



Research Article

Mass media and astrology as a reflection of the culture industry

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Abstract

The unknown has always been a subject of great interest for both the ancient and contemporary societies. We can say that making the unknown known is equivalent to the modern individual's self-motivation through confidence in the search for meaning. The aim of this study is to reveal the role of mass media in the contemporary appearance of astrology. It is not easy to find an answer to the question of what is astrology amidst its convoluted relationship with numerous fields such as religion, science, astronomy or psychology. Astrology, which, by its origin, initially sought to interpret and forecast natural phenomena and later administrative and ideological problems, has entered a brand new era with the advent of the mass media. Daily forecasts, which had never had a place in astrology in almost 5 thousand years, were included in the astrology system through newspapers in the 1930s. Astrology has become one of the standardized cultural products manufactured and disseminated by the mass media for the mass market. In the present study, how, with the popularization of astrology in parallel with mass media, mass media have incorporated a modern form of computing to astrology is discussed. It is aimed to try and understand the relationship between traditional & new media and astrology. In the present study, the history and appearance of astrology's place in mass media are discussed, respectively. Moreover, the astrological counseling offered in books, on telephone lines and by mail is also addressed. The examples were selected from both Turkey and the world, highlighting the astrological phenomena that can be considered the turning points. Lastly, the astrological calculations made via computer programs and artificial intelligence made possible with digitalization, and examples from Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 were included in the study, while the social media example was limited to Facebook.

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Introduction

With the emergence of mass media and its dissemination among opulent societies, the tools, types and subjects of publications have increased in numbers and diversified. Some of these publications are intended for material satisfaction of the humankind, while some are for spiritual satisfaction. The modern individual's search for new styles with an anxious mindset has led to the creation of a new field of entertainment in the media. With newspapers and magazines having become products of mass consumption, there came about a "popular" psychology system purified of sorcery through celestial movements. Jung holds that, through the religious and astrological knowledge of the Mithra religion, many innovations thought to be discovered by analytical psychology and psychoanalysis had, in fact, already shaped the West centuries ago (Jung, 1997). Carl Jung regards astrology in a sense as the social psychology of the ancient times that impacts societies. In the Secret of the Golden Flower, Jung argues the following on the subject: "Astrology is validated by psychology without restraint, because astrology represents the summation of the psychological knowledge of the past." The modern human, in such mood of pursuit for meaning, conveys the religious to the "new", that is, the "secular". In that sense, the psychological state of the individual who takes interest in astrology via the media, and how this reflects on the society, is crucial.

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Astrology had had a significant influence on the ancient/pre-modern society throughout history. Astrology contributed to progress during the ancient era both through prophecies and discoveries. By the 17th century, although astrology was not officially refuted by science, it became less and less credible as it was not empirically verifiable. The earth no longer being considered the center of the universe, and discovery of the laws of physics such as gravity etc. also played an important role in this matter. With its reputation shaken in the 17th century, astrology still became immensely popular especially after the Second World War across the Western world despite unrealized prophecies. Patrick Curry discussed this situation, which, in a sense, is a crisis of modernity, as a postmodern discipline (1994); everything that has been fluidized with post-modernism had become popular once again by means of mythological and ancient belief practices. However, another important element here is the mass media that produces content in tandem with the culture industry.

Horoscopes That Came onto the Stage of History through the Mass Media

From the second half of the twentieth century forward, astrology's popularity grew in many European countries, especially Germany, in parallel with the growing mass media. Particularly the astrologer Louis de Wohl, who had been reportedly working for the British Intelligence Agency during World War II, contributed greatly to this popularity. In addition to the establishment of trade associations, many initiatives are being undertaken with the aim to train professional astrologers in the field. Various influential figures were also seen to show great interest in astrology, similar to the courtiers in history. One such figure was Hitler, who committed the biggest mass murder in history. Mircea Eliade states that Hitler was interested in astrology to the point of obsession. Ernst Röhm, the commander of Hitler's special military force 'S.A.', sets out his reason for having his horoscope read as to get to know himself, highlighting individuality. Again during World War II, De Gaulle reportedly consulted a general who was also an astrologer in the Free French Forces (Marshall, 2005, p.396).

Featured in countless media outlets from magazines to books, from TV programs to various digital video broadcasts, and from hotlines to live channels of social media accounts all around the world, astrology stands as one of the most trending products of popular culture. In many publications, television programs and websites on astrology, cosmological pursuits are turned into a commodity, a product of popular culture that is bought and sold. Special birth charts and future predictions are made and astrological consultancy is provided in exchange for money through séances by so-called astrologers and self-proclaimed experts of the field. Mass media broadcasts horoscopes by taking advantage of the human need for hope and fear. In fact, its visibility via mass media and ability to spread independent of class structures due to its public accessibility has both led to the commoditization of sacred activities and rendered the individual's relationship with the divine paradoxically more distant (Mirza, 2014, p.34). According to Eliada, the primary reason behind the interest in traditional mystical beliefs circulated by mass media is the war-torn Europe's pursuit of the meaning of existence. In this climate, which Sartre calls "Nausea", astrology tells us about the future organization of the planet, the limitless possibilities of humankind, and the mysterious universe we are eager to step into, while this nauseating haze has left us susceptible to all kinds of manipulation (2017).

In his analysis based on the *Planete*² magazine, which sold 100,000 copies monthly, Eliade points out that astrology was propagated like a science of salvation, with the claim that it offered solutions to the social and political problems of the modern world. An esoteric³ magazine that was popular in France and had published 40 issues; all the magazine covers of the can be accessed via the relevant link.

According to Adorno (2011), horoscopes came into people's lives with the advent of mass media as concomitant to the irrationality of modernity. Arguing that this has historical reasons, Adorno stated rationality and irrationality go hand in hand in modern societies and even the concept of irrationality functions within rationality. He pointed out that the spirit of capitalism and the function of astrology work in the same way. Emphasizing that the commandments of capitalism are parallel with the predictions and suggestions of astrology, Adorno re-emphasized that fortunetelling, which is a part of popular culture, serves the culture industry through media attention and support.

Media organizations have been following the New Age movements that began spreading in Europe in the early 1970s. For example, Blavatsky's *New Theosophy* and Hanegraaff's *New Age* were promoted by the American media

² An esoteric magazine that was popular in France and had published 40 issues; all the magazine covers of the can be accessed via the relevant link: <http://www.johncoulthart.com/feuilleton/2014/02/27/planete-magazine-covers/>

³ Esoterism is the name of the philosophical and belief systems underlying the mystical techniques and practices (Eliade, 2017). The Western esotericism category includes alchemy, astrology, Gnosticism, Hermeticism, Kabbalah, magic, mysticism, and various occult or semi-occult societies.

for a long time between 1980 and 1990 (Aydın, 2015, p.55). The books *Age, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki and Aldous Huxley*, which are about New age beliefs and practices that can be considered a part of the media, bring individuals under its influence in the 1970s.

The media has shown great interest not only in astrology, but also in almost all new religious movements and New Age beliefs and practices that highlight mystery. A comprehensive study on the aforementioned interest of the media has been conducted by CESNUR149. The study was based on publications between 1999-2007. A total of 1,852 articles published in NY Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, LA Times, USA Today, London Guardian and Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France-Presse were reviewed. The media's approach to the concept of Falun Gong, which can be described as a New Age adaptation of a Buddha philosophy, was investigated. The results of the study proposed that the media had a keen interest in the movement. However, this interest is not in the way that its proponents desire, but in the context the media seeks to convey. Cesnur says that the media remain insensitive on issues and they report biased and manipulative news (Lemish, 2009). James A. Beckford also states in his article that new religious movements often represented in the media within the context of conflict and sensation (2006).

Examining the relationship between astrology and the media, the process of forming Herbert Schiller's "individualism and personal choice" myth should be considered together (1993, p. 19). According to Schiller, (1993) media manipulators and content producers create a packaged consciousness. In this consciousness-building process, individualization and personal choice are exaggerated in a mythical way and presented as the sine qua non of freedom. The concepts of personal choice and identifying one's self with human freedom, diluted by the media, find a place in the market of the culture industry together. The idea that the media is bi-directionally and constantly developing should always be taken into consideration. The commercial aspect of the media is cardinal; media in itself is an industry. The main goal of the media is to ensure the acceptance and continuity of the consumption order based on profitability. Schiller talks about the existence of a frame of reference that is prepared consciously or unconsciously. The main attribute of this reference framework is that it is aligned with the interests of the market economy. Although the media emphasizes pluralism through individual freedom, this is just a covert and far-fetched conscious loading. It is also important to consider New Age beliefs and practices in general, and astrology's first media coverage in particular among such conscious packages.

As stated in the Facebook Indirect Content Analysis of Astrology from New Age Practices-Beliefs in the Context of the Culture Industry (2018-2019), it is possible to see the trivialization and devaluation of all kinds of events within meaningless division⁴150. In his 1973 book, Schiller predicted that new technology would bring a new dimension to the phenomenon of split in information. In this context, it is possible to say that new media generates new necessities through astrology while also generating markets where these are sold. The media does not produce information for us to better understand the age and life. On the contrary, it causes further confusion through new communication technologies and blends the pursuit of meaning with the pursuit of despair. The life planning dichotomy of the modern individual is grounded on meaning and meaninglessness. The solution to this pursuit of meaninglessness is new needs and new markets. For example, products such as Himalayan salt, natural stones, incense etc. has been assimilated into astrology and become necessities in cultures that such products do not belong in. It is as if an occult healing market has been established.

In his research⁵ Adorno predicates the period when the interest in astrology began to rise as the mid-20th century (cited by Rigel, 2015).

Considering astrology as an important element of the culture industry, Adorno did comprehensive analyses on astrology columns featured in astrology journals and daily newspapers. He analyzed astrology as a personal consumption in terms of difficulties in reaching the astrologer, and assumed it as an expensive service (Kulak, 2006, p. 92). Conversely, it is very attractive as mass consumption. Forecasts about the love lives of the masses featured in newspaper columns entice many customers. Holding that astrology, which is regarded as knowledge of the traditional school believed to date back 5000 years, has been devalued by the media, the American astrologer Elizabeth Teissier (1994) calls this new astrology "commercial astrology". The very first intervention in astrology by the media was to divide humanity into twelve through astrology. Teissier finds media mediation so destructive

⁴ Presenting arbitrary pieces as information without presenting all aspects of an issue to the public, and even go as far as to cover them up (Schiller, 1993, p. 45).

⁵ *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture* (1994) Adorno.

that she not only dubbed it commercial, but also defined it as "pestilence", "ready-made astrology" (Teissier, 1994, p. 73).

Astrology in Traditional Media

With the emergence of mass media and its dissemination among opulent societies, the tools, types and subjects of publications have increased in numbers and diversified. Some of these publications are intended for material satisfaction of the humankind, while some are for spiritual satisfaction. The modern individual's search for new styles with an anxious mindset has led to the creation of a new field of entertainment in the media (Arslan, 2011, p. 34). The first astrological publication was published in the form of journal, book and almanac by British astrologer Robert Cross Smith (1795-1832).

Newspapers played an important role in the promotion of astrology before the distances of time and space were eliminated by the advent of the Internet. In 1930, the astrological chart, which was published by *the Sunday Express* for the occasion of Princess Margeret's birth, attracting a great deal of attention marked a turning point for newspapers (Zeldin, 1998, p. 335). Encouraged by the newspaper's editor-in-chief, John Gordon, to write a column, Naylor made the forecast one month after his first analysis that helped astrology achieve its current popularity. Naylor predicted an aviation accident involving a British aircraft in his daily analysis, and on that very same day, a British R 101 aircraft was involved in a crash. Thus, the prophecy aspect of astrology becomes a subject of great interest for the masses. The astrology that the newspapers dealt with is to divide the zodiac into 12 horoscopes and offers forecasts on them. It was Alan Leo who planted the very first seeds of this field.

Sunday Express was followed by *The People* in 1933 and *the Daily Express* in 31 January 1938, and began publishing daily astrological analyses. These analyses were given their current form only in 1936 once again by Naylor. The analyses took on the form of signs divided into 12 sun signs. Naylor started making various astrological forecasts, saying "the sun is in Aquarius" and "the moon is in Pisces". From this date onward, these type of analyses began to spread gradually, first to the Western world, and then across the whole world.

Adorno examined the astrology columns of *the Los Angeles Times* and the famous astrology journals of the time, showing how astrology itself can be considered a part of the culture industry (Kulak, 2006, p. 91). Adorno emphasized the contradiction between the religious-secular and the modern-antiquity, and drew attention to the rationalism and non-esoteric aspects of the consultation offered in astrology columns. On the other hand, after Adorno immigrated to the United States, he studied the writings of Carroll Ryther, an American astrologer whose articles were published in 166 newspapers around the world, for three months. In addition to Righter's articles published in *the Los Angeles Times*, Adorno also followed publications such as *Forecast, Astrology Guide, American Astrology, World Astrology, True Astrology, and Everyday Astrology*. Adorno stated that he sought to paint a picture with this study that serve as a warning for asterophiles (Dursun & Rigel, 2015, p. 236). Evaluating the animic trends in the publications he examined, Adorno published his comprehensive analysis on astrological forecasts in his article titled "*Stars on Earth*". Here, by deeming society's interest in astrology as fraud, Adorno specifically pointed out the rational tendency of the said fraud. The main purpose of this study conducted by Adorno is to provide a deeper insight into large-scale social phenomena involving irrational elements as well as their underlying motives.

According to Adorno (2002) the relationship between newspapers and astrology mostly focuses on garnering readers. Astrology is one of the elements that enrich the content of newspapers. The mass media, which serve the culture industry, pursue the primary goal of increasing their own capital, and act in line with the interests of the system, reinforces this purpose by means of astrology. Adorno says that the newspapers show a sense of publishing that aim to turn astrology articles into an addiction for their readers and develop their policy accordingly, which he finds fraudulent. In today's mass communication, privacy virtually becomes institutionalized, objectified and largely socialized. As a member of modern society, the individual, who enjoy secondary relationships and unable to communicate directly with each other, participate in social processes through the personal consultation offered by newspapers, magazines and professional astrologers. Newspapers serve as the medium of commercialized mystery. In the astrology columns of mainstream newspapers and magazines, the mechanism of the astrological system is never disclosed (Bernstein, 2011, p. 24). Apart from horoscope forecasts, newspapers utilized astrology in their news and files as well. Many subjects such as diet based on the zodiac signs, fashion based on the zodiac signs, and character analysis based on the children's zodiac signs are blended with astrology and take their places in newspaper columns. Featuring popular trends and fashionable products, these pages are seen to serve the capitalist industry, which aims more sales and more profit.

Following the Western world, astrology columns started being published regularly in Turkish newspapers from 1950s forward, and astrology and astrologers started to earn recognition. A horoscope column was published in Milliyet newspaper for the first time on 1 October 1954. While the column was titled "Today's Forecast", there is no information available on the identity of the author of the column. Later, this column continued to be published under various titles such as "Your Forecast" and "Forecast". The first newspaper to publish a horoscope column using the name of an astrologer was once again the Milliyet newspaper. The column published on January 1991 under the title "Mega Astro Gufran"⁶ shows the photograph of the astrologer (Düztepe, 2005, p. 101). The Milliyet newspaper was followed by the Tercüman, Dünya and Günaydın newspapers, which included horoscope forecasts under different titles. According to Düztepe's investigation, the horoscope columns of the Dünya newspaper, published on 22 April 1962 and 23 April 1962 are exactly the same (2005).

1200 out of 1750 daily newspapers published in the USA in the 1970s feature a horoscope column (Eliade, 2017, p.). It is estimated that at least 5 million people in the USA plan their lives based on astrological forecasts (Rosenthal, 1993, p. 22).

By the mid-1980s, President Regan and his wife's regular consultations with astrologers helped astrology become an element of popular culture covered by *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Dozens of articles were published in these "serious" newspapers.

Allum says that the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry⁷, a US-based organization, launched a campaign in 1984 to convince newspapers and magazines to add health warnings to their astrology content. Approximately 70 out of 1,000 publications adopted this recommendation (Rigel, 2015, p. 231). The increase in the number of news articles on not just astrology, but various other topics ranging from reincarnation to paranormal phenomena gives important clues about the change process that the US-centered Western world went through (Mirza, 2014, p. 112).

"Astro-modâ" in the Kelebek supplement of the Hürriyet newspaper dated 08 June 2004 (Düztepe, 2005, p. 130), the key message conveyed by the article is the relationship between fashion and sense of dressing. As one can see from this sample article, over the years, astrology has been associated with every field of popular culture. Most of the articles on astrology published in the Radikal newspaper between 2001-2004 featured tabloid content (Düztepe, 2005, p. 131).

Dr. Barış Yetkin studied the political astrological news, interviews and commentary texts of the Sabah, Bugün, Habertürk, Sözcü, Cumhuriyet, Hürriyet/Posta newspapers in 2014 and 2015. According to his study, the articles did not have any statements regarding changing the market economy in the texts. The astrological knowledge has both become a popular culture material and provides products to culture industries via newspapers.

Newspapers and magazines played a dominant role in the popularization of astrological forecasts based on sun signs in their current sense.

The first publication on astrology in history was a monthly magazine that was launched in London in 1791. The Almanac of *Moore Magazine* published in 1803 sold 393,570 copies, and in 1824, the world's first weekly astrology magazine *The Straggling Astrologer* was published in England (Zeldin, 1998, p. 335). By 1898 Raphael's Almanac and Zadkiel's Almanac included astrology and prophecy in greater detail than Moore did. The publication, which sold approximately 300,000 copies at its first release, boosted its sales six times in 1851 (Godwin 1994, 177). In the 1890s, two academic articles on astrology in the field of folklore in the USA were published in journals, and the relationship between folk beliefs, meteorology and the sky was found particular valuable (Thornton, 2016, p. 20).

The population of the newly-developing cities in Russia in the 1890s began taking an interest in astrology, and this curiosity created a market for the recently established publishing houses. With the impact of spreading literacy, astrological "how-to" guides, brochures and single-page articles and popular journals were published (Rosenthal, 1993, p. 5).

By the 20th century, after the weekly horoscope analyses that started with *The Sunday Express*, *The People* magazine recruited an astrologer in 1934, attracting a great deal of public attention. The Planete magazine published in France featured highly important issues on both astrology and mysticism. *Le Monde* published two articles about the amazing success of the magazine, which had 80,000 subscribers while reaching 100,000 sales

⁶ During the months of May and June 2018, Mega Astro Gufran attended online astrology courses as participant investigator for observation purposes. It was observed that, despite his advanced age, the astrologer had adapted well to changing conditions using an advanced module called Percilus.

⁷ The organization was at that time called the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.

monthly. *The* framework of Planete for the mystical approaches, astrology in particular, which are currently considered a part of the New Age, is scientific in appearance, an imaginary mythology (Eliade, 2007, p. 22-30).

These strikingly high circulations in the Western world resulted in the formation of a large market in various countries. In Australia, the magazines *Woman's Day* and *New Idea* issued a regular occultism publication in which astrology played a dominant role in the 1980s and the 1990s, respectively. Many magazines featured astrology on their covers, contributing significantly to the popularization of astrology, and benefited from the circulation of astrological content, thus creating a new para-culture.⁸ (Arslan, 2011, cited from Amant and Goode).

While astrology was addressed in these journals in general, in 1970, *She* magazine revolutionized astrology by using a special computer program. As communication technologies advanced, the market share of astrology increased alongside it. Astrology is the one subject that is definitely featured every week in women's magazine craze that started with *She* magazine (Franklin, 2008, p. 242).

In Turkey, Metapsişik Tetkikler ve İlmi Araştırmalar Derneği (Metapsychic Studies and Scientific Research Society) featured information about astrology in its own magazine published from 1960 forward. With the 1980s, magazines such as *Fenomen*, *Focus* and their thematic supplements started including the belief practices of the New Age movement and astrology (Kozanoğlu, 1997, 38).

The knowledge of astrology, which began with newspapers and reached a more specific audience through magazines, is one of the popular culture products that has been the most featured subject of books in the last century. These ideas were made popular by ?

Blavatsky's books titled *Theosophical Society and Isis Unveiled's* published in 1877. Jesse Stearn's *A Time for Astrology* (1971) and Linda Goodman's *Sun Signs* (1975) are the two major best-sellers in the 1970s. These books were followed by the study titled *A Gift of Prophecy*⁹ authored by Ruth Montgomery in 1988. The book sold 260,000 hardcover copies and 2,800,000 paperback copies (Rosenthal, 1993, p. 20). In Turkey, on the other hand, there are countless publications available such as books discussing the methods to communicate with supernatural beings, and those based on the Eastern philosophy that address topics such as astrology, magic, tarot, reiki, meditation, as well as those discussing the use of natural stones and their secret healing capabilities. Many of these publications are offered for sale under self-help genre. Nuray Sayari's books on astrology are among the bestsellers in Turkey.

Limiting the horoscopes to daily analysis was caught on by newspaper, and these horoscopes were further branched out into weekly and monthly forecasts in books. In that vein, forecast books featuring horoscopes began to be published on the New Year's Eve during the early 20th century in the West, and after the 1980s in Turkey. However, these have limited relevance to traditional knowledge of astrology. Because during the relevant periods, some slow-moving planets had never visited some particular signs, so these are deemed products of imagination that are not included in the thesis of astrology (Teissier, 1994, p. 74). Popular horoscope books, which are among the bestsellers of the last few years, have led to the emergence of a category dealing with concepts such as parapsychology-mystery-magic in bookstores and online stores.

As communication technologies advanced, the market for astrology has grown along with them. Firstly, in 1999, *The Daily Mail* started offering astrology services via telephone. While *the Daily Mail* recorded a turnover of 10 million pounds from this service, other practices did not remain indifferent to this development (Uyar, 2019, p.47). Printed publications have never been able to achieve incomes as high as those generated by hotlines. Half of the *Daily Mail's* earnings were granted to British Telecom, 20 percent to the line provider, and 10 percent to the astrologer (Franklin, 2008, p. 254).

In Turkey, astrology service over 900 lines began to be seen. As shown in the relevant link, (<http://alkislarlayasiyorum.com/icerik/1823/metin-rezzan-kiraz-inter-star-900lu-hattan-astroloji>) professional astrologers Rezzan Kiraz and Metin Kiraz advertised the astrological consultation they provided via hotlines in a pseudo-psychic ambiance on the first private television channel of the time. These hotlines attracted a daily call number of up to 100,000 in 1991 (Nirun, 11.04.2012).

⁸ In the context of taking advantage of paranormal beliefs.

⁹Ability to Predict the Future



Figure 1.

In the 1990's, Astrological Consultation Was Offered via Hotlines on the First Private Television Channel of the Time.

Following in footsteps of newspapers, astrologers started offering consultation to many customers via mail without meeting them in person (Marshall, 2005, p. 395). Today, with the advent of digitalization, this has evolved into the medium of electronic mail. Astrologers, who were interviewed extensively, stated that they talked to their clients via video calls on Skype and WhatsApp, and that they would report the results to their clients first verbally, and then via e-mail in the form of reports. Those who do not prefer video calls can receive information via Facebook's Messenger chat system or e-mail.

The power of television, which has been considered an effective media tool since its invention, to adapt popular culture products to social life has been observed with astrology as well. After newspapers and magazines, radio was the first to offer a rich domain for astrologers. Evangeline Adams, the first person to broadcast on radio in 1930 in the USA, received 150,000 requests for horoscope forecasts. Shortly after the broadcasts began, certain restrictions were imposed on the radio programs due to criticisms such as being unethical and involving sorcery, forcing some astrologers to apply to Mexico and start broadcasting in border stations (Connor, 1943, p. 228).

Astrology and new age content, which were openly declared as mere superstitions by modern science, began drawing more attention with the popularization of television in the West and the growing influence of the cinema industry. The paranormal and irrational approaches introduced with the Matrix pioneered a new trend with the movie adaptations of the Harry Potter book series.

In addition to television programs such as *UFO Gerçeği* (the UFO Truth), *Smır Ötesi* (Beyond the Edge), *Üçüncü Göz* (the Third Eye), and *Gizli Dosyalar* (Secret Files), which became a popular trend in Turkish Television particularly after the 80s, news bulletins were also enriched with content featuring warlocks, the new age approach introduced by sorcerers, and sections involving astrologers in women's TV shows. By the 2000s, almost all women's TV shows attracted even further attention to astrology that is a part of popular culture.

Astrology in Digital Media

Over the past 30 years, developments in communication technologies and their subsequent merge has led to the emergence of new types and forms of communication. This has redefined the modern individual's interaction with the media, who previously had one-way communication with the media with the advent of the industrial society. While large media owned by big companies and states maintained their influence and power, the expansion of the digital environment created new market prerogatives and business models. These effects enabled the audience and the consumer to become both a participant and a producer. This shifting landscape created unprecedented opportunities, especially in terms of diversification of popular culture elements. Technologies such as websites, computer programs, digital photography, video-audio blogs, wikis, file sharing systems, open source software, and social media have all come together and formed a digital ecology. This emerging digital media ecology, with its uniquely complex structure, has created complex problems in numerous areas (Lievrouw, 2016, p.12). The virtual environment, which transcends all kinds of institutional structures and authorities in various contexts, has brought people of all beliefs together on a platform where they interact with one another. Akgül defines this as media piety (Akgül, 2017, p. 202).

Astrology, which appears to be a part of the New Age beliefs and practices under the umbrella of new religious movements, saw its true leap in market share with the advent of digital technology. Prophecies made on paper through hand drawings and mathematical calculations were now made using ready-made programs enabled with the mediation of the computer. The entire computational process is carried out by the computer with sufficient information of the date of birth, time of birth and place of birth of the person whose astrological birth chart is to

be created. Astro Flash was the first such computer program to be introduced into the market (Teissier, 1994, p. 264).

The most common ones among the programs that have improved further and offer all kinds of calculation techniques after the Astro Flash are as follows:

- Canopus
- Kepler 7.0
- Janus 4.3
- Astrolog 5.41
- Solar Fire
- Skyglobe
- Winstar.

The program recommended in astrology courses, which allows the investigator to attend as a participant observer, is Solar Fire listed above. Outfitted with an extremely complex structure, Solar Fire program can be purchased for \$500. The operating language of the Solar Fire computer program is English. Separately priced 1-day and 2-day courses are offered to teach how to use the program. The message below includes an introduction to one of these courses.

SOLAR FİRE EĞİTİMİ BAŞLIYOR
 🌿🌿 EĞİTİMLER HAFTANIN TEK GÜNÜ, PERCULUS ÜZERİNDEN
 ONLINE OLACAKTIR.
 🌿🌿 EĞİTİM DÖRT HAFTA SÜRECEKTİR
 🌿🌿 DERS ÜCRETİ 190 ₺ DİR.
 🌿🌿 BAŞVURULAR DOĞUM VERİLERİ İLE BİRLİKTE OLACAKTIR.
 🌿🌿 TEMEL EĞİTİM BAŞLAMA TARİHİ 10 EKİM SAAT 21:00
 🌿🌿 ARADAN ALIM OLMAYACAKTIR. BU EĞİTİMİ TAMAMLAYANLAR
 TEMEL SEVİYE EĞİTİME GEÇEBİLECEKTİR.
 Not: 3 Aydan kısa süreli olan programlarda katılım belgesi düzenlenmez
 🌿🌿 ÖNEMLİ NOT: Kontenjan sınırlı olduğu için katılmak isteyenlerin
 eğitim gününden önce kayıt yaptırmaları gerekmektedir.
 🌿🌿 Instagram hesabımızda canlı yayınlar başlayacak takip edin
 iletişim için

SOLAR FIRE TRAINING COURSES SOON TO START
 - TRAINING COURSES WILL BE HELD ONLINE ONCE A WEEK
 VIA PERCULUS.
 - THE TRAINING WILL TAKE 4 WEEKS.
 - THE COURSE FEE IS TRY 190.
 -APPLICATIONS WILL BE SUBMITTED ALONG WITH BIRTH
 INFORMATION.
 - THE STARTING DATE OF BASIC TRAINING IS 10 OCTOBER, AT
 21:00.
 Note: Certificate of Attendance is not issued in programs
 shorter than 3 months.
 -IMPORTANT NOTE: Since attendance is on space-available
 basis, those who wish to enroll must do so before the date of
 training.
 - Follow us for live courses on INSTAGRAM, which will start
 soon.
 Contact via:

Figure 2.

Solar Fire Course Introduction

The advent of computer programs and artificial intelligence also led to shifts in astrologers' style of analysis; while classical astrologers draw and examine a horoscope through manual calculations which take days, modern astrologers can allocate the time they save on calculation efforts to forecasts.

Although utilization of the media to promote astrology is nothing new in Turkey, as it is with the world, expansion of their sphere of influence was made possible with the advent of digital media. According to a survey conducted by Varlık, digital channels are the most widely preferred form of communication the New Age beliefs and practices in Turkey use to inform their followers with a rate of 35% (Varlık, 2019, p, 88).

Although there are countless books written on astrology, with the introduction of the internet into our lives, websites have undertaken an important function in generating and disseminating astrological information. Websites, which offer the convenience of publishing without the need for a printing house, distribution monopolies, and the approval and permission of governmental agencies, are now a cheap and attractive media tool for broadcasts on astrology. Before the emergence of social media accounts, astrology was a popular cultural consumption tool that had been traded via these channels. Such websites are used by people called astrologers as a means of providing birth charts, future predictions and astrological consultancy, as well as serving as an unlimited, referenced-unreferenced publication medium about astrology. The first website to provide astrology services was founded in 2001 by Daily Mirror astrologist Jonathan Cainer. While the website //www.cainer.com/ attracted 100,000 unique visitors and traffic of 300,000 to 600,000 clicks per day. Based on this data, the website has become the fourth most popular website in the UK (Franklin, 2008, s.255). The trend in Turkey, on the other

hand, initially involved internet forums on astrology, followed by astrologer websites and blogs. Due to their one-way communication, websites dubbed as Web 1.0 served as mediums that only allowed content sharing. However, with the advent of Web 2.0, the social media, which allows instant communication and interaction, has results in websites being preferred less.

With the introduction of smartphones into the market, a significant portion of the increasingly advanced mobile applications are reserved for various new age practices. Among them are applications that send notifications based on the astrological system. In addition, astrologers provide online consultancy services through these applications thanks to the smartphone systems convey both sounds and visuals. In the studies he attended as participant observer, it was seen that online counseling sessions were mostly done via phone using Skype and WhatsApp applications. This is an indication of how it has become easier to reach astrologers compared to the old times. Similarly, it shows that those who provide astrological and spiritual consultancy can sell products to their customers more easily for more affordable fees (Pınarbaşı, 2021).

With the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, social media came to the fore with its many different features. These features include; the ability to share and see who is sharing, control features such as changing, deleting and adding texts, images, sounds and video files on the content, selecting friends according to preferences, and creating friend groups. Another prominent feature of social media is that it has a technology that can be easily used by people with any knowledge level and device. This convenience allows every user to produce content about any and every aspect of life on social media.

The relationship of astrology, which is becoming increasingly popular in the digital environment through websites, with the culture industry has virtually been restructured with the growing number of social media channels. The promotion and ease of access of social media accounts have reshaped the type and distribution of astrological publications. Astrologers establish new virtual academies and schools through social media networks, and the knowledge of astrology is rebuilt through followers who can become astrologers in a short time. For astrologers, this innovation occurs in a way that reconciles the new with the old, and combines the known technologies with the new ones. For example, the Solar Fire program, which has been used for astrological charting since the 90s, is promoted among astrology groups and brief online classes are held to train people on how to use the program. Or articles previously published on personal websites and blogs are reproduced by astrological content producers, and can be made into a curriculum, a purification camp, or an international mystical quest. In other words, the format of social media is highly suitable for the promotion, commodification and mutual interactions of astrology. The decisive factor here is that the platform provides free access and establishes a system integrated with means of payment such as Pay-Pal. In other words, while the astrological content creator packages and sells their product, their followers can make payments reliably.

Another conspicuous issue on social media platforms is the building of a rapidly shifting and restructured world of communication. The groups that were created quickly on Facebook and the individuals who communicated and interacted on these groups had been observed from 2017, when the study began, until 2020, when the results were analyzed. A follower, who was a member of a single astrological group a few months ago, follows more groups after a few months, and this process is constantly renewed. This state of renewal is compatible with the element of the new media that combines the existing technologies with the means of innovative technology.

On the other hand, according to a study conducted in Japan, with the advent of social media, the New Age Religion has started to express themselves more. For example, while a New Ager group in Japan published 2,630 videos in 2009, this number increased to 5,180 in 2011 (Nobutaka, 2012).

Since astrology has come into circulation in the mass media, Astrologers take on a societal role through their prophecies like other healers who have had their share of modernization, liberalization and post-modern approaches.

Since the magazine deals with psychology, articles and studies on astrology, media and society or individual psychology should be addressed, albeit briefly, under a sub-heading. Some of these prophecies have the potential of exerting a transforming effect in terms of social psychology. An Anatolian belief from the traditional mythical era maintains that what is said is bound to come true; thus, it is advised to always talk about what is good and auspicious. This belief is also confirmed by the science of psychology, that is, a child who is constantly called a failure might be mentally affected and eventually fail. This phenomenon, in the modern age, is defined as “self-fulfilling prophecy”. Astrological prophecy, however, is usually conditional; every possibility is taken into account,

and some have certain conditions established on their chart and some have those conditions met through choices. On the other hand, a language of anxiety is seen between the individual who makes the prophecy and the reader, based on their awareness of the risks and uncertainties faced by the newly-emerged society following the industrial revolution.

Conclusion

Mass media and the ensuing digital media has become increasingly important since day they have been introduced into circulation. As the communication tools, which are used in increasing number in both the daily and professional life, become more diverse, their effect on their users also becomes that much stronger. Holding the power to penetrate cultures and societies, these media tend to open their windows to certain fields more, with the aim to sometimes attract more readers and sometimes in line with the demands of the capitalist system. Numerous unrelated fields such as shopping, faith, idea, law and health are carried out via the media. Religious beliefs, neo-pagan practices, and rational approaches also have their share from this situation. One such practice is astrology, which is among the New Age belief practices. After having been featured on newspapers and televisions for many years, astrology is being reproduced in digital media. A belief and practice dating back to ancient times, astrology is diversified through communication tools, similar to culture that is restructured in every era. The most decisive dynamic in the aforementioned processes has been the concept of consumption. Initially an field of economic activity, the concept of consumption went one step further and turned into a phenomenon that encompasses daily life and cultural areas in the society. One can say that the primary reason for this is that there was a big break in the traditional sense of consumption prior to industrialization. The primary production areas of this culture industry are the radio and television, photography, cinema, advertisement, internet and social media. Astrology has remained a commodity in its various forms since the existence of the mass media. Through a parallel process, it has created a market. And the product being traded in this market is the future. Interest in these areas goes beyond the class categories as they are shaped by mass media and can reach far and wide. Therefore, these beliefs and practices have been adopted by many different groups in socio-cultural terms. As Schiller points out in his quote from Freiere (1993, p. 42), even professionals are unaware of what they are actually doing, thanks to the fragmentation that prevents perceiving the big picture. In that respect, those who produce such content may be unaware or uninformed in order to support the media in pushing astrology. Daniell Bell, who views information as a strategic resource, highlights that the crucial point is who will control this information and how much of it will be allocated to whom. At this point, the question of who is in control of the knowledge of practice of astrology propagated through media attention and support, and how much of it is put into circulation, is meaningful.

Astrology's rise in popularity in the mass media began on 24 August 1930 with R.H. Naylor writing the astrological profile of Princess Margeret, daughter of George VI in *Sunday Express* (Marshall, 2005, p. 395). As can be seen in the present study, a new field was created in the media over the lives of famous people, and then a Market started to form upon this field. The calculation method based on sun signs, which had never been part of the 5000-year history of astrology, has been created by means of the media. The most crucial intervention in astrology by the media was to divide humanity into twelve through astrology. As detailed in the present study, astrology has always been widely read and demanded in traditional mass media and digital media. Furthermore, the tools of astrological calculations have changed with the invention of computers and programs. And then, astrology took its market share in this recently-emerged field. The present study takes Facebook as the representation of the social media, and includes the astrology groups and their followers on this network. Compared to traditional media, the social media has expanded the parameters of astrological calculation and introduced mythology and asteroids up in the sky into the market.

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