



A Sociological Study on the Necessity of Change in Consumption Patterns in Modern Societies.

Modern Toplumlarda Tüketim Modellerinde Değişimin Gerekliliği Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir İnceleme

Raheb MOHAMMADI GHANBARLOU¹

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of consumption is one of the economic concepts that has significantly developed since the Industrial Revolution. Among the problems arising from this phenomenon are resource scarcity, environmental pollution, the emergence of artificial needs and the increase in individual and social misconducts such as wastefulness. In today's world, as needs are more manipulated, the phenomenon of unconscious and unnecessary consumption has emerged. Therefore, addressing this problem and producing potential solutions will alleviate problems for both the individual and society. The aim of this study is to emphasize the necessity and importance of reforming consumption patterns in society and to highlight the essential need for change in consumption models on a social ground. It should be noted that this study has a quality that will lay the groundwork for future field studies. In terms of methodology, the study is designed based on content analysis, employing literature and document review. The preliminary impression of the study suggests that reforming consumption patterns improves life, reduces costs, paves the way for the widespread and enhanced realization of justice, and ensures the optimal use of existing resources and reserves through a proper institutionalization. Additionally, the correct distribution of resources is expected to foster progress and development. The construction of the necessary consumption models will play a facilitative role in the lives of individuals, particularly families, as well as the entire society.

Keywords: Consumption, Consumption Models, Modern Society, Modernization, Globalization.

ÖZ

Tüketim olgusu, sanayi devriminden sonra önemli ölçüde gelişen ekonomik olgulardan biridir. Bu olgunun doğurduğu sorunlar arasında kaynakların kısıtlı hale gelmesi, çevre kirliliği, sahte ihtiyaçların doğuşu ve israf gibi bireysel ve toplumsal yanlış davranışların artması sayılabilir. Günümüzde gerçek ihtiyaçların manipüle edilmesi sonucunda bilinçsiz ve gereksiz tüketim olgusu ortaya çıkmıştır. Dolayısıyla bu sorunun üzerine gidilmesi ve olası çözümlerin üretilmesi hem bireyi hem de toplumu rahatlatacaktır. Bu çalışmanın amacı toplumda tüketim modellerinin reform edilmesinin gerekliliği ve önemi üzerinde durmak ve toplumsal zeminde tüketim modellerinde değişimin gerekliliğini ve önemini vurgulamaktır. Çalışmanın öncelikle saha çalışmalarına zemin hazırlayacak bir nitelik taşıdığını söylemek gerekir. Çalışma yöntem açısından bir literatür taraması ve doküman incelemesi kullanacak şekilde içerik analizi temelinde tasarlanmıştır. Çalışmada rastlanan ön izlenim; tüketim modellerinde reforma gitmek hayatı iyileştiren, maliyetleri düşüren, adaletin yaygınlaşmasına ve artmasına zemin sağlayan, doğru şekilde kurumsallaşarak mevcut kaynak ve rezervlerin mümkün olduğu kadar doğru kullanılmasını sağlamak yönündedir. Ayrıca kaynakların doğru dağıtılması ilerlemeye ve gelişmeye neden olacaktır. Gerekli tüketim modellerinin inşası kişilerin özellikle ailelerin ve tüm toplumun yaşamında birer kolaylaştırıcı rol oynamış olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketim, Tüketim Modelleri, Modern Toplum, Modernleşme, Küreselleşme.

¹ Corresponding Author: (Lec. Dr.) Istanbul Gelişim University, Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences, Sosyology Department, mohammadi@gelisim.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-3606-3524



INTRODUCTION:

The study of consumption as an object of sociological study dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Prior to these dates, it was seen as a purely economic phenomenon and evaluated only from this perspective. Max Weber was first to discuss consumption, or more precisely, the way of consumption, as a phenomenon linked to a particular culture and worldview. Weber argued that the piety of Protestants and their avoidance of luxury consumption, along with technical knowledge and the possibilities of rational organization of production, were the factors that led to the accumulation of capital in parts of Europe, which made capitalist production possible (Bocock, 2019, p. 2). In the contemporary period, consumption became an important concept in sociology and more so in social theory in the 80s.

In today's society, consumption is not so much an economic activity as an unlimited consumption that has nothing to do with people's daily needs and basic desires. Bocock (2019, s. 3) argues that consumption in Western forms at the end of the 20th century can be seen not only as a utilitarian economic process, but also as a social and cultural process involving cultural signs and symbols. The prominent factor here is that consumption is not only an act based on need, but rather an act based on desire.

In recent years, society's consumption, waste and luxury levels have increased excessively. The dominance of this consumption culture puts the healthy lives of many families at risk. People love beauty and care about their appearance and the environment in which they live and work. However, when this care and attention becomes unbalanced, obsessive and pathological, it can become a dangerous factor for mental and social peace. Excessive involvement in the consumption spiral leads to waste, loss of time, increased costs and other social and psychological consequences. Therefore, this issue should be taken seriously in different areas, such as government policies, universities and non-governmental organizations. There should be a rational consumption model that will bring peace and prosperity to humanity. Especially in the current economic conditions, families and institutions experiencing financial difficulties will significantly alleviate the problem by reviewing their consumption behaviors and developing new models and behavior patterns. Theoretical and empirical information that can shed light on this problem is included throughout the study.

1. Consumption as a Concept

The phenomenon of consumption has made itself felt by experiencing a significant transformation with the modernization process and has become one of the most used concepts to express the lifestyle of contemporary societies in the light of post-modern developments and changes. From this point of view, the concept of consumption can have an acceptable and general definition in every changing age and period, as well as changing definitions with the introduction of new meanings, values and norms in every age (Orçan, 2004, s. 11). The concept of consumption is not only a sociological phenomenon but has also been of interest to different disciplines such as psychology and economics.

According to Baudrillard (2002, p. 68), consumption is the virtual sum of all the messages and objects that come together as a coherent discourse. This means that consumption is an activity that arises from the systematic manipulation of symbols.

The main dynamism of consumption derives from the perpetually unsatisfied project towards objects. The project transfers the dynamics of its object's existence to systematic and unlimited consumption. Therefore, to preserve what it is and its reasons for living, consumption either continues its repression or merely repeats itself (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 72).

If consumption becomes the criterion of a successful life, happiness or of human decency, then human desires are exposed for what they are. No amount of gain and no thrilling sensation is likely to bring satisfaction on the way to the once-promised "reaching the standard", and there is no standard to reach. The finish line moves with the runner; the goals are always a step or two ahead of those who strive to reach them. Records are constantly being broken and this means that there is no limit to what a person can desire (Bauman, 1999, p. 110). Constantly and rapidly developing technology and living conditions cause rapid changes in standards. Therefore, as standards in various fields become relative, people's perception of consumption and consumption behavior change.

2. Consumer Society

A society in which individual consumption increases rapidly is called a "consumer society" due to the increase in production, prosperity and the development of means of consumption. The increase in the number of shopping centres, the intensification of mass communication and advertisements, and the development of credit card facilities are all factors contributing to this. In other words, it is a society in which the geographical and temporal boundaries in front of consumption are eliminated with the spread of credit cards and the development of the internet because of digitalization. When people use credit cards, they spend = their current, past and future income (Zorlu, 2006, pp. 59). According to Ritzer (2000, s. 86), credit cards help exploitation by encouraging consumers to buy more. In addition, credit cards are exploitative in the sense that they directly lead people into debt (Uras, 2007, p. 84).

In a consumer society, a people can only survive if they fall under a preferable hegemony in line with their hedonistic desires and have to work to realize the activity of consumption. The graver situation in terms of human values is that in the consumer society, the only means of having normal living standards and being happy is to work to consume. Capitalist logic establishes its sovereignty through the desire to have normal living standards that it rationalizes in the human mind. In order not to fall below the standards, it is necessary to work harder and consume more. Whatever is subject to consumption becomes the object of consumption in exchange for a measurable value. Sometimes a cultural element or a religious motive becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold. What is important is no longer the social and cultural conditions, philosophy or history of a cultural element or a religious ritual; what is important is that the consumable object or cultural element for which a price is paid gives the individual a different pleasure and becomes an object of consumption (Aydemir, 2007, pp. 278-279).

According to Baudrillard (2002, p. 42), consumer society, through the myth of happiness, creates the concept of need in a hyper-real way to justify encouraging people to consume more. Consuming products dissolves the social gaps and hierarchies created by the great discrimination in the sphere of power. Based on the above narratives, there is almost no society in today's world that does not fall under this definition. As a result of modernization and globalization, the meaning attributed to consumption is becoming increasingly universal.

3. Modern Consumption Pattern and the Emergence of Consumption Culture

Modern consumerism emerged because of the spread of capitalism in Europe. One view of the development of capitalism in Europe, based on the writings of the great sociologist Max Weber, is that it resulted from the spread of the ideas of Luther and Calvin in Europe. It was hard work, saving, investment and the establishment of economic institutions that created this spirit, which then gradually developed into a social system under the influence of capitalism. Theoretically, there is a contradiction here between explaining the emergence of capitalism and the development of consumerism. But the truth of the matter is that capitalism has had one main goal since its inception,

and that is to make a profit. To be able to achieve this, more sales, investment and more production were required. In other words, the aim is to sell more goods and thus make more profit (Lahsaizadeh, 1988).

Initially they thought that the main buyers of capitalist goods should be the upper classes and the aristocracy. But gradually it became clear that capitalism with mass production needed mass consumers. Since the upper classes did not have enough consumption numbers, the need for mass consumers soon emerged.

In the first productions, the first thought was to meet biological needs. However, since the biological needs of human beings are limited, it was made necessary for non-biological needs to emerge for goods to be consumed in societies. Non-biological needs were also limited. But mass production, which was one of the aims of the producers, should not lose its characteristic. Hence the emergence of false needs for the rapid consumption of mass goods in capitalist societies. Mass consumption was made possible based on perishable products.

The spread of urban life in the West and urbanization with its specific psychological and social aspects laid the groundwork for consumerism as a particular way of life. First, at the beginning of the 20th century, these new cultural patterns became popular among upper- and middle-class urbanites. Department stores were established in the cities and consumer culture began to be promoted. In this culture, the main slogan became popularized, which was to buy as much as you can and consume as much as possible. It was from this slogan that competition in purchasing, and consumption became the main element of this culture. People surpassed each other in buying more and consuming more, and the frenzy of consumption became a kind of social image (Lahsaizadeh, 1988).

4. Consumption Patterns

The second part of the 17th century saw the emergence of the first consumption patterns. Puritanism, especially with its Calvinist character, significantly influenced the first bourgeoisie of agricultural and manufacturing capitalism. Commercial agriculture, lands, agricultural labor, food, and the sale of products made on the new-style farms were all examples of how "a free market" emerged in England.. Puritans became accustomed to this new style of commercial farming. Puritanism influenced some manufacturing capitalist families in ways that helped their businesses grow. This was because puritan capitalists reinvested their earnings to develop their businesses, rather than spending them on luxury like aristocrats and royal families. English puritanism embodied ascetic values like not spending much money on fancy clothes and expensive food.

Following the years after the 1950s, first in the US, then in the UK and other Western European countries, groups following the mass consumption model and the American lifestyle rose rapidly. One of the most important developments after the 1950s was the emergence of new consumer groups with mass production and consumption, and through advertising, brand images were established for things ranging from soap powders to cars, beverages, cigarettes and kitchen utensils (Bocock 1997 as cited in Zorlu, 2006, pp. 17).

In European countries particularly in Britain, consumption patterns were heavily associated with social status and economic income. In fact, between 1950 and 1980, consumption advertisements were based on categorical social classes. These classes were defined as A, B, C, D, E. However, this categorical definition changed after 1980. In the 80s, advertisers and market researchers made new classifications based on lifestyle. Classifications based on the head of the household were replaced by the household members and especially the young people (Bocock, 2009, p. 35-36).

Mike Featherstone highlighted the significant shift in how market researchers perceived consumption patterns between 1950 and 1980 extremely important. He labelled the societies experiencing this change as “postmodern”. According to Featherstone, these societies are characterized by the disappearance of traditional determinants of consumption, such as "fixed status groups" or "social classes," terms commonly used by market researchers. Featherstone, drawing on the ideas of other postmodernist social theorists, defines this transformation as "postmodern." In his usage, the term "postmodern" means a type of society that is not shaped by rigid categorical groups, like those seen in late 19th-century societies studied by Veblen and Simmel. It also stands apart from the social groups analyzed by sociologists in the latter half of the 20th century (Bocock, 2009, pp. 39–40).

What is different about the consumption pattern in postmodernism from that of modernism is that various limitations regarding society, ethnicity, age and period are less important in consumption patterns than individualized patterns. In postmodernism, group boundaries are less rigid and more fluid than in modernism; people do not necessarily feel that they belong to the group of which they are a part, or even to the ethnic groups they were born into (Hall, 1992 as cited in Bocock, 2009, pp. 86). In postmodern society, identities are in a constant state of flux; individuals can move freely from one subcultural group to another. They can mix everything that previously belonged to different categories (Bocock, 2009, s. 86). Identities, which are separated from the roots and specific patterns that bind individuals to the past, are now easily changeable for individuals. According to Bauman (1999, p. 47), in societies dominated by consumer culture, identities, like consumer goods, are meant to be owned only on condition that they are consumed. The characteristic of these wholesale identities, which can generally be obtained from stores and shopping centers, is that they can be bought, do not last long, and can be easily and completely changed.

5. Main Stages of Change in Consumption Patterns

As mentioned above, it was emphasized that one of the ways to avoid waste, to use the world's resources more fairly, to contribute to the formation of social welfare and equality without harming the country's resources with rational consumption behaviors is the necessity of change in excessive and irregular consumption models. Today, wrong and non-essential consumption models need to change as they transcend human values and turn people into objects that consume. For this change to take place, some initiatives must be taken. Below, a roadmap for change in consumption models is proposed with the themes of cultural construction, strong governance, developing appropriate mechanisms, ensuring people's participation and media support.

5.1. Cultural Construction

One of the prerequisites for solutions to achieve the desired result in preventing unnecessary consumption is to lay the mental and cultural foundations for different segments of society. Today, every member of society needs to know that for a country to achieve the goals set out in the vision of development, for prosperity and growth to be realized in all national dimensions, it is necessary to make the best use of material resources in its activities. Therefore, without culture-building, nothing can be achieved. Because the correction of consumption patterns is not a problem that can be implemented overnight and suddenly with an instruction and a letter. Therefore, sustainable culture building constitutes one of the main platforms for a change in the consumption model. According to the post-modern perspective, culture is the shaper of all kinds of social relations and actions, and the perception of oneself, the world, society and reality in general is the product of cultural and social interaction.

Individuals with the consumer mentality of contemporary society also consume culture. Indeed, cultural content is consumed in the same way as the washing machine, which becomes an object of consumption not as an appliance but as an item of comfort or prestige. Today, communication has also become an object of consumption. The technological mass communication process, with its coercive understanding, gives society the message of consuming the message, perceiving and interpreting the transmitted message not in its entirety but in fragments and the spectacularization of this process, the misunderstanding of the world, the news gaining value as a commodity, and the content gaining value as an indicator. In short, it successfully continues the process of preparing and conditioning individuals for consumption (Baudrillard, 2004, p. 134-154). Sombart (1998, p. 88) talks about how to draw the boundaries of cultural need or necessity being up to the individual's own choice.

The ideology of consumption is a fetishistic ideology based entirely on consumption. In this ideology, cultural objects have lost all human meaning: Those who own these objects fetishize them to maintain a confident attitude. All these developments lead to the construction of a new culture called "consumer culture". Consumer culture is the culture of societies where the market economy is dominant. In such a society, people's access to consumption depends on distribution and cultural resources. The concept that cultural resources will be money and pleasure. The consumption is the culture of the consumer society. It is also an extension of material culture and is closely related to the change in time and working conditions (Odabaşı, 1999, p. 24-27).

The introduction of mass media, the function of consumption gains a mediatic value. In other words, the shaping of consumption by information does not seem to be possible in any other way than a message transfer based on mental processes, and the values of consumption in the cultural environment created by mass media are largely based on these images (Topçuoğlu, 1996, pp. 161-172). Like other cultural phenomena, consumption culture should not be considered separately from social codes. Unless the planned change and improvement in consumption models are prepared in line with the cultural values of a society, it is an activity that seems difficult to achieve results.

5.2.Strong Governance

One of the key requirements for changing the consumption pattern is prudent and wise consumption management. Authorities and decision-makers should not be content with organizing numerous conferences, speeches, publishing articles and similar activities. Therefore, the existence of a correct and rational management at the macro level to guide, formulate and select strategic solutions will pave the way for the realizing the national and future-oriented plan for changing consumption patterns. Therefore, identifying and communicating general policies to improve consumption patterns is therefore one of the steps that strong governance must take.

In recent years, economic and social policymakers in developed countries have taken into account the importance of creating a culture and desirable behaviour in the field of economics. They have prepared a targeted policy in the field of education and cultural system to put it into practice. An example of this can be seen in the preparation of numerous and targeted economic education programs in these countries, producing a variety of content suitable for the needs of society and the needs of different age groups from childhood to adulthood. The world today understands that paying attention to people's culture and economic education is a kind of national investment, and any society that makes more efforts in this direction will undoubtedly reap the rewards in the future.

The content of general policies to reform the consumption pattern reveals an attempt to direct the actions of the three sides of the triangle of economic behavior - households, the state and economic enterprises - through the leadership and centrality of the state. The fact that the economy in Türkiye

is still dominated by the state, state-owned companies and public institutions shows that if the reform of the consumption model starts from the state and its affiliated institutions, this group as a large consumer will have a significant share. It will impact the creation of favourable situation in society. In addition, governments play an irreplaceable role in society's cultural reform and education. Therefore a coherent and systematic program for the creation of desirable and optimal consumption behavior will be necessary. Government leadership in both areas will undoubtedly have a major impact on all aspects of society.

5.3. Developing Appropriate Mechanisms

One of the essential prerequisites for changing the consumption model is to set targets, dimensions and solutions to achieve the goal, and identifying indicators to measure and evaluate the process and how things are progressing. A strategic study and map should be prepared and publicized to prevent consumption, waste of resources, opportunities and costs in all areas. In other words, the managers, and officials of various organizations can realize this important principle by preparing this document and implementing and applying the documented methods and practices.

The products present a fixed and observable system of meanings through which culture is realized through a series of distinctions between time, space, activity, social position, inclusion in a group and exclusion by providing a mechanism through which status differences can be constructed (Douglas & Isherwood, 1999, s. 81-82). In other words, consumer goods embody a system of meanings within which people can express themselves and convey messages to each other. Under these conditions, products emerge as a criterion for disambiguation and as evidence of specific events with specific meanings. For example, a ring constructs the marriage status, indicating whether the people are married or not. Ultimately, people convey messages to others not only through words, gifts, clothing and the myriads of consumer goods they use, display and dispose of in everyday life.

5.4. Ensuring People's Participation

One way to enhance consumption is by attracting people's participation and raising their awareness of the proper use of facilities and resources. An action that can be taken to reorganize the consumption pattern in society is so that every member can significantly benefit by participating and ensuring the correct consumption of resources.

One of the most important components of economic lifestyle is people's consumption patterns and style regarding their choices and behaviors. It is interesting to note that the first discussions on lifestyle in the traditional economics literature also addressed this issue in consumption. The American economist Veblen first brought it up by discussing the consumption behavior of the wealthy class under "conspicuous consumption". He believed that such lifestyles sometimes caused people to consume goods for their symbolic values rather than for their function. For example, a candle lit on the dining table shows that the purpose of lighting the candle is no need for light, but that the host wants to show the guest the exceptional lifestyle of the affluent class.

5.5. Media Support

People choose a particular mode of consumption according to their definition of social status and identity. At the same time the media plays an important role in defining this status and constructing identity. The most important thing that comes to mind is that in an age of mechanical reproduction of cultural products, culture and mass media are as closely linked as possible, and the media itself plays a decisive role in the organization of the media. Culture and actions perform culturally and, in this way, go far beyond the limits of conveying cultural messages. By representing ideas and beliefs, the media influence the way people living in the territory of that culture understand the world. In

other words, the main problem of the media in present time is its role in the far-reaching transformation of culture and the formation and construction of identities (Poster, 1999, p. 59).

People choose and act according to their identities and perceptions of "self". The cultural atmosphere of society and the influence of mass media on identity form and shape ideas, ideals and ultimately needs. An individual's identity is defined by the influence of the media and the individual forms their own behavior and consumption patterns (Corrigan, 1997).

Different theories have been put forward on the impact of media on behavior patterns, consumption patterns in general. The common point is that media, especially audiovisual media, can influence thoughts, lifestyles and social media. Behavioral patterns influence the audience. There is no comprehensive consensus among experts on the extent of media influence. A literature review reveals that some scholars believe that the media has an enormous and irreplaceable influence on thought.

The media also help in the process of meaning-making. Many of individuals have relied on mass media to make sense of an increasingly complex and mysterious world, which gradually promotes a coherent worldview (Razavizadeh, 2005, p. 31). National media is the most important and influential of the social institutions involved in the process of reorganization of consumption patterns and plays an extremely important role in the realization of planned changes in consumption patterns. The media acts as a means of cultural exchange. It motivates people to think about "who they want to be".

CONCLUSION:

One of the provisions of the general policies on the reform of consumption patterns is clarifying the correct consumption model in different situations and reforming the prevailing culture of consumption in society. The existing inadequacies cannot be overcome unless this model and educational goals are transmitted through effective and culture-forming institutions such as education and the media. The awareness and familiarization of society, and especially the country's future generations, with a precise and targeted plan for the correct way of consumption in various areas requires serious commitment from those responsible in the state.

In current societies, people define their identities with what they consume. Consumption habits have become central to life and are becoming more and more complex. According to post-modernists, cultural values lie at the heart of this issue. Therefore, cultural elements are expected to be emphasized to understand and explain the problem. The opposite view argues that there are those who think that the concept of lifestyle should be analyzed in relation to modernity.

Modernity creates possibilities and diversity, confronting people with diverse and complex choices. Tradition leads people down certain paths, while new life emerges through increased awareness and opportunities to construct and reconstruct personal life history (identity and lifestyle) (Rosengren, 1996, p.265).

Today, especially in developing countries like Türkiye, reforming the consumption pattern is one of the fundamental needs of our society. This is because in developing countries, unlike most developed countries, per capita consumption is more than twice as high as per capita production.

To sum up, modern consumers are mentally active but physically passive. Consumption has become a part of an excess of meaning and variety more than ever before. Consumption is no longer regarded as a process of satisfying the biological requirements of the body but has become a matter of the brain and mind. This has a profoundly negative impact on both the economic health of society

and the social psyche. Therefore, it has become urgent to improve and transform consumption patterns.

Etik Standart ile Uyumluluk

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