THE IMPACT OF SHOPPING CENTERS ON TURKISH CULTURE: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

Alışveriş Merkezlerinin Türk Kültürü Üzerindeki Etkisi: Kapsamlı Bir Araştırma

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Abstract: In recent years, shopping centers have risen to prominence as spaces that not only offer a diverse array of products and retail experiences but have also become key sites for social interactions and cultural transformations. Historically, markets also transcended their roles as mere economic hubs, serving as communal gathering places where individuals convened to exchange knowledge, learn about significant matters, and make decisions. Turkey's ancient bazaars exemplify the social significance embedded within marketplaces. However, the proliferation of shopping centers has ushered in a shift in these spaces, with people increasingly opting for malls as destinations for leisure and social engagement. As the influence of shopping malls has surged, it has triggered cultural transformations and reshaped social behaviors and exchanges. Contemporary shopping malls no longer bear the same civic and cultural roles as traditional bazaars. Consequently, the ascent of shopping centers has left an indelible mark on Turkish culture, contributing to the emergence of a skewed consumerist society. This review offers a comprehensive examination of the evolution of bazaars and shopping centers, placing particular emphasis on the cultural aspects that have been impacted by the proliferation of the latter.

Keywords: Shopping Center, Consumerism, Globalization, Bazaar.

Öz: Son yıllarda, alışveriş merkezleri, yalnızca çeşitli ürünler ve alışveriş deneyimleri sunmanın ötesinde, aynı zamanda sosyal etkileşimler ve kültürel dönüşümler için önemli mekanlar haline gelmiştir. Tarihsel olarak, pazarlar sadece ekonomik merkez olan rolünü aşmış, bireylerin bilgi alışverişi yapmak, önemli konular hakkında bilgi edinmek ve kararlar almak için buluştukları toplumsal toplanma yerleri olarak hizmet vermiştir. Türkiye'nin antik çarşıları, pazar yerlerinin içine gömülü olan toplumsal önemi örneklemektedir. Ancak alışveriş merkezlerinin yaygınlaşması, bu mekanlarda bir değişime yol açmış, insanlar gittikçe artarak boş zaman ve sosyal etkileşimler için alışveriş merkezlerini tercih etmeye başlamıştır. Alışveriş merkezlerinin etkisi arttıkça, kültürel dönüşümleri tetiklemiş, sosyal davranışları ve ilişkileri yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Günümüz alışveriş merkezleri artık geleneksel çarşılar gibi aynı toplumsal ve kültürel rolleri taşımamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, alışveriş merkezlerinin yükselişi, Türk kültürü üzerinde derin etkiler bırakarak, dengesiz bir tüketimci toplumun ortaya çıkmasına katkı sağlamıştır. Bu inceleme, çarşıların ve alışveriş merkezlerinin evrimini kapsamlı bir şekilde ele almaktadır ve özellikle alışveriş merkezlerinin yaygınlaşması tarafından etkilenen kültürel yönlerine önem vermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alışveriş Merkezi, Tüketimcilik, Küreselleşme, Çarşı.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic interplay between urbanization, industrialization, and consumerism has significantly reshaped the landscape of social and cultural spaces over time. This article explores the historical progression of these spaces, from their origins in city squares and markets to the present-day dominance of shopping centers. Understanding this evolution is crucial for comprehending the broader cultural and societal shifts that have accompanied it.

The Industrial Revolution marked a pivotal turning point in history, triggering mass migrations to cities as factories concentrated in urban areas (Clark, 2014, p. 209). The resulting urbanization not only fueled population growth but also altered the nature of leisure and social activities. As technology and industry advanced, time and speed became paramount for the

working class. Weekdays offered little time for travel and leisure activities, reserving weekends and holidays as moments of respite. This shift was particularly striking for individuals who had migrated from rural areas to work in factories, as leisure time took on new significance in their routines (Thompson, 1966; Tosh, 2007). City squares, parks, theaters, cafés, department stores transformed into hubs of social interaction (Hobsbawm, 1996). In this context, urban shopping centers emerged as transformative hubs, catering to both social and utilitarian needs with unparalleled convenience (Pacione, 2009). Their growth was underpinned by the increasing desire to access all necessary items under one roof, obviating the need to traverse long distances during weekends. Over time, shopping centers proliferated, encouraging people to explore their offerings and experience leisure within their confines.

The expansion of shopping centers to suburban areas introduced a novel dimension to the social space culture. Suburban shopping centers emulated the bustling atmosphere of city centers (Goss, 1999), drawing individuals away from the city center itself (Sorkin, 1992). The shopping center's ever-expanding influence redefined the concept of social spaces, reshaping the culture of leisure and social interaction (Zukin, 1995). The historical evolution of social and cultural spaces reflects the dynamic interplay of industrialization, urbanization, and consumerism. As society adapted to these changes, social interaction, consumption, and leisure evolved to take place in shopping centers, which have, in turn, become integral to contemporary culture and the concept of social space. Understanding this evolution helps contextualize current social trends and underscores the significant role of shopping centers in shaping the fabric of our society.

Further, the proliferation of shopping centers in a global context is a phenomenon that has left an indelible mark on societies. Turkey has experienced remarkable economic and commercial changes since the introduction of shopping centers. These centers, emblematic of modernity, played a pivotal role in redefining the lifestyle and culture of Turkish communities, as it can be argued that the infusion of products from different countries was one of the key factors related to the shift towards globalization, either by driving it (Appadurai, 1996) or being the consequence of it (Giddens, 1990).

The rise of shopping centers in Turkey corresponded with the decline of traditional public spaces and bazaars, not only transforming the retail landscape but also significantly impacting cultural and social dynamics. The following analysis underscores the complex influence of shopping centers in reshaping Turkish society. Understanding these changes is vital for comprehending the ongoing cultural trends and the evolving concept of social spaces in Turkey.

Historical Development of Shopping Areas and Their Impact on Social Identity

The historical evolution of commercial spaces and its influence on the construction of social identity can be traced through various epochs. Commercial activities, dating back to ancient Egypt and the Hittites, originally centered around open areas near community temples. The development of planned commercial spaces can be observed during the Ancient Greek-Hellenistic period, exemplified by the "Agoras", a gathering place initially, evolved to encompass market activities (Altuna, 2012), and the subsequent Roman period featuring the "Forums" (Packer 1997; Batı, 2007). This evolution continued with the construction of "Trajan's Market," characterized by its 150 shops and multi-story architecture. The transition to marketplaces in western cities occurred during the Roman Middle Ages (5th-15th century) and the Renaissance-Baroque period (15th-17th century). Meanwhile in the eastern provinces, structures like "khan,"[1] "bedesten," "arasta," and covered bazaars facilitated a strong market influence during this period. The Enlightenment Age (18th and 19th centuries) witnessed the

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[1] Khan, type of inn once found in the Middle East and parts of North Africa and Central Asia that effectively functioned as a trading centre and hostel. A square courtyard was surrounded by rows of connected lodging rooms, usually on two levels and arcaded. Although some stable space was provided, the khan was intended primarily for people, providing food as well as shelter for travelers and traders (Britannica, 2009).

transformation from small shops to larger establishments. Subsequently, shopping areas underwent further metamorphosis, particularly with the advent of shop windows (Sennett, 1990; Dündar, 2002).

A significant shift transpired during the Industrial Revolution as multi-story spaces dedicated exclusively to shopping began to emerge. Notably, Le Bon Marché, a department store in Paris, represented a novel type of shopping space that would influence subsequent developments. As pioneers in this paradigm shift, multi-story stores not only introduced new marketing strategies but also integrated them into their spatial designs (Dinçer, 2010).

The inception of modern shopping centers dates back to the 1920s in the United States, with the first established in Baltimore in 1907 and later in California during the 1920s. The Baltimore venture united small vendors who harnessed a parking area to create a sprawling open market. In California, traders engaged in commerce with European countries and other states gradually consolidated their power and eliminated smaller vendors, paving the way for the opening of expansive department stores offering an array of international products (Feinberg and Meoli, 1991; Frączkiewicz, 2013).

From the early 20th century shopping centers, a pivotal turning point was marked by the popularization of the automobile, and consequently, suburban sprawl. The history of the shopping mall and its relationship with the evolution of the urban and suburban lifestyles can be portrayed by Victor Gruen's work in shaping the concept of the suburban mall (Hardwick, 2015). He is often regarded as the visionary behind the concept of the enclosed shopping center, that prioritized convenience, accessibility, and the creation of a centralized "community hub" in dispersed sprawl fabrics with very limited spaces dedicated to the community and social interaction. The first enclosed suburban mall, Southdale Center in Minnesota, which opened in 1956, marked a turning point in retail history, as it introduced a climate-controlled, one-stop shopping experience that catered to the needs and desires of suburban residents. These malls became more than just places to shop; they became gathering spaces for social interaction and leisure activities, fundamentally altering the way people spent their free time and becoming a central fixture of suburban life, reflecting changing patterns of consumer behavior and social interaction. These contemporary shopping malls are often referred to as 'machines for shopping' (Hardwick, 2015), 'spectacles' (Mansvelt, 2005, p. 59) and the 'cathedrals of consumption' (Fiske, 1989; Ritzer, 1999).

Shopping centers are dynamic structures that encapsulate a blend of social, economic, and cultural dimensions, evolving in tandem with technological and societal shifts and assuming a pivotal role in urban morphology (Batı, 2007). Contemporary shopping centers have solidified their status as integral components of cities, prompting collaboration between urban planners and architects to formulate urban design strategies that include them. The confluence of shopping centers with public transportation hubs (e.g. Istanbul Forum) underscores their significance as urban nodes. Present-day mega shopping centers have seamlessly transformed into complex entertainment hubs, perpetually expanding to cater to diverse needs and preferences (Şentürk, 2012). They function as powerful magnets that draw people into their vibrant and lively ambiance – even if not for immediate purchases – thereby enhancing the overall appeal of their surroundings. The availability of entertainment options within these spaces further amplifies their allure (Şentürk, 2012). However, some scholars argue that, owing to an array of social and economic factors, the foreseeable future holds predictions of decline for numerous large shopping centers, as they grapple with challenges related to integration with the urban fabric and their contributions to the overall quality of life (Mendilcioğlu & Goudarzi, 2019, p. 235).

Development of Shopping Centers in Turkey

The historical development of shopping centers in Turkey can be contextualized within the aforementioned broader timeline of commercial spaces, beginning with ancient Greece and Rome and progressing through various epochs. The origins of commercial activities in open areas near community temples were followed by the establishment of planned commercial spaces, which evolved into market centers (Packer, 1997; Batı, 2007). The Istanbul Grand Bazaar, founded in 1461, is one of the world's largest and oldest historical trade centers (Koroglu, Eceral, & Ugurlar, 2009). In the fifteenth century, two bedestens (covered craft markets) were constructed to generate finance for the Ayasofya Mosque (Gülersoy, 1980). Over the centuries, this commercial hub continued to evolve, incorporating traditional Turkish baths, commercial buildings, mosques, cafes, restaurants, and jewelry industry, contributing significantly to the city's economy (Gharipour, 2012).

The narrative then transitions to the nineteenth century, which witnessed the transformation of public spaces into transitional zones connecting private and public domains. The industrial revolution prompted an upsurge in commodity production and the emergence of extensive commercial areas (Gülserin, 2010). In parallel with these global developments, modern shopping centers made their debut in Turkey during the 1980s. This transition was driven by the prevailing free-market economy of the time, with Istanbul serving as the starting point for these innovative commercial spaces, later spreading to other major cities across the country. Turkey's first modern shopping mall, Ataköy Galleria Shopping Mall, opened its doors in Istanbul in 1988 (Arslan, Isigicok, & Sezer, 2010). The subsequent two decades witnessed the proliferation of numerous shopping malls across Turkey, especially in major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and Bursa (Türk et al., 2011, p. 630). The introduction of open-air shopping centers and lifestyle centers in Turkey in the early 2000s marks another significant point in the country's retail history. These developments included Forum Bornova in Izmir (2006) and Forum Aydın (2008), designed with principles aligned with global trends (Uluengin, 2014). This expansion reflects Turkey's integration into the global shopping center phenomenon, which has evolved over time from ancient marketplaces to the dynamic shopping centers of the modern era.

In contemporary Turkey, an array of modern shopping centers has proliferated across many cities, signifying a transformative evolution from their initial stages to a pre-mature phase (Özorhon & Özorhon, 2014). However, this shift has brought about substantial disparities in terms of social, cultural, economic, architectural, and urban planning aspects. Formerly, these shopping malls exhibited architectural and design homogeneity, characterized by common elements like interior courtyards, multi-story structures, ventilation, and lighting considerations (Özaydın, 2009). Over time, these structures have metamorphosed into diverse typologies, sometimes resembling traditional urban spaces, districts, squares, markets, or other themed environments, marking a significant shift in architectural and urban design paradigms. A similar diversification is observable from a socio-cultural perspective, where the changing dynamics within these shopping malls reflect broader societal transformations. However, it's worth noting that the academic inquiry into these shifting social, economic, and spatial dynamics in Turkey has not kept pace with the rapid proliferation of shopping malls (Kartal & Turcan, 2018).

With the emergence of large shopping centers, these spaces have transcended their role as mere shopping venues, morphing into miniature towns that offer a comprehensive array of goods and services under one roof. Navigating these shopping malls has evolved into a social habit, reflecting a societal shift that began in the 1950s and 1960s often referred to as the "consumer society." This era heralded a marked emphasis on the constant acquisition of goods as a paramount goal and value, catalyzed by factors such as the burgeoning entertainment industry and a response to the aftermath of World War II and the rapid industrial growth of the period. The rise of mass society and mass culture, both of which are foundational in the formation of a

consumer society, played a pivotal role in shaping this new cultural and economic landscape (Storey, 2003).

Shopping centers have transcended their utilitarian function, evolving into integral cultural and social entities. This transformation aligns with the capitalist system's growing emphasis on shopping centers, economic program organization, and the intricate web of production and consumption relationships, fostering consumption as a prevailing social paradigm encompassing society as a whole. In this context, shopping centers assume the role of a stage, casting individuals as actors in a community without distinct individual identities, introducing novel consumption patterns, and promoting new products (Zukin, 1991). As Zukin elucidates, people seek their "social identities in shopping, comparing goods, and talking about consumption," showcasing how identity can be both chosen and perpetuated through these consumer practices (Van Eeden, 2005).

Life and Death of Great Public Spaces

Historically, Turkish public spaces in the Middle Ages acted as the gateways to the city and marketplaces, facilitating interactions across diverse classes and social statuses. Town squares, frequently located in the vicinity of religious buildings, provided settings for socialization and communication, a concept similarly observed in the Islamic tradition with mosque courtyards and bazaars serving parallel roles (Oktay, 2007). Current tendencies towards disperse and suburban lifestyles modified the nexus between workplaces and residential areas leading to a detachment from public spaces. In contemporary urban landscapes bisected by highways, squares and streets primarily served as conduits, diverting social interactions towards tourist destinations and shopping areas. Consequently, shopping malls started independently promoting themselves within the urban fabric. These spaces served as "psychological recreation areas" within the city's structure (Zucker, 1959).

The architectural and social fabric of these environments has invariably mirrored the prevailing social, economic, and political conditions of their respective epochs. At times, these spaces have served as arenas for communities rallying around political or religious authorities, while in other instances, they have hosted everyday occurrences like festivals and fairs. Due to their multiplicity of uses besides shopping, Bazaars have traditionally been recognized as public spaces, embedded within the societal and cultural fabric of the cities, with their open and communal designs, have historically served as centers for economic exchange, social interaction, and cultural integration. They were, "third places" (Oldenburg, 1997), public forums where people from diverse backgrounds and social strata came together, fostering a sense of community, and encouraging the exchange of ideas and goods.

Capitalism in Turkey in the 18th Century ushered in a series of transformative changes. The development of industrial capitalism, in particular, not only regulated the dynamics of production and consumption but also left an indelible mark on public relations and the very essence of public spaces within urban life (Vural and Yücel, 2006). The implications of this shift are profound, as it significantly altered the nature of public space, with a particular impact on urban areas. The aforementioned later emergence of shopping malls, representing the epitome of capitalist-driven consumerism, marked a turning point. Shopping centers driven by commercial interests and profit can often overshadow the principles of shared community, social interaction, and cultural exchange, which originally characterized public markets.

Public spaces are the crucibles that bring society together, facilitating cultural exchange and the transmission, sharing, or embodiment of a society's values, culture, and language (Yavuzçehre & Çezik, 2015). Although the abstract nature of public space makes it challenging to define, it represents an environment in which uniquely human phenomena find expression. Urban public spaces serve as tangible reflections of local culture and the era in which they exist, offering valuable insights into the social, cultural, and economic diversity of a city. These spaces, key to

local identity and a source of communal pride, assume an instructive role and carry ecological significance (Oktay, 2001). Common traits characterizing public spaces include their role as destinations for individual or collective activities, venues for fulfilling daily needs, accessibility to the general public, demarcation from private spaces, and utilization for both functional and symbolic purposes (Madanipour, 2007).

While in the context of Turkey, the evolution of the twentieth-century shopping mall from the historical bazaar is indeed a noteworthy transformation, when we scrutinize the two, it becomes evident that several substantial differences exist. One of the primary distinctions lies in the representation of regional culture. Historical bazaars served as showcases of a region's cultural heritage, manifesting through the products sold, architectural aesthetics, and the very ambiance they exuded. In contrast, contemporary shopping centers often adopt a standardized, homogenized appearance that does not necessarily reflect the unique cultural identity of their specific locale (Mendilcioğlu & Goudarzi, 2019, p. 236). Another vital contrast arises in their ability to foster social interaction. Historical bazaars were renowned as hubs of community life, where people congregated, engaged in conversations, and exchanged ideas while navigating the market stalls. They often functioned as integral forums for social interaction. In stark contrast, modern shopping centers tend to prioritize individualized shopping experiences (Erkip, 2003, p. 1080), with limited emphasis on encouraging social engagement. Furthermore, historical bazaars traditionally played a role in important community decisions, functioning as urban democratic spaces where key matters were deliberated. This participatory function is largely absent in new shopping centers, which are less likely to be venues for significant decision-making processes (Savaş Yavuzçehre & Çezik, 2015, p. 30). Additionally, the role in contributing to the growth of the local economy differs substantially. Historical bazaars were fundamental contributors to the local economy, offering locally produced goods and channeling profits back into the community. Conversely, new shopping centers may prioritize profits channeled to larger global corporations, potentially at the expense of the local economy (Varma, 1998). Architecturally, historical bazaars exhibited a distinct regional architectural style representative of their surroundings (Vural and Yücel, 2006). These bazaars embraced and mirrored local architectural design principles. In contrast, new shopping centers often adopt a standardized aesthetic that lacks the regional architectural nuances found in traditional bazaars (Oktay, 2001). While both historical bazaars and modern shopping centers share a common function as places for purchasing goods, their socio-cultural and economic roles have diverged significantly (Figure, 1).
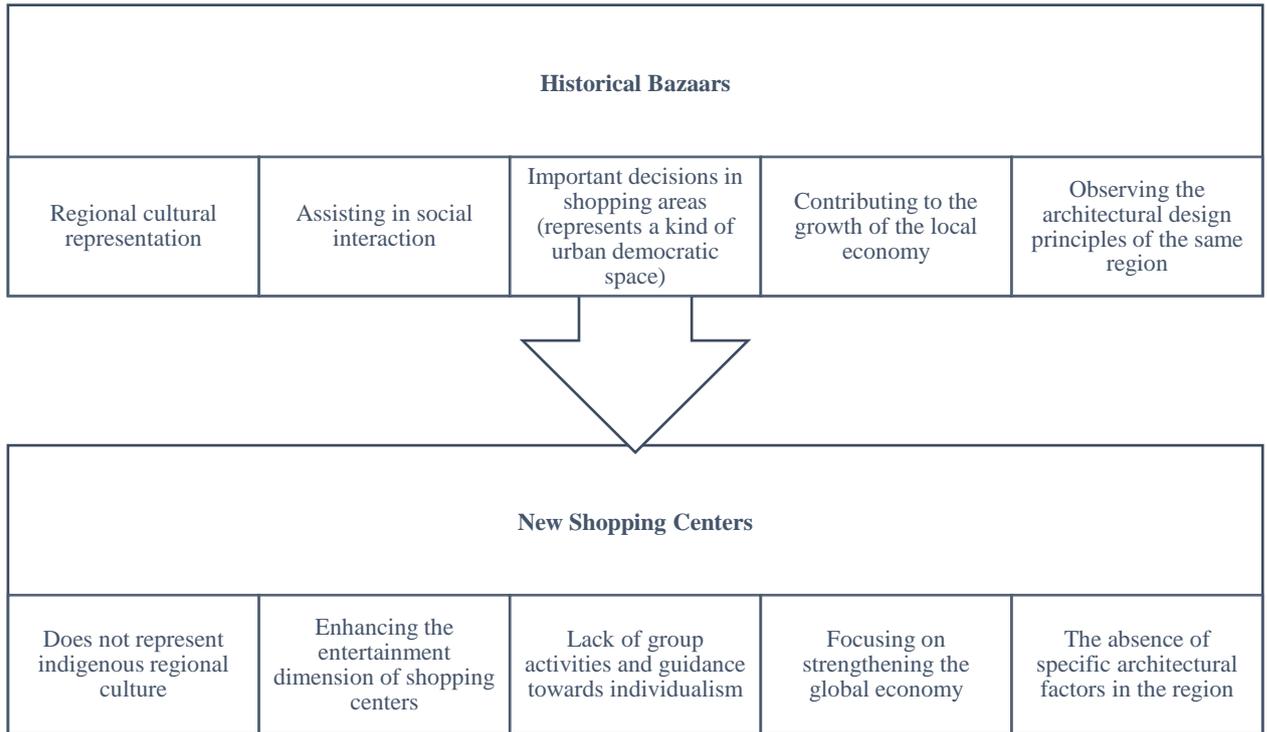
Historical Bazaars				
Regional cultural representation	Assisting in social interaction	Important decisions in shopping areas (represents a kind of urban democratic space)	Contributing to the growth of the local economy	Observing the architectural design principles of the same region

New Shopping Centers				
Does not represent indigenous regional culture	Enhancing the entertainment dimension of shopping centers	Lack of group activities and guidance towards individualism	Focusing on strengthening the global economy	The absence of specific architectural factors in the region

Figure 1. The alterations observed in shopping areas throughout history until present times, Source: Authors.

The Cultural Changes Following the Emergence of Shopping Centers in Turkey

During the political discourse surrounding Turkey's potential accession to the European Union, the focus has shifted towards distinct cultural disparities rather than solely economic differences. Critics of Turkey's EU membership emphasize the nation's unique historical, intellectual, and religious traditions, arguing that these characteristics set it apart from existing EU member states (Baycar, 2013, p. 10). Consequently, there is a growing interest among individuals in embracing European and Western products as a means of integrating into these societies and adopting their respective cultures. The aim is to facilitate an adjustment to the cultural fabric of these countries, ultimately enabling one to become a more suitable candidate for European Union membership.

Within this context, the landscape of Turkish shopping centers plays a pivotal role. International brands representing their countries of origin often take precedence in these establishments, a development that has not consistently aligned with Turkey's heritage and has introduced a notable generational rift in consumption behaviors. The ascendancy of non-local brands in mass production and their dominance in the Turkish market transcends mere economic boundaries; it challenges local customs and cultural values. Consequently, the younger generation, inspired by global connectivity, has adopted the consumption of international products that may undervalue traditional Turkish cultural models.

On a global scale, shopping centers have widely adopted chain stores predominantly featuring products rooted in Western cultures. This trend gives rise conflicting perspectives on foreign investment and its implications for the globalization of middle-class economies (Ganguly-Scrase, 2003, p. 544) and has limited the space for local and national production, sometimes even leading to the disappearance of indigenous products due to their inability to compete with imported goods. Similar trends are observed in other regions. For instance, India's burgeoning middle-class consumerism has faced scrutiny for its potential to promote excessive westernization (Varma, 1998).

The ubiquity of advertising across various media platforms, coupled with the endorsement of products by influential figures like celebrities, fashion icons, and youth leaders, has accelerated cultural shifts. Brands and products have now taken on roles as conduits for fulfilling emotional and cultural needs. A notable segment of the population, especially young individuals, aspires to assimilate into the global community associated with particular brands or lifestyles, fostering a sense of belonging to this collective. As a result, contemporary consumers are often characterized as "pleasure-seeking" or hedonistic, and within this unending cycle of consumption, they continuously grapple with dissatisfaction, exemplified by the self-defining formula: "I am nothing without what I own and consume" (Fromm, 2015), underscoring the erosion of social capital and community engagement. In the United States, a similar effect was described by Putnam (2000) attributed to factors like individualism, materialism, and a decline in civic participation, and by Oldenburg (1997) specifically referring to the declining role of "third places" for socialization. This parallel highlights the broader global trends which associate shopping malls with consumerism, individualistic values, and their impact on the social fabric of societies.

Case studies in Turkey elucidate a discernible interplay between urban spaces and identity, wherein the shopping center has emerged as one of the key places for urban inhabitants, shaping their perceived environment. Departing from local culture has become a prevalent trend and a symbol of modernity among many urban residents (Erkip, 2003, p. 1073). The past two decades have witnessed significant shifts in the consumption habits of the Turkish populace. Factors such as population growth, rising incomes, improved product quality, limited public transportation options relative to private alternatives, the proliferation of credit card usage, advanced payment methods (including installment payments), modernized advertising avenues, seamless communication, and heightened consumer demand have all contributed to these changing shopping behaviors (Aktaş, 2011, p. 30). These shifts in economic structures and investments have precipitated macro and micro-scale economic transformations in Turkey. Consequently, these shifts have propelled Turkey into the realm of a consumer society (Uzun et al., 2017, p. 05). Numerous scholars assert that contemporary shopping centers serve as the main public spaces where individuals engage with their identities and construct their understanding of the world (Van Eeden, 2005, p. 39), while paradoxically overlapping those that define shopping centers as "non places" characterized by standardization, anonymity, and uniformity (Augé, 1992).

As a result of the juxtaposition, there has been a conspicuous shift away from shopping areas that once epitomized the unique culture of their respective communities, with malls opting for a more generic and globalized approach to retail. This homogenization and globalization of consumerism has further accentuated the sense of uniformity with identical brands and products. Simultaneously, there has been an escalating detachment from local culture and a heightened affinity for Western culture, particularly among the younger generation. These transformations are reflecting Turkey's evolving relationship with globalization and modernity (Figure 2).
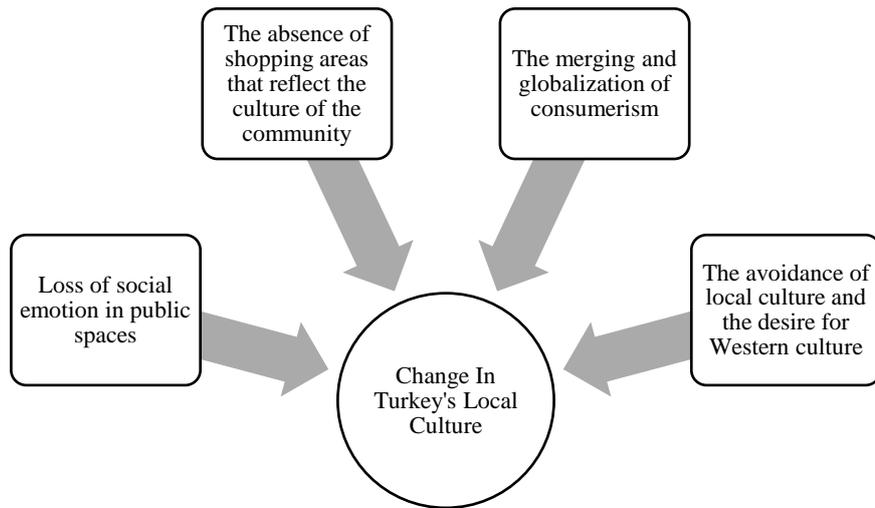
Figure 2. The role of new shopping centers in Turkey's local culture, Source: Authors.

Shopping Center Design and People

Shopping centers employ meticulous design. Their purpose is well-orchestrated: to craft an enticing, hyperrealistic world that beckons people to step inside and indulge. Enormous aquariums, towering palm trees, glistening columns, dazzling lights, glass arches, elevators, musical fountains, and cascading waterfalls collectively offer an immersive experience. Within these precincts, individuals often find themselves spending more and nurturing a voracious appetite for consumption. This might point toward the "spectacle" as one of the factors that drives contemporary daily practices, where social interactions and experiences are substituted with representations (Debord, 1967).

Several scholars have looked into the architectural elements of shopping centers, wielded to attract, insulate, and metamorphose them into epicenters of consumerism. Notably, their large proportions serve to blot out the external environment. Most shopping centers are devoid of transparent windows. Instead, they establish an enclosed realm governed by their own regulations. Within this closed space, the passage of time remains elusive, as the light levels and temperature remain constant despite the times of the day or seasons of the year (Underhill, 2005). The interiors exist in a perennial spring-like state, sustaining an unceasing day of consumption. "This is the utopia of consumer society, an uninterrupted opportunity for consumption every season and every hour of the day" (Yırtıcı, 2005, p. 124). Beyond the walls of shopping centers, the exteriors typically manifest as austere surfaces. *"From the parking lot, most shopping centers resemble a reinforced concrete shelter with a large store logo made of steel and brick, functioning as a single space"* (Gottdiener, 2005, p. 135). This architectural disposition serves the dual purpose of retaining visitors in the inside, and speeding up their departure, once outside of the building. Furthermore, it conveys the image of a "concrete shelter" while projecting an aura of a distant "safe zone" within a chaotic urban milieu (Table 1). *"While the outside world is filled with crime, irregular development, and the peculiarities of urban life in a society characterized by social stratification, life inside the shopping center is protected by black walls that resemble castle walls and its feudal-looking property, which is under the protection of the shopping center operator"* (Gottdiener, 2005, p. 135-136). This very "desire for escapism" from the negative aspects of daily life has been reported as one of the key factors that drive the success of controlled isolated environments as an alternative to the outside world. This deliberate isolation serves to maximize consumption, as it disconnects individuals

from external distractions and concerns, keeping them engaged within the spectacle of the "Eden of mindless consumers" (Tuan, 1998, p. 22).

Table 1. Architectural Elements that Attract People to Spend Time in Shopping Centers, Source: Authors

Closed and solid volumes pique curiosity, drawing people inside to explore further.
Maintaining controlled indoor temperatures encourages people to spend time regardless of the weather conditions outside.
Incorporating urban elements within the design creates a perception of being in the heart of a city.
Creating an isolated environment that disconnects visitors from the outside world and external time cues, thereby fostering a setting where people are more likely to linger and engage in extended shopping experiences.
Often infusing these contemporary spaces with a sense of uniqueness by integrating historical architectural elements.

Contemporary shopping centers not only exhibit architectural similarities – established as a global building typology – but also store offerings on a global scale, leading to a phenomenon where people worldwide can adopt similar lifestyles and consumption habits. The link between shopping malls as a representation of capitalist global culture, and the consequent homogenization of local identities is one of the main criticism of this building typology (Şan et al., 2017, p. 149).

In this context, the proliferation of shopping centers in Turkish cities has substantially transformed the use of public areas. In response to the encroachment of simulated public spaces, it is crucial to reinforce and invigorate genuine urban public spaces. This includes supporting existing shopping areas and bazaars that are seamlessly integrated into the urban fabric, as they play a vital role in preserving the authenticity of public spaces. However, a lack of discourse on these matters within architectural and urban planning circles signifies a failure to address the long-term transformations that cities may undergo in the future as a result of evolving lifestyles (Özaydın, 2009, p. 88). These alterations within shopping environments are emblematic of the broader societal shifts towards globalization and commercialization, influencing how we shop and interact within public spaces (Figure 3).
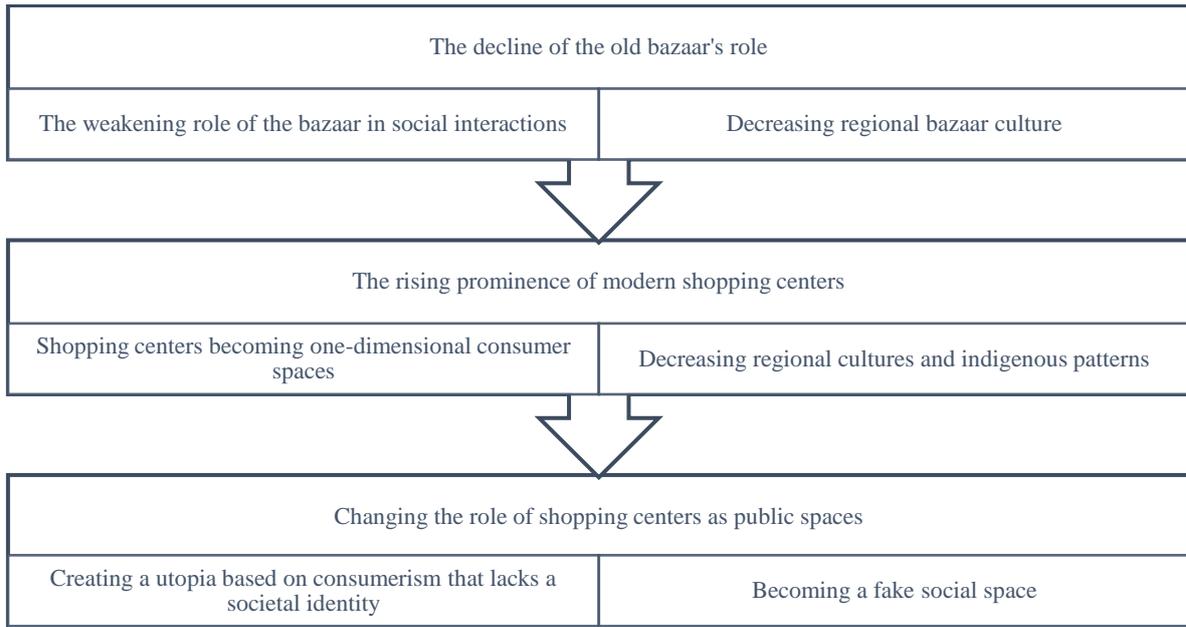
The decline of the old bazaar's role	
The weakening role of the bazaar in social interactions	Decreasing regional bazaar culture

The rising prominence of modern shopping centers	
Shopping centers becoming one-dimensional consumer spaces	Decreasing regional cultures and indigenous patterns

Changing the role of shopping centers as public spaces	
Creating a utopia based on consumerism that lacks a societal identity	Becoming a fake social space

Figure 3. The Role and Changes of Today's Shopping Spaces

CONCLUSION

Research reveals the significant impact of Western consumption culture on Turkish local community lifestyle. More specifically, the presence of non-local stores in shopping centers contributes to an increase in consumerism among certain segments of society, driving them to favor non-local products over local ones. This trend ultimately undermines the acceptance of indigenous culture and initiates a process of globalization.

While shopping centers have become urban focal points and leisure destinations, their effects on community identity and cultural transformation are profound. While the full effects of this transformation on Turkish society are yet to be fully understood, parallels can be drawn to social and psycho-social phenomena described in American cases (i.e. desire for escapism, anonymity, individualization, and the erosion of traditional social third-places). While it may be challenging to definitively prove that shopping centers directly erode local culture, the parallel trends observed in both Western and Turkish experiences highlight that these centers influence lifestyle choices, which in turn have a profound impact on the broader cultural fabric. Shopping centers, as hubs of consumer culture, play a pivotal role in shaping and globalizing consumption habits, fostering cultural changes within communities. The long-term implications of these changes merit ongoing attention and study.

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