

OBJECT EVALUATION: THE ROLE OF SHOWCASE IN TURKISH HOMES

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Abstract-The construction of domestic spaces is based on cultural, functional, aesthetic and symbolic values. Showcase is the prominent furniture that gives the differentiating characteristics to each Turkish home. In addition to that the showcase with its objects that gives clues about personal information. Although showcase is a common item in the homes of the elderly, it is becoming more and more rare among the in younger generations. This research aims to understand the dominant role of showcase Turkish homes in Konya and the meanings that are associated with it. The ethnographic research is applied to eight homes in Konya with four respondents under 40 years of age and four respondents over 40 years of age.

Key Words-Use of Showcase, Symbolic Meaning of Objects, Aesthetic Taste of Persona, Object-User Relations.

NESNE DEĞERLENDİRMESİ: VİTRİNİN TÜRK EVLERİNDEKİ ROLÜ

Özet-Evsel mekanların oluşumu kültürel, fonksiyonel ve sembolik değerlere bağlıdır. Vitrin her Türk evinin karakteristik farklılıklarını belirleyen mobilyadır. Ayrıca, içindeki nesnelere birlikte vitrin; bize kullanıcıların kişisel bilgileri hakkında ipucu verir. Çoğu yetişkin evinde sıkça rastlanan vitrin, yeni nesilde nadiren bulunmaya başlanmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı vitrinin Konya'daki Türk evlerinde baskın rolünü ve onunla ilişkili anlamları anlamaktır. Etnografik araştırma, dört adet 40 yaş üstü ve dört adet 40 yaş altı katılımcılar olmak üzere Konya'da bulunan sekiz eve uygulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler-Vitrin Kullanımı, Nesnelere Sembolik Anlamı, Katılımcıların Estetik Beğenileri, Nesne-Kullanıcı İlişkisi.

1.INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

The homes are the basic spaces that conducted with culture. Culture has many definitions and it is related with the scientific approaches. Selected definitions on culture are

- “Culture is the full range of learned human behavior patterns” [1].

Bu makale, 4. Uluslararası Mobilya ve Dekorasyon Kongresi'nde sunulmuş ve İleri Teknoloji Bilimleri Dergisi'nde yayınlanmak üzere seçilmiştir.

- “Essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their values; culture systems may, on the hand, be considered as production of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action” [2].
- “Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.” [3].
- “A culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society.” [4].
- “Those who define culture as an abstraction do not tell us what they mean by this term. They appear to take it for granted that they themselves know what they mean by ‘abstraction,’ and that others, also, will understand.” [5].
- “Culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them.” [6].
- ‘The socially and historically situated process of production of meanings’ [7].

The study is centralized on the definition of the culture as “a system of meanings and symbols that shape how people see the world and their place in it and give meaning to personal and collective experience” [8].

Understanding material culture is related with understanding the physical environment of people. The material things bring various meanings and values for each person. These meanings are reflected in lifestyles, culture and belief. People tend to construct their physical environment within various values through personal codes. The codes are related with lifestyle, culture, intellectual capital, economic capital, aesthetic value, functional value, use value and symbolic value [9].

According to material culture theories the objects has biography as human has. The objects are commodities or singular that depend on the culture. For instance, gifts are not commodities because of not to discrete transactions [10].

The object selection in daily life related with aesthetically pleasing as tacky, merely, or ugly. According to Bourdieu the multitude of social factors affects the object preferences. He also claims that, “The different aesthetic choices people make are all distinctions—that is, choices made in opposition to those made by other classes.” [11].

Individuality, creativity and the traditional behaviors are related to evaluation of the object. Some objects involve to daily life to answer a function, while some objects involve to the daily life with its symbolic and aesthetic values. To demonstrate, keeping broken watch from grandfather has symbolic value, instead of its functional value. The emotional experience and the cultural perspectives affect the user preferences on furniture and related objects.

Culture is a dynamic process and sensitive to the social environment of individual. The study aims to understand the importance of the showcase and its future in domestic spaces in Turkish homes. The research focuses on showcase, which is the prominent furniture of Turkish homes, is commonly used for exhibition of the objects. The aim of the study is to understand the exhibited objects of showcase in the context of culture, lifestyle and the values. Besides, common view on the showcase preferences are changing day by day related lifestyles. Thus, the human-object interactions cannot be considered without socio-cultural context.

The major research questions are

- How does an object contribute in daily life as regards meanings and values in spaces?
- What are the impacts of the culture through showcase to understand its importance in

- domestic spaces?
- What are the relations of the objects with showcase?
 - The differences between citizens over 40 years of age and citizens under 40 years of age in Konya. How does material culture change between first and later generations?

2. METHOD (YÖNTEM)

This study inquires the use of showcase and its objects deeply. Study reutilized the methods for understanding issue. Ethnography is the main method of the study that is defined in many types of studies. The definition of ethnography is ‘description of people’ or ‘in-depth description of cultures to understand another way of life form of the local notion’ [12]. The major subject of ethnography is the people in a collective sense. Spradley mentions that “Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people.” [13]. The research aims to understand the objects by learning from people.

“Participant vs. non-participant observation: complete observation, observer as participant, participant as observer, complete participant” [14,15] “dependent on collective knowledge of the topic and by whom, who is observing, what activities are (not) performed by the researcher and how this impacts how people/the observer/the setting relate; how researcher orients oneself in terms of positionality and reflexivity” [16]. The observation is applied to understand the location of the showcase and relation with the other objects. Interview with semi-structured, open-ended questions are asked to understand the use of objects in special days, which cannot be observed by the researchers.

In this study, snowball sampling is applied for exploratory purposes [17]. The main reason to choose the snowball sampling is to establish efficient respondents with their close social networks which is similar. Besides, researcher is required to enter the participant’s home to perform the ethnographic method. Because of this, respondents may have privacy concern about opening their home to researchers. In that sense, participants’ close social networks have helped to overcome this privacy concern. Thus, with the snowball sampling this study has progressed more quickly and in a more reliable way.

The study is conducted with two target groups. Each group is consisting four married couples, living in a city center of Konya. First group is consisting participants over 40 years of age, while second group is consisting participants less than 40 years of age. Data is collected by taking photographs of showcase in the living room with participants’ permission and obtained from the interviews conducted with them. Photos are taken without any intervention on showcase arrangements of respondents. Thereby, it provides valuable data to understand symbolic values, functional values and meanings of the objects through the exhibited in showcase. As well as, open-ended questions are mainly about the participants’ daily life practices, such as; why they have or not showcase in their living room, how they interact with the exhibited objects in the showcase and getting information about these objects.

3. FINDINGS (BULGULAR)

According to the interview results, all of the respondents over 40 years of age have showcase in their living room. They are using showcase for exhibition and storage purposes. These showcases ranged from 8 to 28 years old. They have a common thought about showcases that showcases are “unnecessary” furniture. The exhibited objects in the showcase of the participants over 40 years of age listed on the Table 1.

Table 1. Exhibited Objects in the Showcase of over 40 Years of Age

| Age | Persona | Having Showcase | Exhibited Objects in the Showcase |
|-----|---------|-----------------|---|
| 40+ | P1 | Yes | Porcelain And Crystal Tea And Coffee Sets, Sugar Bowl, Porcelain Trinket, Photographs, Crystal Vase, Wedding Candy, Candle Holder, Artificial Flower, Lace Doily |
| | P2 | Yes | Porcelain Coffee Sets, Copper Turkish Coffee Set, Zam-Zam Set, Porcelain Tray, Porcelain And Silver Trinkets, Candy And Sugar Bowls, Candle Holder, Certificate Of Honor, Easter Egg, Lace Doily. |
| | P3 | Yes | Tea And Drinking Glass Set, Candle Holder, Crystal Drinking Glass And Decanter Set, Sugar Bowl, Porcelain And Silver Trinkets, Zam-Zam Set, Silver Tray, Cake Tray, Wedding Candy, Lace Doily |
| | P4 | Yes | Turkish Coffee Set, Zam-Zam Set, Photographs, Silver And Porcelain Trinkets, Crystal Tea And Drinking Sets, Candle Holder, Candy Bowl, Wedding Candy, Point Lace |

All the respondents over 40 years of age advise young generations not using showcases. Although two of four respondents express that showcase is a traditional object. Three respondents recommend sideboard for alternative exhibition furniture instead of showcase. Nonetheless, three of four respondents over 40 years of age exhibit their dowry in their showcase. The existence of the showcase bases on conventional. However, the change of the lifestyles and daily life activities make the showcase to lose dominancy in the homes.



Figure 1. Traditional Showcase

In addition to this all respondents exhibit various objects such as; gifts, trinkets, souvenirs, Easter egg, artificial flower, ottoman bath shoe etc. These objects ranged from 14 to 100 years old. Three of four respondents exhibit zam-zam set, tea set, candleholder, wedding candy, sugar bowl and coffee set. Two of four respondents exhibit drinking glass set, photographs, decorative tray and candy bowl. However, all respondents over 40 years of age exhibit lace works in their showcase. Three of four these lace works are using for doily while one lace work is using for

cover the object. Two of four respondents arrange the location of the showcase to easy accesses the stored dinner sets. Two of four personas use the coffee set, tea set and drinking glass set for guests, whereas other two respondents do not use any exhibited objects for guest. The main reason behind exhibiting these objects is their aesthetic taste. In contrast, they state that they will not exhibit these objects even they do not have showcase.



Figure 2. Ottoman Bath Shoe as Exhibited Object

All respondents over 40 years of age interact with showcase for cleaning activity. Nevertheless, two respondents express that they interact with showcase while hosting the guest. Respondents store various products as follows: tablecloths, dinner set, cooking pot set. P2 mentioned that she hides her money in showcase. Not only symbolic values but also aesthetic values of the objects are variable depend on each persona. Commonly these objects are memorabilia such as; coffee set, antique tray, silver tray and decorative ottoman bath shoe (Figure 2.).

According to interview results two of four respondents under 40 years of age have showcase, while other two do prefer using alternative exhibition and storage furniture instead of showcase. One persona prefers to use sideboard and the other one prefers to use TV console. Both two respondents who have showcase in their living room expressed that they bought showcase to complete the furniture set. Meanwhile, all respondents under 40 years of age have a common thought that showcases are “unnecessary” furniture and they define the showcase as exhibition furniture. The exhibited objects in the showcase or another furniture of the participants under 40 years of age listed on the Table 2.

Table 2. Exhibited Objects of under 40 years of Age

| Age | Persona | Having Showcase | Exhibited Objects in the Showcase/Another Item |
|-----|---------|-----------------|--|
| 40- | P5 | Yes | Cologne Bottle, Wedding Flower, Drinking Glass Set (Whisky Decanter Set, Champagne Decanter Set, Liquor Decanter Set as Zam-Zam Set), Photo Album, Crystal Trinket, Wooden Fish Toy, Baby Shoes, Sparkling Wine, Silver Candy Bottle, Lace Doily |
| | P6 | Yes | Drinking Glass Set, Tea Set, Pitcher (Decanter), Silver Turkish Coffee Set, Liquor Set, Copper Trinket (Tea-Urn), Silver Tray, Lace Doily |
| | P7 | No (Sideboard) | They Prefer To Exhibit The Decoration Objects On The Sideboard. (Lace Doily, Cake Tray, Sugar Bowl, Candle Holder) |
| | P8 | No (TV console) | Coffee Set, Tea Set, Silver Sugar Bowl, Silver Ottoman Bath Shoe, Gift Mugs, Silver Tray, Lace Doily |

On the other hand, two of four respondents state that showcases are can be used as a store some goods. According to P7 “showcases are difficult to clean and also take up too much space”. Besides they think that buying showcase is an uneconomic issue. P8 defines showcase as conspicuous product. However, P8 prefers to exhibit the objects in the TV console instead of showcase. P5 has showcase to exhibit dowry such as; whisky decanter set, champagne decanter set, liquor decanter set. Besides, this persona exhibits gifts and souvenirs. All the objects that listed and mentioned above are range from 1 to 10 years old.



Figure 3. Zam Zam Set in Showcase

Lace works are common goods for all respondents in showcase as P5, P6 have or on sideboard/console as P7, P8. The way of exhibition and the exhibited objects have similar roots. P6 arrange the location of it nearby the dinner table and sofa, while the other one locate it near by the sofa. P7 locates the sideboard nearby dinner table to easy access storage goods. P8 locate it in front of the sofa suite. P6 exhibits the objects as decoration even they have functional value, except glasses. P7 exhibits the objects, which have functions, for decoration. P6, P7 do not prefer to use the objects for daily usage. These objects lose their functions by gaining aesthetic value.



Figure 4. TV Console

P8 expressed that they use the coffee set for their guests. P5 and P6 interact with it for cleaning activity and for use storage good. These respondents store various products such as dinner set, tablecloths, cutlery set. P6 mentioned that there is no symbolic value of the objects, while P5 stated that dowry, baby shoes and crystal trinkets have symbolic value for her. P7 expressed that glass bowl has a symbolic value for her. P8 mentioned that there is no object has symbolic value for her. Aesthetic values of the objects are variable depend on each persona. These objects are glass set, pitcher and decanter. P7 mentioned that wall mirror most aesthetical object in the living room. P8 stated that there is no aesthetical good on the TV console (Figure 4).

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION (SONUÇ VE TARTIŞMA)

The homes where we create private space, involve lots of issues concerning to cultures, income levels, social statuses, life styles, etc. The combinations of the objects of showcase concerning to decoration, exhibition, and function especially in the acceptance of guests and rituals inform us about the society and their culture.

The participants mentioned that the showcase do not have importance for their daily lives. Moreover they highlighted the lack of necessity of showcases in daily life. The main reason behind having a showcase bases on conventional attitude. The use of showcase is to store and exhibit the units, which is serving for special days or for decoration without any usage. In other words they store the units not only for storage, but also exhibition. The object selection for object exhibition is transformed from showcase to TV console that shows us the practice is continuing for this home.

According to the interviews, the participants will not renew the showcases after economic life of furniture is ended. In addition to that they will not even exhibit the products they have already exhibited. Since they keep the objects for filling and organizing the showcase depending on their aesthetic taste. They do not interact with the objects in showcase in their daily life. The interaction exists only in special days or hosting guests.

Hosting guests is the significant activity for respondents. Householders want show their honor to their guests elaborately. In that sense, serving has importance for entertaining the visitors. They store and exhibit the objects in showcase, which has aesthetic, economic or cultural value, for serving to guests. Showcase is one of the privileged furniture for keeping these valuable objects that has codes. For instance, a participant keeps her money in showcase because of keeping other valuable objects make it safe zone for her.

The use of showcase of the participants is different when we compare them by their age. The over 40-year-old participants have similar objects, interactions with showcase and thoughts on it, while the participants under 40 years of age have more variety on objects selection between each other. The older group advises to the young people not to have showcase. They do not prefer to renew the showcase. They believe that they have to keep showcase for traditional reasons.

The study cannot be generalized for Konya homes. The results limited for the eight homes that the research conducted. The range of age and number of participants should be varied in terms of different level of income for further studies.

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