trying to construct friendships like in the series that they admire.

The third zone is called “administrator(s)”. Administrators also have a place among the core group members. They animate the group and generally play the role of fan curator. The curator role can be explained as some type of informal mentorship in which the most experienced members pass along their knowledge to novices to shape their interpretation, understanding and engagement related to the text (Kompore, 2018). The administrators have the responsibility to share at least one post everyday (including daily ‘Good morning’ posts to communicate with the members) in order to animate the group. They monitor the group, organize offline meetings, offer competitions, ask questions about the series and encourage other members to be active. They also apply the rules to assure peace in the group. In sum, it can be said that administrators spend both time and effort for the continuity of the group. That’s why the administrators are mostly students or they do not have regular work. It’s necessary to remember that the old administrators of L&M fan groups or pages were students at the time, and they later decided to quit the administration mostly after they found a job. Başlar and Tüzün

Ateşalp (2019) also reveal in their study, that *Puzzle Fansub* community members spent a great deal of time and effort in the process of participating in the production of subtitles.

In this study it is seen that administrators or the group rules can impact fan practices or the degree of fan involvement in the groups. The following extract of an interviewee's narrative shows an example of how fan communities can restrain fan practices like writing fanfictions:

“There were fans writing fanfictions, but believe me, I tried so hard to send them away... I am a very realistic person. Ok, people have dreams and so, but the scriptwriter has created the series world. It goes well, somehow. Ok, we can influence the scriptwriter by saying don't do this or that, but I was getting angry when they were trying to change the whole series' universe. In other words, don't confuse the scriptwriter's mind by getting involved. I don't understand why they are writing...”(Interviewee 4)

An important feature of the abovementioned group model is the possibility to switch between these zones which is crucial for the consistency of the groups. General group members can get a place within the core group, depending on their activeness and relations with others in the groups. Core group members can become administrators or co-administrators or vice versa and administrators can assign their roles to other group members and switch to core or general group members zones. In her study Baym explains the coherence of the groups saying “... many participants attribute the group's consistency over time to long-time posters who have remained committed to the group” (Baym, 2000: 183). L&M fandom also owes its consistency to both the long-time group members and to the new members who become fans and help continue the circulation of the activities in the groups.

While L&M fans tried to impress the producers by criticizing the course of the script and the actors while the series was being aired, the situation has changed for the fans who watched the series after its cancellation. They do not engage in such efforts because they watch a finished series and they can only admire or criticize it. It can be said that they are involved in activities such as visiting existing fan groups, getting extra information if any, finding people to share their feelings, catching and sharing the references of the series that were thought to have not attracted attention before, etc., which maintain the survival of the online Facebook groups. Significantly, the efforts and lobbying works made for the return of the series are factors contributing to the long- lastingness and visibility of the fandom, and have also empowered it. It can be commented that the long-lastingness and the subculture of the fan groups feed each

other. The long-lastingness of the fan groups serves the creation of fan subculture and vice versa, the fan subculture enables the groups to remain for a long time.

5.3. L&M Fandom Subculture

Another objective of this study was to understand the common reasons gathering audiences around the L&M fandom and the common cultural features (meanings, jargon, activities, speaking styles etc.) occurring in the community within the frame of subculture theory. Based on the idea that every human practice carries a cultural aspect that is adopted via the society (Bourse & Yücel, 2017: 133), we can examine the manifestation of this situation within the framework of L&M fandom practices. In this respect, the reasons for L&M fans' interest in the series, the reasons for why and the ways of how they get in contact with other fans and the common cultural features they share in groups are discussed.

It can be asserted that the features of the subculture of L&M fandom was ready-made within the scenario of the series. What L&M fans do in the communities is to talk about the events of the series, to create a common language by internalizing the main jargon of the series that people who don't watch the series can't understand, to make jokes about the series and have fun, to reference the scenes of the series in daily talks, to empathize with and act like the characters of the series and, finally to try to create the same relations that the characters have in the series. In other words, it can be said that they try to simulate the series universe which reflects nostalgia to the old days that intersect with most of the fans' lives. All of these activities help to create a fan subculture springing from the L&M TV series. Taking also into consideration the results of the interviews, they reveal that L&M fans enjoy similar TV series genres and the reasons for loving L&M sets an additional ground for the creation of fan subculture. In their study on the impact of adapted TV serials on the audience, Ilgin & Uruç (2018) found that according to the data they obtained within the scope of the clothing styles, lifestyles, places, occupations, family and neighborly relations codes, the audience was emotionally affected by the codes reflecting the American culture in an adapted series and they were desiring to live this way of life.

Hebdige (1979) gives the example of punks who wore clothes as the sartorial equivalents of swearwords as a subculture style. In L&M subculture different meanings are attributed to products like chewing gum (representing cigarettes), eating grapes (drinking wine) and other fruits like figs (rakı), plums (tequila), apricots and hazelnuts (vodka), sweetcorn (viski) etc. This is a new vocabulary invented to escape the restrictions of the TV channel. Some object names are used as the equivalents of swear words like wet plastic bathroom slippers, demijohn / water cooler bottle, plastic

bag, drinking straw, sock with a hole etc. This kind of use is issued as an escape from the censorship of the national television rules but becomes a subcultural style to replace the swear words. The talking or dressing style, the accent, and expressions of Mecnun and İsmail Abi also became a cultural feature that fans internalized and used in their daily dialogs. All fans are using at least the talking style of Mecnun or İsmail Abi. As mentioned before, there is also a fan cosplaying the İsmail Abi character. He wears jackets with shiny colors, speaks like him and waves to the ships passing from the Kireçburnu coast.

As Jenkins (1992) emphasizes, fans have particular critical and interpretive practices. They concentrate on the text and conduct an in-depth review. While being interested in every detail of each scene, they pay special attention to whether there is inconsistency between given information or events within and across episodes. They approach many elements, like the course of events in the series, or the characteristics of the characters, etc, in the context of their own lives. Sometimes they identify their lives with events and characters of the series and create strong parallels between them. They also can enable a path to meta-texts by filling in the blanks of the series' text by commenting on them, exploring detailed information, and creating new information on their own (Jenkins, 1992). Arslan (2013) describes in her thesis that audiences can get involved in TV series characters and create a close connection with them, called parasocial interaction. She indicates that characters created in TV series and movies are the most influential element for the audience. When the audience watches a character they love, they empathize with him/her. Assuming that the character's experiences are real, they experience the emotions of the character in the series and even treat him/her as a close friend. When the character dies and leaves the series/film, they feel a great sadness about this situation (Arslan, 2013). Groszman (2020) takes this issue one step further by explaining the parasocial relationships concept. He indicates that *"Parasocial relationships involve media users forming an emotional connection with media figures by becoming familiar with their "mannerisms, behaviors...and other personal details" (Kurtin et al. 2019, 33). Basically, PSI are temporary illusions, while PSR are long-term attachments that form over time."* It can be said that, through knowing every detail of their fandom objects fans commit parasocial relationships.

L&M fans usually talk about the events and emotions reflected in the series and remember them in a nostalgic way. They can be identified as "conservative" in this context. They mostly don't rewrite the text or construct a meta-text. One of the fan page administrators (Interviewee 3) said that there was someone writing new stories related to the series, but other fans didn't appreciate this. L&M fans are mostly enthusiastic in conducting detailed analysis of the series' episodes. They are proud of exploring new details of the series and sharing them with other fans. This makes them

precious as a fan. They feel more prestigious when they present new information that nobody noticed before. This became a sort of game among them. Of course, they were criticizing the scenario (comments on the Leyla character(s), events like the death of the first Leyla or the departure of the Leyla(s) at the end of the second season etc.) during the shooting stage of the series but this was not a common case after the cancellation of the series. They were aware that there were no coming episodes, and they were resigned to this reality. If they don't like the critical and interpretive activities of one social media fan group, they create their own fan groups via the Internet and social media tools. They don't have to participate and obey one group and its rules. They can find or create a new group with like minded fans easily. It can be said that fans are free in their fan activities.

As a good example of a fan subculture, Nicolle Lamerichs (2018: 12-13) narrates her first visit to a fan convention and her impressions in her book, saying:

“I had long defined myself as a fan and felt comfortable in online fan spaces. At Animecon, I started to doubt myself. Who were these eccentric people and what did we actually have in common? A friend saw that I was uncomfortable and took me to the video game room to show me the titles that we could play. We battled in ‘Soul Calibur 2’ and talked about the characters. I was more at ease and started to get accustomed to the atmosphere. Yes, as fans, we did share some things that united us: not personal knowledge about one another but a different type of capital, related to the subculture in which we engaged. We shared knowledge, social contacts, creativity, and, above all, a passion for particular stories and visual designs.

When I donned my costume the next day, I gained a sense of belonging. The outfit made me fit in visually and became a greeting card. Conversations became easier because fellow fans found topics to converse with me about: my character, Final Fantasy, video games. Some visitors recognized me from the forum because they knew that I was going to be wearing an Aerith outfit. They called me by my nickname, “Setsuna”. By the end of the weekend, I had made many new friends while watching anime, playing games, and attending workshops. From that point on, fan conventions seemed exotic and diverse to me, as well as attractive. Increasingly, they became a social context that I could fall back on: a place called home.”

These paragraphs tell a lot about the main features of fan cultures, revealed here as a subculture within the framework of a fan convention. The idea of a common L&M fandom subculture originating from the series, is also seen in fans' comments on social

media platforms which shows that they think that all L&M viewers share the same values with the characters of the series, and therefore with themselves. The following post of a fan is an example of many other social media posts with the same belief:

“Love, kiss and hug a person who watched Leyla ile Mecnun and never leave them. They are fragile, pure-hearted and harmless people.”¹

One of the actors of the series, Cengiz Bozkurt (Erdal Bakkal) also point out the influence of the series on its audiences (Figure 5.3) with a comment on an Instagram post saying:

“Facebook reminded me of the note “Today, 9 years ago”. The first episode and the first scenes of Leyla ile Mecnun. The scene at Kireçburnu stairs where Mecnun imagines Baggal² as Leyla. I think there was an issue with the “tab”. We think we made a good series, but it’s a work whose impact will spread over the years and influence one or two generations.”³



Figure 5.3: Cengiz Bozkurt’s (Erdal Bakkal) Instagram post (Screenshot of Instagram post. Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/mcengizbozkurt/?hl=tr>).

Jenkins (1992) indicates that fandom creates a ground for consumer activism counter to the powerful institutions of cultural production and dissemination. Fandoms, as an unofficial fan community, contend with the insisting culture of the official fan organizations that act according to the interests of regular viewers and don’t take into consideration all of the fans. This situation leads unofficial fan communities to mention their cultural preferences and desires for alternative products or activities (Jenkins, 1992, p. 285). The L&M TV series doesn’t have an official fan organization,

¹ Sertaç Akan (@srtcaknn), “Leyla ile mecnun izlemiş kişiyi sevin, öpün, sarılın hiçbir zaman da bırakmayın. onlar narin, kalbi temiz kişilerdir zararı dokunmaz.”, Twitter, 02 September 2017, twitter.com. Accessed 4 April 2019.

² Referring to Erdal Bakkal with accentuated pronunciation of the word “Bakkal” as “Baggal”.

³ Erdal Bakkal (@mcengizbozkurt), Twitter, 11 January 2020, twitter.com. Accessed 20 June 2020.

but there have been some attempts to create one. The series producers didn't have a strategy for fans at first. Fans created their own fan websites, fan pages, fan groups, fan accounts and fan products in different social media platforms. After a while one of the fans of the series became an official social media manager attached to the producers. The first step of the social media manager was to gather all social media fan pages and fan groups on Facebook. According to the statements of the interviewees (1 and 3), this attempt couldn't be achieved because of the disagreements between some of the existing fan groups/fan pages administrators and the new official social media manager. The official group account succeeded in having the most number of members but it couldn't last long.

L&M fandom can also be read as a rebellion against the popular mass media texts which facilitated the creation of a fan subculture. Fans took the series as a uniting point which is expressing their inner voices: sickness of rich lives, degenerated relationships, violence etc. They criticize the broadcasting sector and think that they need to return to sincerity, such as the old days when they were playing on the streets with their friends with no benefit... They express their hope for the future with the saying 'That ship will come one day', they imitate and internalize the jargon created in the series. The series itself was a soft rebellion against the prohibitions of the use of cigarettes, alcohol, swearing etc. with the tactic of attributing new meanings to the object which replaces the prohibited one (chewing gum meaning smoking a cigarette; eating grapes, corns or other fruits meaning drinking alcohol or using object names in lieu of swearing). The appropriation and the utilization of all these elements refer to a fan subculture which is probably protesting and expressing the same types of discontentment of the Turkish youth.

The cancellation of the L&M series had a fortifying impact on the L&M fandom subculture. Fans contended with this decision and thus were brought together as a converging group that held a common concern. Protesting the cancellation of the series mostly in unity and especially with the tactics of the series strengthened the relationships in L&M fandom communities. Fans became more attached to the fandom and actively attended the fan activities to show their love for the series. New people heard about the series, wondered about and began to watch it and maybe became a fan themselves. Hence L&M became more popular and visible after its cancellation. Besides, the L&M fandom became a long-lasting one which succeeded to bring the series back via the persistent and undeterred fan lobbying which can be called "civic power".

In the case of L&M Fandom, the efforts and the success of the fandom can be explained by the youth and the technological literacy of the fans. As explained previously,

audiences have more power and they become prosumers in many areas. Their visibility and ability to create public opinion on social media platforms influenced the traditional success criteria in different areas, as it occurred in the TV series industry. Unlike other media forms, internet technology has led to innovations that are responding to the daily and social needs of their customers. Digital film-TV serial platforms are one of those innovations which respond to the needs of the audiences. It is known and mentioned before that the production of the TV series/dramas are linked to their financial return to the producers and the amount of audiences was a critical criteria for the survival of TV series or dramas until the coming of the digital platforms. L&M fandom is seen as a potential return of investment by a digital TV series platform and re-broadcasted after years. The owner of this platform announced the success of the series on his Twitter account saying,

“‘Leyla ile Mecnun’ met with you after 8 years. We set out on this road with a beautiful dream, and it received an extraordinary amount of attention and reached a number of views far above what I expected. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this magnificent series and all Exxen members who showed great interest. Enjoy watching.” (Figure 5.4)⁴

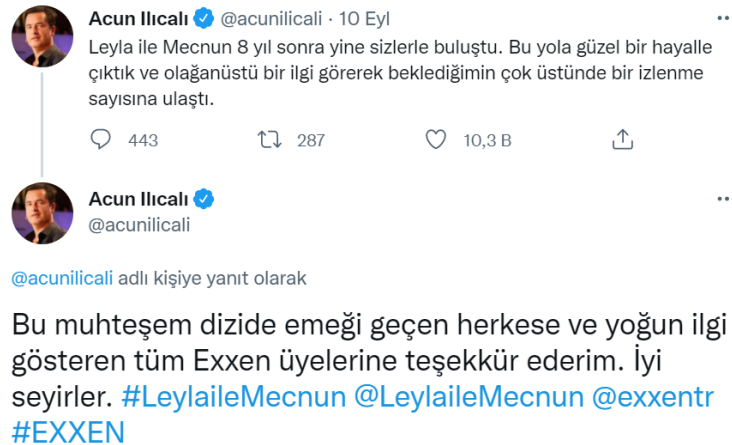


Figure 5.4: Screenshot of Acun Ilıcalı's Twitter post (Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/acunilicali/status/1436225346840449024>)

After years of lobbying work for the return of L&M, fans succeeded to engage the attention of a digital TV series platform and a season of ten episodes was produced by the same team of L&M. The comment of the digital platform owner signalled the coming of a new season and after a while the second season also began to be aired. This achievement serves as a model for other Turkish fandoms. If the L&M series is considered as an opposition to the dominant TV industry culture in Turkey, L&M fandom also embraces this opposition in the series. It reproduces that culture in itself through interpretive communities and creates a subculture of its own.

⁴ Acun Ilıcalı (@acunilicali), “Leyla ile Mecnun 8 yıl sonra yine sizlerle buluştu. Bu yola güzel bir hayalle çıktık ve olağanüstü bir ilgi görerek beklediğim çok üstünde bir izlenme sayısına ulaştı. Bu muhteşem dizide emeği geçen herkese ve yoğun ilgi gösteren tüm Exxen üyelerine teşekkür ederim. İyi seyirler. #LeylaileMecnun @LeylaileMecnun @exxentr #EXXEN”, Twitter, 10 September 2021, twitter.com/acunilicali/status/1436225346840449024

CONCLUSION

My orientation to this study started after an assignment I prepared within the scope of the cultural studies course. The fact that people demonstrate their culture (what they think, design, or believe) with their behaviour (e.g. speech and actions) in certain social contexts (Neuman, 2009), made me realise that there is also a common language or culture among people who follow the “Leyla ile Mecnun” TV series. The TV series was not understood by many others or not watched, but I saw that it had a deep effect on its young audiences. Meanwhile, I paid attention to examining L&M fans in a subcultural context, L&M fan accounts and organized fan groups on social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc.). Becoming a member of a closed Facebook group (via a friend who was a fan of L&M), brought me to an online fan community world where members were sharing posts with the pictures or videos of their preferred scenes, writing their emotions on the group wall, having a heart-to-heart talk with each other as if they knew each other for a long time (with great sincerity like the characters do in the series). Hence, they had a common language including expressions used in the series, which could not be understood by any person who did not know about the series. All those observations made me decide to study “fans” within scientific research and to choose L&M fandom as this doctoral thesis subject.

Fandom studies is a multidisciplinary research area which continues to evolve in time and is mostly hard to define. Within this framework in this study, I explored the L&M fandom from different dimensions. This study observed all possible processes of a local fandom and showed the journey of a fandom, it then focused mainly on the *modus operandi* of the fan culture in Facebook online platform. This focus served to discuss the dynamics of L&M fandom both in individual and communal aspects. Actually, whichever aspect of fandom we focus on, the other part would be missing. The importance and the main challenge of this research is to observe and try to explore holistically a local fandom universe. This study claims to observe all the processes of fandom and to analyze the functioning of fan culture by revealing the journey of a fandom in Turkey. The fandom activities of the fans and the reasons for fans cannot be independent of the culture they reside in. With a view coming from the Cultural Studies tradition, I tried to deal with a local fandom within the framework of general culture,

economy, politics and social life, and to see and show the effects of these elements on L&M fandom. In order to reduce the difficulties that I was confronted with while reading and understanding the research of foreigner fan cultures in a foreign language, I added a section that gives information about the series, its subject, characters and basic features. This was also to ensure that the research was not detached from the cultural context.

Communication studies has shown that audiences are not passive recipients. They are critical of the media texts they consume, and they create new meanings by interpreting media texts depending on their personal and societal life experiences and backgrounds. The common interpretations form the basis for interpretive communities as it is in fan communities where enthusiasm for the same object or subject is shared. This shared enthusiasm leads fans to create new meanings and cultural products which they share with other fans as a gift to the fandom. All these developments bring into the open the reasonable necessity of studying fans in a research field focused on fandom studies as it has happened in time.

Fans, who were considered pathologically before being the research subject of the “fandom studies”, interact and produce easily without the restriction of time and place via the Internet and the new media technologies. The Internet and the new media technologies have an important effect on participatory culture, hence the creation, development, visibility and continuation of different fandoms. Fan activities, such as writing fan fictions and sharing with others, performing fan arts and exhibiting them, organizing fan conventions and participating in them, construct a participatory culture which shifts fans from being only a consumer to being both consumers and producers. Moreover, fans create their own fan subcultures based on their common interpretations, activities and interactions, and thus they have their own rituals, rules, jargons, dressing styles and fan activities to be explored by researchers.

Leyla ile Mecnun has a special place in Turkish TV series history with its sudden cancellation after the Gezi Protest, which occurred in İstanbul, May-June 2013. As narrated in the second chapter of this study, TRT1, the channel of this series, had been both the chance and the mischance of L&M. As a possibility to mention, L&M may have not been aired without TRT1 but also wouldn't be cancelled politically without TRT1. As another possibility and an alternative viewpoint, the series would not have become a phenomenon if it had not been cancelled suddenly. Anyway, Turkish audiences, especially the youth, were introduced to L&M, some of them liked it and became a fan, and some of them didn't like it. However, it is seen that the series turned into a legendary TV series after its cancellation. It attracted the attention of the public, and by means of the Internet technologies has been watched and discussed

by a considerable amount of people (particularly youth), and gained popularity via a faithful fandom which has continued to exist and evolve in time. The online universe of the L&M fandom and its modus operandi provoked an interest in a deeper research which can also reveal the features of a fan subculture that may have an impact on the longevity and successes of this fandom.

The aim of this study was firstly to observe, explore and describe the online L&M fandom universe including the activities and interaction ways of fans. In this regard, I conducted a netnographic research to find out the online platforms used by L&M fans. As part of this, I designated the purposes of the usage of different social media platforms, and I journaled, categorised and analysed the diverse L&M fan activities by a descriptive observation method. The second aim was to study and understand the ways in which fans come together, create a fan community and also to investigate the general factors that help the creation of a fan subculture. In this regard, I decided to apply semi-structured interviews with the administrators of fan pages or groups on Facebook, since they hold full knowledge of the communities. I chose Facebook as the most convenient social media platform for the occurrence of fan communities during the netnographic research process. The process continued with the preparation of the questionnaire and the determination of the interviewees. As I narrated before, I made a keyword search, “Leyla ile Mecnun”, on Facebook and I listed the groups and pages which I filtered upon their relevance with the series and their member and follower numbers. I sent invitation messages to the administrators of these groups or fan pages to ask for their contribution to the study.

Most of the fan group and page administrators didn't want to contribute to the study. On the other hand, the administrators who accepted the interview were very welcoming. They gave all the information to understand this fandom deeply. They helped to reach more members of their groups and it can be said that their reference made the group members feel comfortable during the interviews. As most of the interviewees were living in different cities, I interviewed them via telephone calls. However, I found the chance to have a face-to-face interview with two group members who lived in İstanbul. At the end, I conducted interviews with twelve participants including actual or ex administrators of fan pages and groups and group members recommended by the administrators. The interviewees were able to inform me about all aspects of the fan communities since they were experienced in different roles in the L&M Facebook fan pages or groups. There were fans who watched the series since the beginning of the series and fans who began to watch it after its cancellation. These varieties served to have information complementing each other and giving the broadest aspect to the research subject. During the interviews with the friendly fans of L&M, I gathered information about the organization of the L&M fandom since the

first days, the processes that the fandom have gone through, and the information of the roles that people and institutions have gained in these processes.

As I explained earlier in this study, once an audience member discovers L&M (this can be via a friend suggestion, discovery of the series randomly on TV or via a post, information or a fan work about the series on Internet) and once L&M is liked by them, they search for more information about the series and begin to have a need to communicate, to share their admiration, enthusiasm or criticism with other audiences. More audiences have explored L&M because of the news and protests about the cancellation of the series. Fans who use the Internet and social media tools efficiently play an important role in the augmenting recognition rates of the series and the long-lastingness of the fandom. In other words, the continuity and the longevity of the L&M fandom have been supplied by the circulation of the fans and the sustainability of the fan groups thanks to the opportunities offered by the Internet technologies.

(1) Results of the netnographic research and the interviews have indicated that L&M fans use different platforms which meet their different needs within the framework of their fandom.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, web sites, online dictionaries etc. are used mainly for communication and discussions with other fans or the production team of the series, for information or the sharing of fan work, for appraisal or criticism of the series, or for the protest of its cancellation etc. Online dictionaries and microblogging platforms like Twitter, offer more free speech opportunities to fans and non-fans to express their thoughts. Among these social media platforms Facebook is more suitable for the creation and execution of fan communities, hence fan subcultures within these communities. L&M fans share their common enthusiasm for the series within these fan communities, which have their own rules that provide a coherence and a sense of a fan subculture created in cooperation with other fans. L&M fans engage in different types of fan activities depending on the features of the social media platform that they use, or they prefer the most appropriate platform for their fan activities. I also detected that opposite to one of the universal fan activities, L&M fans do not write much fanfiction, especially slash fan fiction, or it has not occurred or been observable during this research.

(2) Facebook is the most appropriate social media platform for L&M interpretive fan communities. L&M fan groups on Facebook have a common *modus operandi* as interpretive communities.

I depicted three member zones on the L&M fandom Facebook fan groups. These are General Group Members who generally prefer to follow the posts of others, Core Group Members who generally share posts, comment on others posts and interact with other members, and the Administrators who have an important role in the fan community. Administrators generally act as fan curators who direct the new participants' enthusiasm to renew the interactivity within the fan community. They mentor the newcomers who want to share their enthusiasm, they respond to the group members' questions, and facilitate their attendance and adaptation to the fan community. The administrators spend both time and effort on the groups' coherence and interactivity.

As I mentioned in the third chapter, different subgroups can be formed under the umbrella of the L&M fandom on Facebook. The establishment of the rules such as the restriction of the use of swear words in the group, selling products made within the concept of TV series for commercial purposes or sharing posts that are not related to the series are important for the fan interactions in a fan group. The fans who cannot experience their admiration within the scope of these rules leave the group and form other groups. Additionally, people with different political views in real life can have disagreements within L&M fan groups. This brings us to the smaller interpretive communities, which Fish (1980) calls sub-communities, within the universe of general fandom. It can be commented that there is an environment that is suitable for establishing more homogeneous fan groups. This makes it possible to homogenize as well as diversify within the whole. Therefore, it can be claimed that there is homogeneity in fan communities and heterogeneity in the fandom. All these differences can be interpreted quite literally as contributing to the longevity and the spread of the series' fandom.

(3) This study strongly demonstrates that the features of the L&M TV series, especially its absurdity, enable the fans to refer to and create new meanings, sayings, beliefs and attitudes in common which results in a subculture.

Using different art tools (videos, photo collages, scratches, paintings, writings etc.), the fans present the characters, best scenes, best quotes from the characters, the features of the series, the characteristic features of the series' popular characters, and funny, emotional, amusing sections from the series. These fan works serve to share fans' enthusiasm, love, emotions and the meanings created from the series. The characters of the series like İsmail Abi, Mecnun, or Erdal Bakkal and their talking, thinking and reaction styles became popular, indeed they became a kind of phenomenon among fans. They try to simulate these characters and mostly their friendship online and offline. All of these features have served the interactions between them. They

share a subculture based on the features of L&M, which they admire. The results indicate that the intense interaction creates an increase in the number and variety of fan activities. The admiration of those who encounter more fan content and produce more content has also been shown to increase. People, who are actually working on or acting in the series, have also joined online groups and interacted with fans, even if it has been rare. Some examples of these are that they have chatted with fans, responded to their questions, commented on fan posts, celebrated the anniversary of the series after its cancellation etc. In fact, some of them still continue to communicate with fans by responding to the fan posts or celebrating the birthday of the series. All of those interactions have created interpretive communities with a sense of belonging, and L&M fan communities had developed their own fan subcultures.

Another important feature of the L&M fandom is to create a ‘civic power’ with their lobbying efforts which engaged the attention of a digital TV platform owner and making them produce another season of L&M. It can be concluded that in tandem with developments and opportunities occurring in the TV industry as part of its transforming towards digital platforms, L&M fandom set an example to other fandoms to achieve what they desire.

6.1. Research Limitations

Since everything can be changed at any moment in the digital world, conducting research on social media can be challenging most of the time. As Busse (2018) discusses in her study, relying on textual evidence, fan studies face ephemeral interfaces and disappearing sites. Defining the sample of this kind of research or collecting information or data is tricky because fan pages and groups can be closed suddenly, and member numbers and likes change frequently. So, the samples can change as the universe can be changed unpredictably.

The difficulty of convincing people and scheduling a meeting with interviewees also cannot be ignored. Approved meetings can be cancelled suddenly, or the platform used for interviews may not meet the expectations of an academic study. It should also be noted that the methodology may change according to the developments and the necessities during the research process. For example, within the scope of the semi-structured interviews, the written method was not effective and didn’t work. This situation caused the loss of an interviewee who didn’t want to give an oral interview. The continuing process of the fandom activities and the developments about the return of the series were also crucial for the ending of the study. With every development in the process and as the times passed, all the data was updated at certain intervals. A set of precautions must be taken to prevent data loss in online field study. In this study, I

used screenshots mostly to prevent data loss and saved them as a proof since the web sites, Facebook fan pages or groups, or posts can be lost at any moment.

Researchers should predict the difficulties that would occur, related to the different jargons used in the fan studies research area. Learning lots of words and sayings within their cultural context can take a lot of time. On the other hand, the translation of the L&M fan community jargon was very difficult to manage and so required extra efforts to achieve from Turkish to English without loss of their cultural background. As lots of images and examples are used in the narrative, the aesthetical part of the thesis concerning the long source information has caused a problem. This problem was solved by giving footnotes to the figures.

Ethical issues also blurs the mind of the researchers. As the Internet users share their opinions and photos on open access platforms, it seems logical to use them as data in a research, but there is not a common view about this subject. In this study, I used all the open access data with the intention of not revealing any personal information. Since fans voluntarily share their fan works or opinions to interact with others, and make themselves visible, I assumed that there is not an abuse of personal data.

6.2. Contributions and Future Work

This study attempts to contribute to the field of fandom studies in the perspective of the local Turkish TV series “Leyla ile Mecnun” fandom. As the fan studies cannot be excluded from the cultural backgrounds of fans the research of local fandoms of both international and local texts are important to understand the effects of cultures on fan practices and fan subcultures.

(1) This study has contributed to fandom studies as a long term netnographic research focused on one special local fandom in respect to participatory culture and subcultural theory. Research dedicated to a special fandom, international or local, in every aspect of fandom studies is numerous as explained in the introduction part. While audience research in Turkey examined fans as ‘audiences’ for a long time, the “fandom” concept has been used more in the last decade.

(2) With the efforts and success of the L&M fandom in re-broadcasting the L&M TV series on a private online platform, this study has shown the civic power of the fans and the role of the participatory culture in this process. The number of Turkish TV series/dramas increases every year, and this augmentation provokes the cancellation of lots of series/dramas because of the low ratings. In the Internet age, the low ratings no longer mean that the TV content is not watched by a great number of audiences.

Being watched online anytime and anywhere, TV series/dramas create their fandoms in a short time. With the opportunities presented to fans by the Internet technologies, fandoms can be quickly visible and struggle for their fandom object better than before. This reality proved by the L&M fandom can attract the attention of academics towards the civic power of fandoms, yet it crosses even into different disciplines besides that of fandom studies.

(3) While fanzines are the leading fan activities around the world, it is seen that L&M fans are not very active in writing fanzines. Additionally, L&M fans who write fanzines do not enter fanzine genres such as slash fiction. In this context, in-depth studies can be conducted on whether other fan communities in Turkey write slash fiction and whether this is related to the cultural, religious or ideological views of the societies they live in. These studies can also be carried out in a broader perspective across different countries and cultural contexts.

(4) Even though they admire their fandom objects, fans can be critical about different aspects of fan activities or the texts. The data for this research predates the series' re-release. A study can be made on fan opinions and interactions relating to the new seasons of the L&M TV series. After waiting a long time for the new episodes, some fans started to criticize the new seasons. There are fans who like the new seasons, or those who don't, etc. It could be efficient to examine and explore the criticism and interpretation styles of fans which change or not, in another study.

(5) This study has revealed a fan group model which can be used or compared with other fan group models. The importance of the model comes from the ability to switch between the member zones. This ability is assumed to contribute to the longevity of the fan groups. Moreover, the transfer of the knowledge between the members and the change of the roles within the groups serve to the spread and renewal of the fan group.

(6) The study of the L&M fandom culture has disclosed that the content of a TV series can contribute to or initiate the creation of a fan subculture. The struggle of the L&M TV series with the censors of the TV channels, with the corruption of the culture, and also with the agenda of the world, attracted the attention of the audiences and has been embraced by them. L&M fandom have internalised the cultural features of the series coming from the tactics invented during this struggle and transformed them into an essential component of their fan subculture.

Further research should be undertaken in different Turkish fandoms and especially fandoms of the national texts, contents, objects or persons. There are no debates on

gender or race in L&M fandom, particularly in Turkey. This subject also can be researched further. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the fan subcultures and moreover to reveal and explain the relationship of the general culture of a society and fandoms. Another reason for researching the Turkish fandoms may be the comparison of the local fandoms with their international peers as it is needed in this study.

To conclude briefly, it can be said that fandoms are an essential part of international or national cultures which can reveal lots of details about the needs or the perspectives of the subgroups or the general nature of the societies.



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APPENDICES

Appendix-A

A Scene Example from the first episode of “Leyla ile Mecnun”

In the third episode of the series we see lots of examples of Mecnun’s mischance and goofiness. He decides to write a letter to Leyla via the recommendation of Aksakallı Dede and his friend Kaan. He writes the letter after hundreds of tries and put the letter in his wallet to give it to Leyla. He goes to the school of Leyla and yells in front of the faculty building to find Leyla. As he yells we see Arda (ex-boyfriend of Leyla) looking out of the window and threatening him to make him leave the school.

Arda (treating Mecnun like a salesman): Why are you yelling my friend! Don’t shout here! Go and sell what you are selling elsewhere... This is a school!!! School!!!

Mecnun (replies Arda): None of your concern! Go in and listen to your teacher...

Then we see Leyla looking out from another window telling to Arda to not to be involved in this affair and asking Mecnun what he wants. Mecnun tries to tell that he wants to speak with her but Arda barges in again:

Arda (to Mecnun): Don’t wait here, don’t wait!! Go and play in the garden of your school...

Mecnun (to Arda): You, go in! Don’t barge in. We are talking something here!

Arda: Who the fuck are you?

Mecnun (raising his arm toward Arda and threatening him): Buzz off! Or I’ll come there!!

Arda: I will go beyond!

Mecnun: Come! Come!

Arda and Mecnun begin to fight and Leyla tries to separate them (in this scene we also see the apprentice of the character Yavuz (the thief) trying to separate them). Then we see Arda, Leyla and Mecnun in front of a teacher asking them their identities. As Leyla and Arda are the students of the school they don’t need to show their identity cards. When Mecnun looks for his wallet to show his identity card he realizes that his wallet is missing.

Mecnun (querying where his wallet would be): My wallet is not here. I dropped my wallet. It is missing! They stole it. (Returning to Arda) “Did you steal my wallet?”

Arda (a little bit surprised by this question): Why would I steal your empty wallet? Poor!

Mecnun (trying to attack Arda): Empty? Are you kidding me? You’re saying that it was empty. How would you know that if you wouldn’t steal it?

The teacher interferes, silences them and let them go. At the exit of the school, two men in black abduct Mecnun and take him to Metin (Leyla’s father). Metin offers Mecnun a bank check on condition that he stops following Leyla and give up her¹. Mecnun rejects the bank check and leaves Metin there.

Metin mutter to himself, that he will find a way to give the bank check to Mecnun. [One of the details to precise in this episode is the dressing style of Mecnun. In the previous episode Mecnun absurdly assume himself like Tatar Ramazan², after passing a few hours in the jail due to a misunderstanding. He dresses a black coat and a white scarf like Tatar Ramazan and gets around with the “I will spoil this game!” motto.]

The apprentice of Yavuz meets him at a park and shows him a wallet that he stole. They check the wallet and find nothing valuable but a funny letter. The apprentice gives the wallet to Yavuz and takes the letter. He goes to school and shows the letter to everyone. At the end the letter luckily finds Leyla. She reads the letter and gets impressed by the sincerity of Mecnun. He writes, “I want to talk about your eyes. Really what color are your eyes? I want to speak with you and apologize for the troubles but I can’t talk if I look in your eyes... I love you Leyla! It’s really easy to write... If only I would tell this looking into your eyes, to the color of your eyes...” When she finishes to read the letter, she receives a phone call declaring that Mecnun and Arda are meeting to fight for her.

Leyla finds Mecnun and Arda then she reprehends them, “What do you think you’re doing here? The winner will win me? Do you think that I am a bet subject?” She tells Arda that they couldn’t be together, that they tried before but it didn’t worked. She also indicates that she tried to continue as friends but that also didn’t work. She tells Arda that he is selfish and impatient; that he wants to buy everything, and he should grow up. Then she turns to Mecnun and says “Green.”

Mecnun (can’t understand what she says): Green?

Arda: Green?

Mecnun (Relaxed by the reaction of Leyla turns to Arda): Fine. That was close!! But why green?

Leyla (showing the letter to Mecnun): Green. You were asking the color of my eyes in your letter... My eyes are green.

Mecnun (Surprised by seeing the letter - to Leyla): Hah! The letter! Did you steal my wallet?

Leyla (rigorously): What do you say?

Mecnun (trying to change the subject): Green! Is it the same green in the open area or indoor space?

Leyla: Only green. I would like to hear this question from you or would like to take the letter from you...

Mecnun (excited): Honestly I was going to take you the letter and give you another thing.

Mecnun picks a red beat-up rose from his pocket and gives it to Leyla. As we think that everything is alright, Mecnun’s father comes and gives the bank check to him telling, “I’ve brought your check my son.” Mecnun asks, “What check?” Iskender answers “The bank check that Leyla’s father has given to you in condition of leaving her!” (Metin calls Iskender, tells him that his son has forgotten the bank check and gives the check to him). Leyla, who hears everything, throw the letter and the rose then leaves Mecnun. Mecnun is devastated in the middle of a green area with disappointment... That’s an example of the mischance of Mecnun, which always prevents him to come together with Leyla...

¹ This is a reference to the clichés on Turkish movies. The girls/boys rich father offers money to the poor lover to make him/her leave his daughter/son.

² Tatar Ramazan a Turkish film character fighting against the corruptions and injustices in the societal system. Downtrodden by the others, Tatar Ramazan gets around saying “I will spoil this game!” ‘Game’ represents the corrupted social order.

Appendix - B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Conducted between February 8th - March 17th 2019.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Gender?
2. Your age?
3. Your occupation?
4. What is your education degree?
5. Do you like watching TV series? If yes, do you have a preferred genre?
6. Is there a TV series you watch regularly right now? Is it domestic or foreign? Can you tell me the names of the series?
7. Which is or are your favorite TV series you've watched so far?
8. How did you hear about Leyla ile Mecnun?
9. Have you watched all the episodes of Leyla ile Mecnun? If yes, how many times have you watched it?
10. What encouraged or made you start to watch L&M?
11. How would you describe the place of 'Leyla ile Mecnun' in your life? What does Leyla ile Mecnun mean to you?
12. Did the series have an impact on your daily life? If so, what effect has it had?
13. Do you think there is an emotional bond between you and the other audience watching Leyla ile Mecnun? Can you explain?
14. Do you feel that you belong to a community formed around the love of L&M? If yes, what is it that makes you feel this way? What are the characteristics of this community?
15. How would you describe your admiration? / Are you just a fan who watches and loves the show, or is there something characteristic that the series and/or the fan community has personally changed in you (in your thoughts, activities, etc.)? / What effect does the show have on you? / Do you think this effect will continue for a long time?
16. Are there aspects distinguishing yourself from other fans or that you describe yourself as different within the framework of activities in fan communities and belonging to these communities? Do you see yourself in a different place in the community? Why is that?
17. a. (For those who have a fan page, group or account): Do you remember when you first decided to open a fan page/fan group or account on social media platforms? Why did you make such a decision? What influenced your decision?
b. (For the fan page or fan group members): Do you remember when you first decided to join a fan page/fan group or account on social media platforms? Why did you make such a decision? What influenced your decision?
18. Can you tell me about your social media activities related to your fandom? What are you doing or were you doing? Do you receive reactions? If yes, what kind of? Do you have or did you have a certain routine?
19. Do you follow other social media accounts related to the series, or the accounts of the actors, director, etc.? For what reason?
20. Do you have other social media accounts related to the series? (for admins)
21. What activities do you or did you observe on the fan group or page? What types of posts are or were there usually?
22. Do you have any rules for the fan page/group?
23. Do you follow other social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) about the series? What do you like mostly in these accounts?

Appendix - C

Cod System	Memo	Frequency
Cod System		900
	Inclusion to the L&M Fandom and its modus operandi on Facebook	190
	22- Do you have membership in other groups?	17
	Following other groups.	4
	Favorites	4
	Following Twitter accounts	2
	No	4
	21- Page rules and interventions?	27
	Complaints from members.	3
	Off-topic posts are removed.	7
	Political and extreme posts are prohibited.	5
	No selling	3
	Whatsapp group invitations	2
	Intervention in slang.	2
	There are rules	5
	20- What types of posts/sharings? Why?	51
	Illustrations.	1
	animations	2
	Photo with actors.	1
	Sharing about the meaning and importance of the day.	1
	Sharing the scriptwriter's tweets.	1
	Secret declarations of love with character lines..	1
	Knowledge contest	2
	Mistakes in the series	1
	News of other works of the series team...	5
	fanfictions-Scenarios for publication...	1
	those who want different scenes to be shared	1
	There was no cursing because of the culture.	1
	Playlist of TV series music	2
	Re-shooting of scenes.	2
	Visit photo of the places where the series was shot	3
	Ismail Abi's genes.	1
	Alternative final	3
	Videos from the scenes	6
	Screenshots of Whatsapp conversations	3
	Line+Image	9
	19- What is being done on the page/group? Routines? Reactions?	43
	Event sharing	1
	Refreshing the memory	1
	Informing the Group...	1
	Uploading episodes to the group page.	2
	In-group commentary for content.	1
	sharing the content on the page from their own accounts.	1
	Likes	5
	Competitions	4
	Surveys	2
	Watching the episodes again to share posts...	1
	comments	11
	to share personal troubles	5
	effing around / Chats	1
	It's about the administration of the page.	3
	18- Do you have other social media accounts?	15
	Instagram	1
	There was, but it is closed.	2
	Twitter	2
	No	3

Yes	5
17- Deciding to open a fan page? Joining the group...	37
Believing that he can do better.	1
The effect of face-to-face meetings	2
Pages on social media.	9
The desire to share the admiration.	14
Spare time	5
Discovering "Leyla ile Mecnun" and becoming a fan	432
15- Feeling different from others?	18
No	4
Everyone perceives differently.	1
more rational	1
Yes	4
seeing more details.	2
Identify with a character.	3
group building efforts in past.	2
14- Will the fascination with the series end? How long does the effect of the show last?	15
Fandom never ends....	5
Still watching.	2
It decreases but does not end	5
13- Feeling of belonging to a community? Why? Properties? What?	45
Different from other fan communities.	1
Chatting	17
Common language	7
Common jokes	3
Recognition/popularity in the group	3
Feels belonging.	8
There are exceptions but yes	2
Not feeling alone	1
New friends	12
Solidarity	6
It's a family now.	1
12- Do you have a special bond with other fans? How is it?	34
Not this time...	1
Distance to wannabe fans	2
Increase in Socialization-Communication	1
Making new friendships.	21
positive bonds	7
Understand that they have common points	3
Talking about the series.	5
11- The effects of the series on daily life?	55
Impact on personal skills, goals and professional development	2
Cultural development.	3
Orienting the sense of humor.	2
Change in personal behaviors.	6
Intellectual development.	4
Reactions/comments of the people around	2
Attempt to make watch the series	1
The reactions are like the ones in the series	6
Using concepts from the series	4
Speaking like Mecnun	6
Whatsapp group	6
They make friends.	4
There are people who become lovers	6
10- Why L&M? place in your life? What does it mean? What different?	96
The quality of the script	22
a philosophical series	13
Messages given.	6

interweaving of comedy and drama.	3
their absurdity	4
metaphors/censors	2
Curses are of good quality.	2
personal reason.	2
Unrequited love	2
The characters are us	9
Speaking style	1
Attitude	3
Occupations	2
Costume	1
Difference from other series.	16
Actors interactions	1
No intrigue-not simple scenario	1
No obscene scenes. Family series.	1
Mafia and violence	1
Rich poor stereotype	2
The series not revolving around two leading roles	2
There is us, there	31
Patience	1
Naivety	3
love	4
friendship	4
sincerity	8
neighborhood	3
9- Have you watched all the episodes? How many times?	28
9- a)All episodes?	12
No	0
Yes	12
9- b) Rewatch status?	12
6 times	1
3 times	1
5 times.	1
4 times from start to finish	1
Most, if not all, several times	2
A couple of times	3
Different episodes from time to time	2
8- How did he/she find out? Starting to watch	36
When did you start watching?	14
2013	2
2012	3
2011	4
Early 2014	3
How did he/she find out?	1
Escape from studying	2
Hearing from the surrounding	2
Followers from family	1
Friend recommendation	2
Soundtracks of the series	1
Random discovery.	7
The effect of Ben de Özledim	2
The cancellation of the series	1
7- Favorite TV series watched and never forgotten?	31
Avrupa Yakası	1
Avrupa Avupa	1
Arka Sıradakiler	1
Şubat	1
Yeşil Deniz	1
Ezel	1

Prison Break	1
Bücür Cadı	1
Sihirli Annem	1
Çocuklar Duymasın	1
Beş Kardeş	1
Ben de Özledim	1
Kardeş Payı	1
Hayat Şarkısı	1
Hatırla Sevgili	2
L&M	6
Suskunlar	1
Behzat Ç.	3
7 Numara	4
6- What series are you watching right now? Domestic and foreign?	36
6- a) Is there a series you watch regularly right now?	1
Yes. Watches Tv series regularly	2
No. Doesn't watch any TV series at the moment	8
Never watches TV	1
6- b) Local or foreign?	19
Foreign series	12
Korean Dramas	1
Sherlock	1
Black Mirror	1
Suits	1
Arrow	1
La Casa de Papel	1
Prison Break.	1
The Big Bang Theory	2
Dexter	1
Game of Thrones	1
House of Cards	1
Local TV series	7
Erkenci Kuş	1
Söz	1
Jet Sosyete	1
Ezel	1
Kalk Gidelim	1
Behzat Ç.	1
5- Love watching TV series / Favorite TV series?	38
5- a) Do you like watching TV series in general?	0
Not frequently	3
Doesn't like Turkish TV series	3
Loves watching series/dramas	10
Generally on Internet	4
Watches generally	2
Never watches TV	3
Doesn't know any series at the moment	1
5- b) Do you have favorite series genres?	0
According to her/his mood	1
Intellectual development provider	3
Period Drama	1
Comedy	6
Mind games	1
Adventure	1
Don't have favorite genre	1
Demographic Info	72
4- Occupation	14
Software developer	1
Trainee Lawyer	1

Unemployed	3
Student	7
3- Educational Degree	14
College Student	1
University Student	6
Graduated	5
2- Gender	13
Female	6
Male	6
1- Age	13
24	1
23	1
27	2
19	1
22	5
28	2
Fan Group	13
Moderator	1
Member	5
Administrator	3
Fan Page / Administrator	5
Other Codes	149
Criticism	12
What fans have achieved with campaigns?	2
Impact on the script	1
IMDB	2
Ben de Özledim	2
Book of the series	3
Reasons for missing the series	2
Cancellation of the series	6
The Gezi events and the cancellation served as advertisements.	3
Offended by the sudden cancellation	4
There used to be better series...	2
Activeness of the group	6
Effects of private life	2
Member prototypes in the group	2
Copyright issues	2
The stories of the established groups	3
The will to live the life like it is in L&M.	7
Broadcast on government channel	2
Post sharings requires a certain amount of effort.	7
Innovations	3
The page stops when the admin leaves	2
Following the series from social media.	2
Love for the character...	1
Fandom features / details...	3
Attention to details	1
Pleasant surprises for actors	1
Sense of ownership for the series and the actors	4
Need to share	2
Fandom of Burak Aksak	4
Sensibility	2
Self-promotion - the motive of admiration.	5
Knowledge of the background. Magazine...	3
Being organized	4
Follow up of the other works and personal lives of the team	3
Meetings	5
Establishing a daily relationship apart from L&M.	9
Attempt to make others watch the series	12

Reasons for spreading the series	4
The page is not fonctionning since 1-1,5 years	2
Social Media is a risky business.	4
Disabled individual	2
Difference between fan page and fan group...	2
Activities on other pages	2
Those seeking economic gain.	2
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Desire to know more.	2
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The more admiring, the more they share.	5
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CURRICULUM VITAE



TEZ ONAY SAYFASI

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