

DOI: [10.20472/SS.2019.8.2.004](https://doi.org/10.20472/SS.2019.8.2.004)

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STAR SYSTEM AND THE POPULAR CULTURE AND TURKEY'S "SUPERSTAR" AJDA PEKKAN

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## **Abstract:**

Mass communication and mass media that bring new dimensions to communication among people affect the individual's accordingly the masses level of knowledge, manner and attitude. According to Mills, mass media is the mirror of modern life of society. Mass media guides the society's potential of motivation by selling image and data; with the data they disseminate mass media can give information about other societies and cultures' standard of living, relations of individuals and consumption areas of them (Quotation by Aziz, 1982, p. 48-50).

While making sense of external reality, human beings starts out from his existing life and as the means of justification he uses his own popular culture icons (like actors, pop singers and etc.). But still he can't change the external reality and it makes the icons meaningful unconsciously. This show the differences between mass culture and popular culture (Aydogan,2004, p.37).

Popular culture is a consumption culture. While creating something popular, the existing popularity is used. Popular sport, sportsman, singers, ideas, manners, magazine heroes...something popular is covered and packed and consumers take part in the process making something popular by taking it (Erdogan, 1999, p.3). A material is sold directly. There is an indirect marketing through media.

Stars can be called popular as they present sustainability, permanency. Stars are related with cultural industry with their trends, looks and novelty.

Scanning model is a research method which aims to describe the situation existing in the past and today as it is (Karasar, 1995, p.77). This research is sample of scanning model. The research contains popular culture, connection of the stars, function of stars at creating and dissembling the popular culture and analyzing Ajda Pekkan who is the superstar of Turkey.

During the research, related publishing in Turkish and English about image, icon, consumption, popular culture, development of star system are scanned. Super star Ajda Pekkan's life is analyzed to discover the relation between popular culture and star system. Ajda Pekkan joined a contest to become the cover girl of "Ses Magazine" in 1963 and chosen the first, then she started her professional career. So for this research all the news about her are scanned at this magazine to see the duration of her becoming a star.

"Popular culture" and "star" terms give essential clues about the cultural, economic, social features of society so the results of this research may be illuminating for this field.

## **Keywords:**

Popular culture, Star system, Mass Communication, Entertainment

**JEL Classification:** L82

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**Citation:**

SANEM BENGÜ UYGUNKAN (2019). The Relationship Between the Star System and the Popular Culture and Turkey's "Superstar" Ajda Pekkan. International Journal of Social Sciences, Vol. VIII(2), pp. 56-74., 10.20472/SS.2019.8.2.004

## Introduction

The term “popular” defined in linguistic as “people or public” is defined as “common thing preferred by public” in the Cockeram dictionary in 1623 (Shiach, 1989, p.29).

Today, the term popular is used as “ something preferred or liked by many people” (Alemdar, Erdogan, 2005, p. 30). Stuart Hall criticize the term “popular” which means “communal” as it expands to vast area. “ collecting stamp, caressing a pigeon and many things can be explained by this term (Quotation Özbek, 1994, p.85). According to Hall, who criticized glorifying opinions about “popular is just a majority”, the main principle of popular is the tension and contrast between dominant and dependent classes.

Raymond Williams describes “popular” as it shown below;

1. Popular is something liked by many people,
2. Popular opposed to high culture,
3. Popular is a culture made by society,
4. Popular is something that presented to society by mass media for commercial concern (Quotation Antony Easthope, 1991, p. 76).

In the twentieth century, the popular term has gained three new meanings. First, popular is mixed with society culture and the term “volk”, “society in German” is translated as “folk” instead of popular. This caused to flash back effect on popular culture. Before the Industrial revolution popular culture was everything but the translation did not suit for the term. Popular culture had a meaning “addressing to many people” and it became “favored by many people” at the nineteenth century. Raymond Williams

describes other two essential meanings of popular. First of them address opponents to government politically. That is, popular culture means certain interests against the power. In this explanation there is something different than the other meaning and it is "opponent". Second of them has a quite wide meaning which includes daily speech, shopping, jokes, idioms, daily clothing, special dresses and celebrations for special occasions (Modleski, 1998, p.24-25). Popular culture turned into "common usage of products presented by mass production industries" and became capitalist fund. Term of popular culture lost its former meaning and now it is commercially produced fund (Erdogan, 2001).

New social rituals are obtained easily and this is importance of popular culture. Popular culture spread in Western metropolis in 1960s then in the third world countries. In 1990s popular culture covered all the areas at society. Music, fashion, media, football and etc. This is the fun of popular culture. After popular culture, minor subjects (like woman and child rights, dancing with pop music, diet problems of models) became major subjects. As a result, the societies are being dominated easily (Akay, 2002, p.18-19).

Popular culture which can be called consumption culture too, uses previous popular to create new popular. As popular, popular sports, popular sportsman, popular singers, popular ideas, popular moms, popular magazines and magazine heroes, popular TV channels can be listed. Popular people wears popular, apply to their faces and hair to sell the popular to society. So people consume the popular product and contribute to marketing. The markets are content with the results (Erdogan, Alemdar, 2005, p.33-40). 'Fashion may be conceptualized both as an object

and as a behavioral process'. Clothing helps in enhancing the self-image of the individuals, and for the Indian youth it may signify global values and lifestyle. Clothing serves to help individuals with low self-esteem adapt in the social setting and for those with high self-esteem it acts as an expressive function. Fashion products are positioned to improve the social image of the consumers. Fashion involvement is based upon behavioral activities and perceived personal interest of the individuals. Fashions are supposed to communicate the values of the society and the involvement of the consumers in their clothes provides a deeper understanding of the consumer behavior and consumption predispositions (Khan, 2013). Star is the fashion leader and innovator. Hedonic and utilitarian shopping motivations are directly related with fashion innovativeness and opinion leadership. The market success of a new fashion product depends upon its adoption by a majority of consumers in that market. Fashion leadership is a concept which signifies the mass acceptance of a new fashion product. Fashion leadership involves two major dimensions: fashion innovativeness and fashion opinion leadership. Innovator is the consumer type who has an ardent desires to purchase a new fashion product before the other consumers. Fashion opinion leader on the other hand, is a reliable person who influences the other consumers on their purchase decisions to buy a fashion product. Consumer fashion buying behavior is triggered by emotional and psychological motivations (transference that; Kang and Park-Poaps, p.313, Calık and Koparal, 2015, p.19). What makes popular pop is economical and ideological power. This power bound to society like fund bound to labor. The spring of popular culture is not only culture industry but also society. What was society's is not the part of life now. Objects

showed on TV are not society culture now. Society culture is getting fund from the society and selling back to society. In popularity there is a battle between today's popular and anti-popular. And popular culture tries hard to spread and sustained. Popular culture is product which can be bought and sold. It is related to product. It occurs by producing, selling and using the products. By means of global marketing dominancy, popular culture and opponents became functional part of class domination. Mass culture is collapsed by mass media. Not only is the sum of the production and culture industries, but also the society the product of the continuous interaction of the whole. In this interaction, as they hold sovereignty in their hands, production tools and organized production relations are determining and managing (Erdogan, Alemdar, 2005, p.33-40). Fabricators produce products while media and advertisers produce the consumers (Erdogan, 2001).

### **1. Image and Icon, Consumption and Popular Culture**

Cassier describes "human" as the symbolizing entity and this gives human another aspects (Özlem, 2000, p.171-172). An image or images have recreated views (Berger, 1995, s. 9-10). Images are standing to represent the things that are absent for that moment, and the more images get stronger, the more they are credible.

Audiences integrate the meanings of these images and their cultural representations and they put the functions into their daily lives. Human beings desire to become important, consumer goods and images are the essential springs to direct the culture (Lull, 2001, s. 106). Images have been committed to our social life so much that they are always together with us (McRobbie, 1999, p. 33).

In Greek, the word icon means an object that is committed without any criticism. The value of the icons come from social life and people giving them this meaning (Oskay, 2000, p.180).

Marshal McLuhan thinks every age and culture are iconic. Icons that have cultural code are in popular culture (Quotation: Fishwick, 1999, p.185, 187). According to Fishwick today's popular icons contain old and new together (Quotation: Oskay, 2000, p.181).

Contemporary icons are, in connection with changes in the sensory structure of modern man, more effective in everyday life because they can detect superficial and simplified images easily. In modern industrialized societies, as people arrange their daily behaviors according to other people's assessment, icons become more contemporary for the age and everywhere (Oskay, 2000, p.184).

## **2. Mass media, Cinema, Star and Relations with Popular Culture**

Since 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the decrease of working hour people have more free- time and this is an important exploitation area for media. The place of mass media in daily life compete with work and social relations (1994, p. 39). Development of mass media in modern societies affects cultural and ideological structure deeply (Erdogan, Alemdar, 2005, p.289). Turning into large-scale trade organizations, mass media organizations have been an area of cultural consumption (Erdoğan, Alemdar, 2005, p. 292). Mass media as an extension of developing technology helps popular culture to be consumed the products by the mass. Mass media has entertaining function as well as educating and informing but the products which are tool of entertainment and under the

control of mass media don't serve for the aim all the time. News can be tabloidized and science and art can be popularized. Due to the wide range of domains mass media highlights the simply perceived and understandable products. In this way, general life habits reproduced visually and verbally. Star is a part of this production and products. Star, who is popular and liked and consumed by a large part of society, is a part of popular culture with the films he shines and songs he sings. Star is a product that is loaded with content such as other commodities and he can be quickly adopted, glorified and forgotten (Yüksel, 2001, p.31). According to Alberoni and King, for the existence of the phenomenon of star, social welfare, mobility, mass media technology, industrial density and existence of the film industry should be replaced with people's working hours and free time (Dyer, 1986, p.8). Mass media which is important for spreading popular culture, enables start to be phenomena and reach to admiring mass (Yüksel, 2001, p. 29). By means of mass media like radio, cassette, movies mass media products reach to everyone (Browne, 1987, p. 162).

### **3. Popular Culture in Turkey**

Since 1950, in Turkey the population grew, the connection between metropolis and the other cities got stronger and this caused cultural changes. But metropolis and the other cities met on the common culture (in another words "popular culture") exactly in 1970. During this period, for example folk music singers introduced to metropolis. By means of technological tools like phonograph records, cultural products had chance to be recorded and spread. In 1950 and 1960, women were dependent to men and were employed at second class works. With the help of magazine women started to get autonomous. After 1960,

economic indicators showed that with the extension of revolution at ideological matters women get involved more in social life. Consumption of magazines in metropolises between 1950 and 1970 years caused development of city life, autonomous women and mobility of the women that are a big part of the society. Cinema which is a common mass media tool played an important role to change the woman image. Erotic enlargement in foreign and local cinema reflected on magazine and helped to woman item to have more elements. This situation caused radical changes on cultural products. For example, feminism get up rise (Oktay, 2002, p.98-99).

By means of popular culture, Turkish society created its own culture without social environment, political center for the first time and got beyond the cultural assertiveness (Kahraman, 2002, p.165).

#### **4. Star and Consumers**

Star fact which comes from capitalist production became more popular after cinema in America becomes widespread. Film makers, introduced cinema to poor in cities at 18<sup>th</sup> century to change the idea of cinema is for low pleasure. So all the shining actors and actresses at theatres started to act on movies and audience was pulled to cinema. By giving roles to idols or cupids, phenomenon stars were created (Yüksel, 2001, p.23-24).

Stars help to decide the ideal beauty standards and shape you according to these standards. In another words, being attractive is the scale for beauty standards. Fashion for appearance is quite superficial and small matter. Physical style change is always a social change, too (Dyer, 1986, p.15-16). It is a common view that, stars are stars because they are rare, exceptional, capable and wonderful.

The areas where the stars exist; cinema, television, music became an industry with big investments, industrial equipment, uniform system and caused to present star as a commodity. Therefore, the star must have concrete features to be marketed and advertised (Yüksel, 2001, p.24-25).

What glorifies a star is being the most talked about, watched and listened. In other words, the star gains value as it is consumed. In modern societies, it gets easier for a star to be consumed more if the star presents itself as a popular (Yüksel, 2000, p.65).

Jacques Seguela lists the principles of being a star like that;

1. Being a star is being permanent,
2. Be, what you are,
3. Force your limits,
4. Stay yourself,
5. Don't forget what makes you diva,
6. Be the mirror someone else,
7. Don't mix being famous and reputed,
8. Stay away from being overdose on media,
9. Don't lose your instinct and be wisecracking,
10. If you don't have star seed, give up,
11. Don't act anti-star,
12. Show your neutrality,
13. Discover your age,
14. Don't forget the exit,
15. Become a myth,
16. Make yourself mediatic,
17. Define yourself,
18. Be the proof of your promise,
19. Contact in real time,
20. Don't mix advertising and propaganda,
21. Be talented or change your job,
22. Accept just the sky as a limit,
23. Hang your gloves without extending the fight,
24. Collect the best people around you,
25. Put curse on being an ordinary,
26. Represent the passion,
27. Surprised yourself,
28. Feed your energy,
29. Pull yourself,
30. Be multidirectional,
31. Be a fire,
32. Stalk the intuition,
33. Find your own dream value,
34. Non-stop customize,
35. In short make yourself world-wide (Seguela, 1989, p.317-318).

## **5. Turkish Superstar Ajda Pekkan**

### **a. Between 1960-1970**

Ajda Pekkan is trying to step into the music world in these years; there are storms in Turkish magazine as in the world also. Because the popularization of the popular culture in these years especially in Turkey trigger the magazine press on the other hand caused o structure where the new stars can be consumed easily (Dilmener, 2006).

“We can see Ajda as chanteuse who fills the blanks in our family” (Ses Magazine, 16.02.1963, no:8). Ajda is announced as a star for the first time at this magazine. Ajda declares she chose her job and she wanted to develop herself in this area. Ses magazine was important as it presents the events about cinema, theatre, music and it was like star machine. By means of this magazine we earned many actor, actresses, and singers as it announced the contests and declared “male and female stars wanted”. But Ajda Pekkan was different than the others and it was understood not passed too much time after she was chosen as the first in 1963.

Stars don't fall from the sky like other products. Stars become famous with the help of interviews, radio-television broadcastings. Managers, advertisers, press attendants support the stars. It is not wrong to call being a star as a job or industry (Seguela, 1989, p.29).

After the important arising, magazines included news about Ajda in a row. Ses magazine started to stalk its own created star.

Every single star has his own property and presentation. Bridget Bardot presents herself instinctively and neutrally without hiding her bad sides. Marilyn Monroe with light blonde hair is artificial but woman of heart (Seguala, 1989, p.82). Ajda pekkan shows herself European look, beautiful, innovator woman.

**b. Between 1970-1980**

Star seed should naturally watch the flow of seasons to grow and develop. This event is universal; this is another proof for the rules of being a star do not recognize any nationality, freedom or borders (Seguala, 1989, s.63). Ajda Pekkan takes steps towards becoming universal and tries to open up to other countries. In Ses Magazine it is shown as "Welcome and Goodbye Ajda" on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1970. The star is away from Istanbul and goes to Italy, Germany, France, and Holland, Switzerland. These round trips has only one reason; she want to be famous all around the world (Ses Magazine, 17.01.1970, no:3). Her round trips to Paris become the most popular subject for the press. Everything she does or doesn't and the times that she arrives Turkey are all written on Ses magazine.

Every year Ses magazine publishes the steps of being famous of the stars with the readers. It was Ajda Pekkan in August, 1970. If she had not been attended to contest of Ses magazine and had not been acted on movies over 30, would it be still annoying of her being famous? (Ses Magazine, 20.08.1970, no:35). It shows the effect of mass media and contests are important for being a star.

Real star senses danger, keeps itself away from media without consulting anyone and waits for the audience to desire it before re-entering the masses. Real star does not immerse itself in every camera turned over or

the first microphone that is directed to it (Seguela, 1989, s.60). Ajda was on magazine in Agusut, 1971, telling “giving up singing”. She explains her reason as there is no place for the singers as the stages are full with the cinema stars (Ses magazine, 28.08.1971, no:35). Actually she emphasizes the eccentric structure of her and expects to be missed. She used cinema as a step, too; but she places herself as a star of music world even if she was media and cinema star.

“Famous star Ajda Pekkan first declared on Ses, “ My aim is to go beyond myself.” “I own too many things to my nation, Turkish people made me star, now it is time to pay back.” (Ses magazine, 22.09.1973, no: 39). Only rival of a star is itself. It can’t compare itself with another. It can give the best.

Every details of a star arise curiosity. Ajda Pekkan gives the signs of esthetic operations to reach the look that she is content. She even claims this is her right as she is a star.

Woman of each period: many singers come to music world. They are shown as rival to Ajda. Time passes, they are gone but Ajda still stands. Then music streams come out one after another but Ajda does not sink into none of them. She keeps her style and they pass. Ajda is number one again. She is woman of each period. She achieved the best with her costumes, voice, speech and attitude” (Ses Magazine, 13.12.1975, no:50).

### **c. Since 1980**

The professional life of each star follows a certain line. Success is to remain as itself while renewing itself. Ajda Pekkan always adapts herself to the era; this posture is a

style. She never loses her innovative stance, renews her appearance and renews herself from top to toe and never gives up being a star. The audience supports the stars as they show the same view all the time. Giving up the role brings to deviate from orbit and stop being a star. It is undeniable and unforgettable that Ajda Pekkan has the ability to present innovation from the beginning. To improve and reproduce herself she stays alone with music. “ I ran away yes, I ran away from myself. As Ajda Pekkan I was sure I can recreate myself if I went away from the country that I live in” (Ses Magazine, 11.10.1980, no:19).

The star does not buy the time, it is mapped over time. For a star, surviving is an art and it always worries about it. Being old does not work. Being a star is a young sport. It is not a human but an era in history (Seguela, 1989, s.24). Ajda Pekkan carries her era's traces. Ajda Pekkan pursues the innovations in fashion and in appearance. Being star is related with timing, they ascend the stairs time to time. Acting on movies, telling to give up singing, going abroad and trying to be universal, having gossips in media and refusing to talk.. They are all the steps of being a star. It is not accepted that stars are human beings. Ajda Pekkan is a good singer but she is a star first. Nobody can claim the otherwise. Nobody criticize her about anything. Being star is her job. Otherwise cannot be accepted. As Seguela declares being a star is to become permanent, stay how you are, demolish the borders and not to forget what makes you diva (Seguela , 1989, p.48).

The stars of the seventies didn't want to act anti-stars; as a result none of them is permanent. Fame does not like half measures, only blesses the Gods. Each era creates its own symbols. Childish woman Marilyn, woman-like woman

Bridget Bardot, from Bardot to dollars age where everything can be sold and bought, money-woman is discovered (Seguela, 1989, p.105). even new stars are discovered Ajda Pekkan is innovative like popular culture in her era and she is always a star in Turkish society. She is always female. She never looks like childish or housewife.

A living legend is priceless, especially if it is dull to future instead of past. Stars of cinema or song world disappeared in narcissistic memory of glory and glory days. Industry is full of optimistic. People value stars not according to they did but they will. Therefore the star grow old better than the show business. Youth does not come from age (Seguela, 1989, p.276). Ajda Pekkan is a living legend. All the magazines, records, newspapers which include her are expensive even she is alive. Ses Magazine with the cover of Ajda Pekkan which she was chosen first at the contest is in auction on internet. Ajda Pekkan continues on her way. Years pass but she never gets old.

Ajda Pekkan never played anti-star, she acted for advertisement, made TV shows, and being talked about her but never let all these things pass her away. She advertises but never propaganda herself. She stands as a proof of her promises, keeps being superstar and never step back having esthetic operations. She goes on her good singing ability and never attempts to become composer or something else. Her only limit is sky and she has no rival, she has never argy-bargy and she always knows when to be silent. She works with professionals and she has relations with well-behaved, educated and wealthy men. She puts curse on being ordinary and uses the previous movies that she acted as a jumping strategies. She creates her own dream value. She became a star that even her name shines.

## Conclusion

Popular culture, different from folk culture, contains social statue, vanity, being same while expecting to be different instead of sold product or benefit of the purchased product. Popular culture is not totally harmful. If you can arrange the dose of being the same, it can be said that it is useful for social unity. Individuals can go to work more dynamic when he gets busy with popular culture products after work, in another word he can discharge himself. He may feel luckier than the others while watching the drams of people on TV or press. He may beat the feeling of yard in his life by watching funny things and he may adapt to the system.

Star who is presented by mass media to audience to consumption-reproduction and system continuity, undertakes a role of creating popular culture and the task of spreading it. While doing so, other popular, music, cinema, fashion and advertisement industries are used. Star signs always the today with innovations and emphasizing the innovation. The star encourages the audience consume the innovation, products related to itself and the day. Star itself is a recreated product again and again after consumed by the audience. According to audience or listeners star is not a consumption object but it is an extraordinary entity that can accomplish the thing they couldn't. Star is an object of popular culture and it is a tool for marketing. Media has a great role in it. Journalists are not something to market; they advertise and market the products and stars. Being attractive, beauty, success is necessary to become a star.

Turkish superstar Ajda Pekkan fits in the criteria of being a star which is declared by Seguela. All the steps

related with popular culture that she had since the beginning of her career enabled her to become a star.

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Popular culture may become distant from being a commercial culture when the products of the popular culture of democratic popular culture increase with the alleviation of direct cultural hunger in the society and thus, the high culture consumed by radical intellectuals get away from the serious and bleak atmosphere of their products. This study guides especially artistic or economical works by showing the relations between popular culture and star. By this mean, the star and popular culture terms may gain a different viewpoint to analyze the social features.

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