

# **CONTEMPORARY TURKISH CONSUMPTIONSCAPE: POLARITY AND PLURALITY**

## **Abstract**

The paper first provides a brief economic and political background of Turkey and discusses the key turning points in the country's history. We then discuss the current consumption environment in relation to different socio-economic groupings. Finally, we outline four different consumption practices – Islamist, spectacularist, nationalist, and historical – that have become increasingly visible in recent years. We suggest that the contemporary Turkish consumptionscape is complex and multi-layered where different adaptations of the modern identity and modern consumption practices exist side by side.

Marketing begins and ends with consumers. A company can survive only by correctly assessing and anticipating consumers' needs, and responding to them in an efficient and timely manner. Globalization, technological developments, movement of people and products intensify competition and transform consumption practices in the less affluent societies. Some believe that globalization leads to commercial, cultural, and technological standardization and as societies become richer their consumption practices resemble to those of the Western world. Others argue that consumption cultures developed in the less affluent societies are neither uni-directional adoption of Western values nor a mere replica of Western consumption styles (Ger and Belk 1996, Miller 1995, Sandıkcı and Ger 2001).

In this paper, we explore contemporary Turkish consumptionscape and discuss how global and local economic, political, social, and cultural forces shape consumption patterns. As many developing countries, Turkey suffers from uneven distribution of income where a small percentage of the population enjoys very high levels of income. The significant gap between the haves and have-nots becomes reflected in consumption behaviors. A small percentage of the population enjoys a lifestyle based on the global consumerist ideology, reside in million dollars residences, adorn themselves with designer clothing, dine at up-scale Turkish and foreign cuisine restaurants, and travel abroad frequently. The majority of the population, however, struggles to maintain a

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descent living. In addition to the polarity observed between the consumption styles of different socio-economic groups, Turkish consumptionscape is characterized by plurality of consumption practices that entail different interpretations of the modern and the traditional, the local and the global. Turkey is located between the West and the East not only in geographical terms but also in cultural and social terms. An inevitable effect of this is the emergence of hybrid forms of lifestyles and consumption dynamics that draw from multiple cultural resources.

The paper first provides a brief economic and political background of Turkey and discusses major turning points in the history of the Republic. We then discuss the current consumption environment in relation to different socio-economic groupings and outline variations in the income levels as well as consumption styles among different classes. Finally, drawing from data collected from different sources such as interviews, participant observations, archival data, and popular media, we discuss four different consumption practices – Islamist, spectacularist, nationalist, and historical – that have become increasingly visible. We suggest that contemporary Turkish consumptionscape is complex and multi-layered where different adaptations of the modern identity and modern consumption practices co-exist.

## **Background**

The establishment of the Republic in 1923 marks a fundamental change in Turkish history. The social revolution undertaken by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the state, aimed at changing every aspect of the economy, culture, and society, and transforming a rural, traditional and religious empire to an industrial, modern and secular republic. In a short period of time everything from the clothing style to the alphabet, from the civil code to the measurement units has changed. The new regime was paternalistic and authoritarian (Robins 1996), and believed that only by adopting the principles of rationality, technology and science, Turkey could progress and become a prosperous, civilized and modern country. As Robins argues, for the Kemalist elite, “it seemed as if the principles of modernity could be accommodated only on the basis of a massive prohibition and interdiction of the historical and traditional culture” (1996: 68). However, the ambitious social engineering program was far from being a smooth process. The country frequently experienced economic and political turmoil which led to the military coups of 1960, 1971 and 1980.

Until the 1980s, Turkey’s economic development strategy was based on the import-substitution model. The semi-controlled mixed economy consisted of domestically-oriented publicly and privately owned industrial sector and mostly privately owned small agricultural businesses. With many restrictions on foreign direct investment and high import tariffs, local companies were protected from global competition. During the early decades of the republic the model proved to be successful and managed to create an industrial base in consumption goods. However, by the end of 1960s, it had become clear that the economic

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boom experienced earlier was not sustainable and import-substitution model had been unsuccessful in developing industries that manufacture intermediate and capital goods (Tokatli and Boyaci, 1998).

From the beginning, industrialization had been uneven across Turkey, with businesses concentrating mostly in Istanbul and other big cities in the Western parts of the country. An inevitable effect of this was the influx of people from the rural Eastern parts to Istanbul and other developing cities with the hopes of finding employment and better living conditions. Those who migrated settled down at the peripheries of the cities, building shantytowns on the land belonging to the state or the municipalities. First seen during the early 1950s, shantytowns mushroomed in the coming decades as a result of increasing immigration from Eastern Turkey (Keleş, 2002). The migrants did not only build illegal houses but also developed a culture of their own that combined rural traditions with the values of the city. Out of the shantytowns emerged *arabesk*, the culture of the migrant, that spoke of "a decaying city in which poverty stricken migrant workers are exploited and abused" (Stokes 1992: 1). As Robins observes "village people, religious people, Kurdish people have invaded the life-space of the secular and westernized middle classes" (1996: 75), bringing the geographically and socially peripheral Islamist revivalism and ethnic identification into center, into the big cities.

Since the 1980s, Turkey's development strategy has changed drastically. Three years after the 1980 military coup elections were held and the military yielded power back to the parliament. The late Turgut Özal, whose Motherland Party gained a sweeping victory at the elections, became the prime minister. Mr. Özal was an avid believer of liberalization and globalization, and sought to develop the export potential of the country and opening Turkey up to the global competition (Öniş, 1991). The Özal era was characterized by a positive approach to foreign capital, expansion of the service and consumer goods industries, and restructuring of the financial and retailing sectors. During the 1981-1993 period, the economy experienced high rates of growth, averaging an annual rate of 5 %. Despite the financial crises in 1994 and 2001, average income increased steadily over the years, and organized financial support in the form of credit cards, consumer credit, and installment options developed a solid consumption base among the relatively well-off segments of the urban population.

In the 1990s, as a result of the liberalization policies, Turkish consumers found themselves bombarded with foreign brand name products that they had not heard of before or could have purchased only from the black market. Shopping malls, five-star hotels, office towers, gated communities, foreign cuisine, and fast-food restaurants became the new landmarks of Istanbul and other big cities. With the privatization of television and radio broadcasting, several private television and radio channels came out, transforming the nature and scope of advertising dramatically. The economic boom of the period however was fueled by both legitimate and illegitimate means. Stories of people becoming excessively rich overnight occupied the public discourse. For the newly rich, conspicuous consumption and obsession with foreign brand names became the means of symbolic expression (Sandıkçı and Ger, 2002). However,

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while the recently prosperous upper-middle and upper classes enjoyed a global consumerist lifestyle, income distribution got worse over the years, especially in the two largest cities Istanbul and Ankara which comprise 28 percent of the population and 34 percent of total consumption expenditures (DIE 2004). The gap between the haves and have-nots made its mark on the economic, social, and cultural environment, creating a consumptionscape which is characterized by both polarity and plurality.

## **Social class, lifestyle, and consumption**

In almost all societies, power, authority, and prestige are unequally distributed, and access to resources such as education, housing, and consumer goods is largely determined by people's position in the social hierarchy. Social class consists of a complex set of variables including income, education, occupation, and family background, and describes the overall rank of people in a society. Social class, similar to other macro groupings such as ethnicity and religion, influences consumers' behaviors both directly and indirectly. On the one hand, it affects purchasing directly by determining how much money will be spent. On the other hand, it shapes one's identity, taste structure, and lifestyle, and indirectly affects how money will be spent. In this sense, "social class is as much a state of being as it is of having" (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 2002: 383). The past decades have witnessed changes in the class structure and the relationship between class and consumption in many newly industrializing countries. As a result of globalization of economies, development of consumer societies and relatively high levels of growth, upper income groups of the "new rich" have emerged (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan, 2004). On the other hand, due to ineffective allocation of wealth and corruption, the gap between the haves and have-nots has also increased.

Similar to the many less affluent countries Turkey suffers from highly unequal income distribution. Despite minor improvements in recent years, income differences between social classes continue to be deep. According to the latest figures, while the richest 20 % of the households command 48,3 % of the total disposable income, the poorest quintile's share remains only at 6 % (DIE 2004). With a Gini coefficient of 42, Turkey ranks as the 40<sup>th</sup> worst income distribution economy among 113 countries (CIA World Factbook, 2005). As a result of high urbanization rate, today 62 % of the population lives in the urban areas. Urban population possesses 71,5 % of the total disposable income and their spending constitutes 72,7 % of total consumption expenditures (DIE 2004). On the other hand, 27 % of population lives below the poverty line<sup>1</sup>. This figure goes up to 35 % in the rural areas and down to 22 % in the cities. Around 15 % of Turks experience relative poverty; that is they live below the average welfare level of the society (DIE 2004).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Absolute poverty based on food and non-food expenditures.

<sup>2</sup> Relative poverty line was defined as 50 % of the mean value of the consumption expenditures per equivalent individual (DIE 2004).

**Table 1: Types of consumer products according to income quintiles, 2003 (monthly averages in %)**

Types of consumer products	Income groups (%)				
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Foods and non-alcoholic beverages	13.1	16.9	19.5	22.2	28.2
Alcoholic beverages, tobacco products	11.3	15.3	18.8	23.5	31.0
Clothing and footwear	6.4	11.6	15.3	22.4	44.2
Accommodation expenses and rent	9.3	13.8	17.5	22.0	37.5
Furnishings, services for home	6.4	10.8	16.2	23.2	43.4
Health	9.1	12.4	17.3	17.8	43.5
Transport	3.8	7.3	11.0	19.6	58.2
Communications	6.2	11.0	15.4	23.0	44.5
Entertainment and culture	3.5	6.7	11.7	18.7	59.5
Education	1.2	4.5	8.3	16.9	69.1
Restaurants and hotels	6.2	9.9	15.5	23.0	45.5
Miscellaneous products and services	5.5	8.7	14.1	20.5	51.2

Source: Turkey's Statistical Yearbook, 2004.

According to the 2003 Household Budget Survey, on the average, housing and rent expenditures constitute 28,3 % of total consumption expenditures, followed by 27,5 % spent on food and non-alcoholic beverages, 9,8 % on transportation, 6,2 % on clothing and footwear, and 5,7 % on house furnishing and home care services (DIE 2004). Communication, restaurant and hotel services, and alcoholic beverages, cigarette and tobacco each have a share of around four percent. Households allocate only around 2 % of their total consumption expenditures to health, education, and entertainment and culture categories respectively (for the breakdown of consumption expenditures by income quintiles, see Table 1).

**Table 2: Consumption levels according to product categories**

Consumption level per capita		
Product categories	Turkey	Europe
Chicken meat (kg)	9.0	20.0
Meat (kg)	25.0	105.0
Pasta (kg)	4.5	6.4
Brand name yogurt (kg)	3.4	20.0
Ice cream (l)	1.0	8.0
Fruit juice (bottle)	13.0	114.0
Refreshing non-alcoholic beverages (bottle)	107.0	334.0
Beer (l)	1.0	114.0
Paper towels (kg)	0.1	3.3
Toilet paper (kg)	0.4	5.9
Mobile phones	33.0	70.0
Car	70.0	475.0
Products made of iron (kg)	191.0	308.3
Cement (kg)	370.0	600.0

Source: Adapted from Firat, 2002.

As the overall purchasing power is relatively low, per person consumption rates in many product categories are far below than the European Union averages (see Table 2). For instance, only twenty percent of households use toilet paper and six percent use paper towel (Capital 2002). In addition to limited income, cultural factors play a role in low penetration rates. For example, in dairy products category, although consumption rates are high, especially for milk and yoghurt, share of branded products remain very low. This, however, is expected to change in the long run with increasing education level and women's employment rate. Nonetheless, with a population of seventy million and gradual improvements in the disposable income, Turkey appears as a potentially lucrative market. The promising market attracts new global and local players; in many product categories, competition is tough with many offerings (see Table 3).

While average consumption rates across different product categories remain low, consumption styles and spending levels of different social classes vary significantly. According to a 2002 survey conducted among the urban population, less than six hundred thousand people are categorized as belonging to the A socio-economic group and they have an annual average disposable household income of sixteen thousand dollars (Capital, 2003). Two and half million people belong to the B socio-economic group, with an average income of twelve thousand dollars. Each of the C and D socio-economic groups consist of approximately fifteen million people, and they have annual average disposable household incomes of six thousand and three thousand and six hundred dollars respectively. Finally, there are around five million people who have annual average disposable household income of two thousand three hundred dollars and are classified as E socio-economic group.

**Table 3: Diversity according to brand name and models for individual product categories**

<b>Product categories</b>	<b>Number of Brand names</b>	<b>Number of models</b>
Cookies	95	1.650
Chocolate	41	446
Fruit juice	120	1.109
Cooking oil	148	1.021
Yogurt	121	881
Water	242	425
Refreshing non-alcoholic beverages	109	860
Beer	11	123
Processed meats	67	856
Pasta	60	328
Shampoo	112	1.363
Washing powder	65	724
Toilet paper	109	387
Sanitary pads	23	260
Deodorant	156	1.141
Car	56	4.200

Source: Adapted from Tekinay, 2002.

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Upper socio-economic class involves both old money holders and the newly rich, and their consumption patterns vary significantly. Among this group there are super-rich industrialists and merchants, land and property owners, and CEOs of top 500 hundred companies, top level government bureaucrats, and media and sport stars. Most of these people are located in Istanbul, while others are in big cities like Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, Gaziantep, and Adana. Those living in Istanbul dwell in million dollar villas or gated communities located along the shores of the Bosphorus and in the newly developed suburbs. They socialize in elite restaurants and frequently travel and shop abroad. While those who possess greater cultural capital are more involved in high art and attend ballet and opera, those who are rich in economic capital but lack cultural capital are avid consumers of popular culture. All of the households in the A socio-economic group own at least a car, and ownership rates of computers and mobile phones reach 87 and 81 percent respectively (Capital, 2003). Fifty-five percent of its members hold university degrees, which makes this group the one with the highest number of educated people in Turkey.

The B socio-economic group, or the upper middle class, consists mainly of high level bureaucrats and managers, and medium-sized business owners. They possess most of the consumer durables but their car ownership rate fall shorter than that of the A status group. Whereas upper classes prefer to drive prestige brands such as Mercedes Benz, BMW, and Audi and sport utility vehicles, upper middle classes typically own brands such as Opel, Volkswagen, and Peugeot (Capital, 2003). The middle class or the C socio-economic group constitutes the majority of the nonshantytown urban population. Among the upper level C's, car ownership rate is around 50 % whereas in the lower segment it goes down to 25 % (Capital, 2003). Computer ownership ranges between 18 to 24 % and mobile phone between 30 to 45 %.

The urban lower class, or the D socio-economic group, is commonly located at the shantytowns or poor neighborhoods. Their income is enough only to meet the basic needs and the commonly possessed durables are refrigerator and television set. Around twenty percent, however, owns mobile phones (Capital, 2003). Finally, the lowest social class, the E status group, consists of people living below the poverty line. They struggle to provide food their families and almost all the family members, including children, work outside of home if they can find employment. Yet, the highest level of unemployment is also observed among this group.

Those with the highest income enjoy a lifestyle influenced by the global consumption ideology and exhibit high fashion consciousness and like to display their trendy and flamboyant consumption. The majority of population, however, struggles to maintain a decent living. Most of the urban and rural poor and the lower middle classes consume to maintain a respectable lifestyle. "To live like a normal human being" is a commonly heard reason that motivates consumption. This is related to notions of deservingness and fairness – to have and use the things that other people have (Ger and Belk, 1999). For the poor, Coke, Fanta, and candy bars become small luxuries purchased in an attempt to compensate for the lack of a "normal life" with abundant consumer goods and for the lack of meat at the dinner table, as well as to please the children who see desirable

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consumer objects on television and in the stores. The urban poor who cannot afford many things in the stores, even in the supermarkets, engage in window shopping. This is usually done on weekends, as a family outing. This becomes their way of participating in the consumer society that they are excluded from. Especially after the 2001 economic crisis, many Turkish consumers have faced difficulties in providing the basic necessities and become more price-sensitive. During the economic crisis of 2001, some even took a large shopping cart, chose items with a lot of deliberation, filled their carts, only to leave the cart at a corner of the store after an hour or two of shopping, and left empty handed (Ger, 2003).

The situation is relatively better in 2005 and postponed demand in various product categories has begun to be transformed into purchasing behavior. However, the increasing unemployment rates and the amount of per capita unpaid credit card debt, which has now reached to 5.527 US dollars, are worrying indicators (Milliyet, 2003). As Cizre-Sakallioglu and Yeldan note "while most people, given the chance, would opt for Western standards of living, globalization has weakened the equitable delivery by the state of the requirements behind those standards" (2000: 497).

Given the polarity in socioeconomic status, class differences and status- and respectability-seeking shape consumer behavior. Furthermore, polarity makes relative deprivation a significant aspect of the Turkish consumptionscape: relying on both temporal and current comparisons, the poorer consumers desire more goods than they can afford.

### **Factors that shape consumer behavior and "normal" consumption**

As people in other marketizing societies, Turks have been learning to have consumer desires. The factors that fuel this process are numerous. One is the globalizing occasions for shopping such as Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Valentine's Day. The second is the development of the market with prominent shopping malls, a great variety of and fast proliferating "new and improved" goods, hi-tech goods, and the increased advertising and merchandising. The third is the encounter with the Western styles of consumption on television and in the movies or in person: tourists, cosmopolitans, expatriates, Turkish migrants returning home for holidays. The fourth is the display by nouveau riches and the conspicuousness of their flashy consumption styles in the media. The fifth involves the ideology and ideals such as the global ethos of consumerism, the notion of the "good life," and modernity and progress tied to consumption. These ideals are linked to the desires to move ahead, to be modernized, to leave the failed past behind, and to catch up with the Western world. Combined with an (over)confidence in the new/global/West versus a lack of confidence in the local, these ideals and ideologies impel people towards an imagined "normal" modern consumption.

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This last point implies that being or becoming a modern person/family is of utmost concern. A modern identity and a sense of joining the rest of the world (being like Westerners) are sought in the consumption of material things. Most people, especially the lower and middle classes, consume to communicate to themselves and to others their modern identity. To consume like Westerners or like other modern Turks, and to be accepted by one's social circle are important motivations for consumption. While being modern is aspirational, it is also regarded to be "normal." Normal consumption is seen to entail using the standard mass-produced goods of the world and buying for comfort, pleasure, fun, practicality, and convenience. Ideally, it is having products of good quality in abundance, and to get the novel goods, the "new and improved" things that appear on the market ceaselessly. Having electronics, kitchen appliances, cell-phones, and detergents, eating McDonald's hamburgers and other fast food, drinking Coke, and shopping in malls are regarded to make a normal modern life. Hi-tech goods and electronics are typically among the favorite objects. The yearning for a normal modern (which is at the same time respectable) life is so great that in poor villages where parents cannot afford to buy milk will buy candy bars for their children. Again, for the sake of modernity, people switched from producing and consuming olive oil, which had been used in the traditional Turkish cuisine for centuries, to Western sunflower oil in the 1970s. Only in late 1990s, after it became fashionable in the West, the olive oil made a come-back but now as healthy Mediterranean oil. Women who had grown up seeing their mothers make jam, tomato paste, and pickles, brew tea leaves, and make Turkish coffee now buy industrial and branded canned foods, jams, pickles, tomato pastes, ketchup, and teabags and instant coffee for the sake of modern convenience. Young girls, who like their international counterparts, are fond of chips and fast foods develop cellulite problems before they reach their 20s and then frequent health clubs and resort to dieting to have a modern, slim shape. Such is the broad scene of modern consumption in Turkey.

The findings of a multi-sited study on consumer desires support our argument that seeking a modern identity is a prevalent force in consumption in Turkey. Belk, Ger, and Askegaard (2003) found that while Americans, Danes, and Turks all desire otherness, an altered state, an escape or a transformation to another time or a place, Turks also desire a total transformation, a permanent escape, and removal of constraints. Furthermore, while Americans and Danes desire to escape to nature, Turks wish to experience the exciting night life in world cities and the "glittery life of Barbie."

The consumptionscape in Turkey is driven by these global and local market factors and ideals as well as the identity-expression strategies of various groups. In addition to the ideal of normal modernity, other cultural and political factors make for further plurality.

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## **Ways of consuming: different consumption practices**

Since the mid 1990s, there has been an increasingly fragmented and vocal public sphere with different identity claims. The struggle to differentiate and legitimize identity for each of the different groups finds its symbolic expression in the domain of consumption. Next we discuss four consumption styles that to some extent cut across socioeconomic classes and are most visible and distinct from the conventional consumption manners of the middle and lower middle classes explained above.

### **Spectacularist consumption**

Some upscale urban consumers who have little cultural capital exhibit a highly fashion-conscious and display-oriented consumption. Immersed in popular culture, they are after trendy designer clothes, latest models of cell phones and plasma televisions, and only the "in" restaurants, bars, and clubs. They frequent the increasingly prevalent beauty saloons and fitness clubs attain the trendy eyebrows, haircuts, manicures, make-ups, and slim bodies. Plastic surgery and liposuction produce fashionable lips, noses, faces, breasts, thighs, and hips. To outsiders, these young upscale urbanites all look alike, with their exact same eyebrows, make up, hairdos, nail colors, and clothes. "Fifteen year olds believe that they have to have that one brand of jeans in a particular bell-bottom style; another bell-bottom cut or brand simply does not work and becomes a source of shame" (Sandıkçı and Ger, 2002).

Termed "magazine" media, television shows and colorful weekly magazines and daily newspapers with large pictures exhibit the lifestyles of the celebrities such as singers, fashion models, VJs, DJs, soccer players, and television and movie heroes and heroines. Many one to two hour "magazine" and "paparazzi" programs in which celebrities are interviewed on the streets, restaurants, bars, clubs, resorts, or luxury yachts occupy airwaves during prime time. In these programs, cameras zoom to the tattoos, bare bellies, low décolletage or exposed thighs and bottoms, the skimpy and fashionable clothes and accessories; and the outfits and the appearance of the celebrities are rated on a scale of ten. For example, the interviewer gives a rating of one to a fashion model that he encounters at a beach, calling her outfit hideous because her bikini is outdated. She angrily reacts to the commentator's decision: "but this bikini is Versace!"

While the rich and the famous engage in public display of their flamboyant consumption with pride, the mass media disseminate and spectacularize that life- and consumption-style by making it visible in every home, poor or rich. The audiences consume the images of such consumption as they watch these programs with admiration, fascination, envy, but also criticism of the artificiality, meaninglessness, indecency, and wastefulness of it all. Such publicly displayed consumption parades as a spectacular model or antimodel, depending on the audience.

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## Nationalistic consumption

A more modest and less advertised type of consumption pertains to objects that symbolize nationalistic ethos. The most widespread version of nationalistic consumption, shared by the extreme and moderate nationalists and secularists pertains to objects, films, photos, and books about or associated with Atatürk (the founder of the republic), such as the popular Atatürk-embossed silver and gold brooches and lapel pins. Another form nationalistic consumption takes, especially for those who cannot afford foreign goods, is the preference for domestic brands, justified with statements such as "we can produce electronics just as well as foreigners."

A more extreme form of nationalistic consumption, aligned politically with the Nationalistic Movement Party, involves baseball caps, t-shirts, flags, stickers, posters, calendars, pins, key-chains, car decorations, bumper stickers, cell phone accessories, and other decorative items adorned with pictures and slogans associated with nationalism. One prominent symbol is the three crescents with the legendary wolf, which, according to the myth, saved the Central Asian Turkish tribes and led them to fertile lands. Youngsters sporting (American) baseball caps, t-shirts, and flags with the wolf and the crescent figures roam the streets during political events or when Turkish soccer teams win in international games. Books on Turkic Central Asian legends, CDs of nationalistic pop and rap music are other items that appeal to consumers seeking national pride or are politically nationalistic.

The most interesting version of nationalistic consumption is that of *Mehmetçik* objects, such as music CDs with songs about soldiers, greeting cards to be given to soldiers being drafted for the compulsory military duty, and posters with pictures of an imagined *Mehmetçik*. All the soldiers in the army are called *Mehmetçik*, referring euphemistically to a soldier bravely and selflessly serving his country. There are television programs about the acts of bravery of various soldiers. Here it must be noted that opinion polls consistently indicate that the public has far more confidence in the military than any other institution. In addition to the enormous confidence in the military, the importance of the image of *Mehmetçik* is probably also related to the prominent role of heroes, who come along and save the people, in many Turkic myths and legends. *Mehmetçik* becomes the legendary hero among the folk in the rural areas (Mardin, 1993) and the objects symbolizing and glorifying *Mehmetçik* find eager consumers.

These forms of consumption express a longing for a sense of worth, for pride in national identity. Nationalism and nationalistic consumption emerge in response to a prevailing feeling of inferiority in relation to the hailed "West," a general devaluation of a past that failed to create a Westernized, modern country. Whether in the form of Atatürk pins, Mehmetçik posters and cards, or baseball caps with politically nationalistic symbols, such objects and experiences fashion novel local identities, drawing from secular republican, Anatolian, military, or ancient Central Asian symbols.

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## **Islamist consumption**

While an almost mythical “Turkishness” is one source to build identity upon, another is Islam. Despite the secular legal system, Islam has been playing a prominent role in the political, socio-cultural, and economic domains since the 1980s. Liberalization and privatization of the economy during the 1980s changed not only the lifestyle of urban seculars but also created Islamic businesses and an Islamic bourgeoisie. This Islamic bourgeoisie is conservative in values but avant-garde in consumption practices. Accordingly, similar to secular media’s dissemination of spectacularist consumption values, television and radio channels backed by Islamic capital play an important role in communicating religious lifestyles. A rich and prolific Islamic media ranging from Islamic pop music to romance novels, women’s magazines, best sellers, and movies, transmit popular Islamic culture.

Since the 1980s, a new style of “Islamist” consumption emerged in many domains such as decoration, leisure, and fashion. Families shop in malls as well as in department stores built inside mosques and in flourishing marketplaces set up on mosque grounds. Such marketplaces sell Korans, prayer beads and religious books as well as Islamic pop music tapes, CDs and romance novels, bright colored clocks with lights and a picture of Kaba in Mecca, landscape paintings or impressionistic reproductions framed with Koranic calligraphy, and many other items including stickers, posters, key-chains, coloring books, calendars, greeting cards, decorative items all decorated with Islamic symbols, pictures, or calligraphy. Several summer resorts, run by Islamic companies, cater to the religiously sensitive people with their separate swimming pools and beaches, separate entertainment and recreation activities for men and women.

The domain of fashion is the most visible indicator of Islamist consumption patterns (Sandıkçı and Ger, 2001). The rise of political Islam fostered a demand for religiously appropriate clothing items. The 1980s uniform large scarf with the loose-fitting long overcoat transformed in 1990s into heterogeneous dressing styles, signaling the rising fashion consciousness especially among the upper, upper/middle class, urban, well-educated, young religious women. Today, more casual, modern, distinctive, and youthful designs and fashionable colors are being sought. Pants and long jackets, skirts and shorter blazers, above-the-knee coats, or jeans and shirts, with smaller and more tightly tied scarves placed inside the shirt are commonly preferred. Yet, in public spaces, one can easily come across to covered women wearing tight long skirts with slits up to the thighs, very tight tops under transparent shirts or jackets, or sexy sparkly high-heeled sandals accompanied by high-fashion handbags. Hermes, Dior, Gucci, or prestigious Turkish brands such as Vakko or Aker scarves are worn by the upscale and lesser brands by the middle and lower classes. Fashion shows and catalogues model religiously acceptable and modest yet tasteful, stylish and modern clothes. Depending on personal factors such as age and work status and religious order and political alliances, some believe that loose fitting, long garments that do not reveal body contours are the proper style, others go for pants and tighter and shorter jackets or shirts, which are deemed more suitable for the lifestyle of workingwomen.

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The covering and dressing style operates not only as a signifier of being religious but as an indicator of the socio-cultural position of the wearer. The newly emergent urban, middle-class covered women do not simply differentiate themselves from the Westernized, secular Turkish women; they equally distance themselves from the traditional Islamic women who wear a headscarf out of a habit and from the "gaudy and pretentious" styles of the Islamist newly-rich. Drawing both from Islam and local and global cultural resources, this elite crafts new consumption practices – modern, casual and trendy clothes, natural foods, traditional cuisine, Ottoman culture and artifacts, alternative vacation and traveling, books, intellectual debates, educational programs and documentaries on Islamic television channels – in an attempt to differentiate itself from the secularist moderns and other groups of Islamists.

### **Historical consumption**

The last decade also witnessed a revival of interest in objects and customs constructed to represent "our own traditions" that belong to several collectively imagined pasts – Anatolian, Turkish, and Ottoman. One example is the phenomenally successful show titled "Sultans of the Dance" (the title *is* indeed in English) which is a Turkish version of the Irish River Dance and consists of stylized folk dances and music from various regions of Turkey with allusions to ancient Anatolian myths. Many proud spectators commented that "it is great to see that we can accomplish such a professional, world class show." Another example is a "return" to traditional wedding ceremonies, complete with a "henna night" party proceeding the wedding night, in line with "our customs" (Üstuner, Ger, and Holt, 2000). Since the late 1990s young people want full-fledged, big conventional wedding ceremonies, unlike the simpler, less ceremonial weddings preferred by the youth of the 1970s. These ceremonies, which are perceived to be "traditional," are in fact highly urbanized and Westernized and nothing but "traditional" in a historic sense. Furthermore, new "traditional" restaurants are popping up in major cities, cookbooks of traditional cuisine are hitting the bookstores, and Turkish coffee, after its decline in the 1980s, when it yielded its traditional throne to first Nescafe and then cappuccino, espresso, and filter coffee is making a comeback. Along with the increasing popularity of Turkish coffee, the long-gone hookah smoking in cafes is now a trendy pastime activity among young urban professionals.

In home and personal decoration, evil eye beads inserted in silver or porcelain decorative objects or strung together with fashionable colorful beads are recently prominent. Traditionally, evil eye beads were used in Turkey by pinning a small one on clothing or hanging a larger one on the entrance hall of a home. Now, variously sized and shaped beads appear in necklaces, bracelets, vases, pots, plates, and even in heart-shaped Valentine's Day gifts. Even though the pagan evil eye, like the henna night ritual, is not particularly Turkish, but rather has its origins in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia, it is imagined to be so. Thus, figures, experiences, and objects construed to be traditional or historical are incorporated in consumption in new and recontextualized forms and ways.

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A prominent form of historical consumption expresses itself in the nostalgic interest in the Ottoman culture, traditions, and lifestyle. Ottoman-inspired consumption clusters around leisure activities, cuisine, home decoration, art, and fashion. Several luxury hotels and resorts that opened up in the last decade make a direct reference to the Ottoman past. "For example, Çırağan Kempinski Hotel in Istanbul, which is located in the late Ottoman palace named Çırağan, offers five-star accommodation to its guests who are treated as Ottoman sultans. The guests can dine in one of the hotel's restaurants named "Tuğra" (imperial signature) that serves old Ottoman cuisine and then yield into its night club to enjoy a performance named "Sultan's Night" featuring classical Ottoman music and belly dancing. The hotel publishes a monthly newsletter titled "Ferman" (imperial edict) that includes stories about Ottoman palace weddings, Ottoman palaces, Turkish coffee, etc" (Sandıkçı and Ger, 2002). Similar developments are abundant in the culinary culture. Some restaurants offer traditional Ottoman meals to their patrons, with classical Ottoman music playing at the background.

Many are also interested in decorating their homes in line with Ottoman design principles and artifacts. Those who can afford can acquire expensive Ottoman antiques. Objects ranging from paintings to miniatures, vases, various kitchen equipment, and furniture are sold to an eager audience in periodic auctions and antique stores. Alternatively, one can resort to upscale department stores or designers to help them furnish their homes with fabrics and furniture inspired by the textiles, velvets, caftans, robes, cushions, and sashes of the Sultans.

The cultural identity and the past of the Ottomans provide a new source to draw from in nostalgic consumption. Returning back to a past that is largely unknown in the contemporary republic and trying to rebuild it through a contemporary reading indicates the search for constructing an identity that is simultaneously traditional and modern.

Spectacularists, nationalists, Islamists, and historicists differentiate their identities from each other and from the mainstream middle classes by creating particular "modern" consumption styles. Yet, these different categories of consumption styles are not mutually exclusive: there are nationalist spectacularists, Islamic nationalists, and historical nationalists. On the one hand, while spectacularist consumption appears to have a modern/global style, it also has very local aspects. On the other hand, while the other three consumptionscapes appear to be "traditional," they have modern and global aspects. The emergence of the nationalistic, historical, and Islamic consumptionscapes is not simply a resistance, an assertion of local distinctiveness against the West/global, perhaps epitomized and exaggerated by the spectacularist consumption. Because, the nationalists, Islamists, and historicists do not abandon buying foreign goods, eating fast food, or engaging in otherwise Westernized or modern consumption and ways of life (Sandıkçı and Ger, 2001). Furthermore, this emergence is not a return to traditions either, because the "traditional" practiced is a new, recreated form. What we see are

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multiple *new* articulations of “modern” identities, class distinctions, and subcultures in Turkey.

### **Concluding thoughts and implications**

Yearning for modernity and respectability, nostalgia, and a search for authenticity operate jointly in shaping consumer behavior in Turkey. The immense polarity in income levels and lifestyles, increased aspirations for a high level of consumption constructed and legitimized to be “normal” and modern, across all social classes, and the profound relative deprivation experienced by the poor set the stage for contemporary consumptionscape. This consumptionscape involves great plurality not only due to the income and social class differences but also due to the diverse strategies of seeking and expressing modern, fashion-conscious spectacularist, nationalist, historic, and Islamist identities and ideals. In each case, the identity and the consumption that expresses it are simultaneously traditional and modern, as well as local and global. Modernity, fashion, nostalgia, traditional/historical/religious/national authenticity merge in hybrid forms of consumption such as the Monet reproductions framed by Kuranic verses, sexy sandals and headscarves, gameboys in remote rural homes, and Coke with traditional Turkish foods (e.g. “döner kebab”). Hybridization and recontextualization of various objects, forms, and uses culminate in multiple novel consumption styles.

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