

INFLUENCE OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE: DOMINO EFFECT OF ‘HILTONISM’

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ABSTRACT

This article reconsiders “Hiltonism” as a diffusion-oriented concept rather than a purely stylistic label. Taking the Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus (1955) as an anchor case, it examines how post-war hotel modernism circulated through corporate standardization, tourism-development agendas, media visibility, and changing cultures of consumption in Türkiye. The study positions the hotel within the socio-political transformation of the 1950s, including Türkiye’s growing engagement with the United States and the shift from state-led modernization toward private-sector-driven urban development. Methodologically, the article combines literature review, archival and media sources, oral-history inputs, geo-referenced mapping, and a comparative indicator-based coding framework. This framework distinguishes morphological-programmatic similarity from transfer plausibility, allowing the analysis to identify recurring architectural and socio-spatial cues without equating visual resemblance with direct causality. The findings show that Hiltonism operated as a standardized yet adaptable hospitality script: façade modularity, lobby-centered sociability, amenity clustering, and urban visibility circulated widely, while massing and façade articulation were locally recalibrated. The article contributes to debates on architectural translation, Turkish modernism, and modern hospitality heritage by demonstrating how Hiltonism functioned as a globally mediated and consumption-oriented form of modernity rather than as the simple origin of modernization in Türkiye.

Keywords: *International style, Hilton Hotel, history of architecture, modern architectural heritage, Hiltonism.*

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This study does not require ethics committee approval as it does not involve the use of human or animal subjects through methods such as surveys or interviews.

1. INTRODUCTION

Post-war modernism did not travel as a neutral aesthetic language. It moved through institutions, corporate standards, diplomatic imaginaries, construction technologies, and the soft-power economies of tourism. Among the most visible vehicles of this transfer was the international hotel, which simultaneously functioned as infrastructure, spectacle, and a cultural script for “modern life.” In many cities, the arrival of a branded hotel was not merely the addition of a building to the skyline; it was the arrival of an urban performance—lobbies, bars, terraces, and social rituals that staged a particular relationship between cosmopolitanism, consumption, and publicness. In this context, the Hilton brand occupies a distinctive position. It became a global shorthand for an exportable model of modern hospitality, while its architectural and spatial conventions helped consolidate an internationally legible image of comfort, prestige, and progress.

Türkiye offers a particularly fertile ground to examine this phenomenon. The country’s mid-twentieth-century modernization agenda produced an intense negotiation between national identity and international affiliation, between local architectural cultures and imported typologies, and between urban everyday life and elite representations of the “modern.” Within this dynamic landscape, the emergence of Hilton-associated architectural and spatial cues—especially in Istanbul and later across multiple geographies—provides a lens to track how modernism was localized, normalized, and, at times, contested. The Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus is frequently cited as a symbolic milestone within this trajectory, not only because it introduced a globally recognizable hospitality model, but because it acted as a social and spatial condenser: a place where international visitors, domestic elites, media narratives, and urban imaginaries intersected. Yet, the mechanisms by which such an architectural and socio-cultural prototype proliferated (how it became repeatable, how it was translated into local production contexts, and how it shaped subsequent hotel developments) remain under-theorized in a traceable, methodologically explicit way.

Importantly, the emergence of Hilton hotels in the 1950s coincided with a major socio-political and economic shift in Türkiye: the transition from single-party to multi-party politics, intensified engagement with the United States, the rise of consumer culture, and a broader move from state-led modernization toward private-sector-driven development. Read in this longer trajectory (one that also includes early Republican modernization experiments, particularly in Ankara) Hiltonism is better understood not as the origin of modernization but as a transformation toward a globally mediated, consumption-oriented form of modernity. Even the decision to build the first Hilton in Istanbul rather than in the capital may be interpreted within these changing dynamics.

The Hilton Hotel (Figure 1), built in Istanbul in the early 1950s, is considered an important milestone in Turkey’s architectural history. Designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), with the local contribution of architect Sedad Hakkı Eldem, the building is one of the most striking examples of the international style of the period. Eldem’s involvement as a controller architect represents an attempt to create a local interpretation of the international style, rather than adopting a purely imported design.



Figure 1. Hilton Hotel in the 1960s (Sabah, 2018)

Eldem's endeavor to imbue modernism with a local identity is evident in specific elements, such as the hotel's iconic entrance canopy—also referred to as the 'flying carpet'—which drew inspiration from the wide eaves (saçak) of the traditional Turkish house (Demirarslan, 2018; Bozdoğan, 2001) (Figure 2a-2b). This demonstrates that the project embodied a dialectical tension between the universal and the local from its very inception.

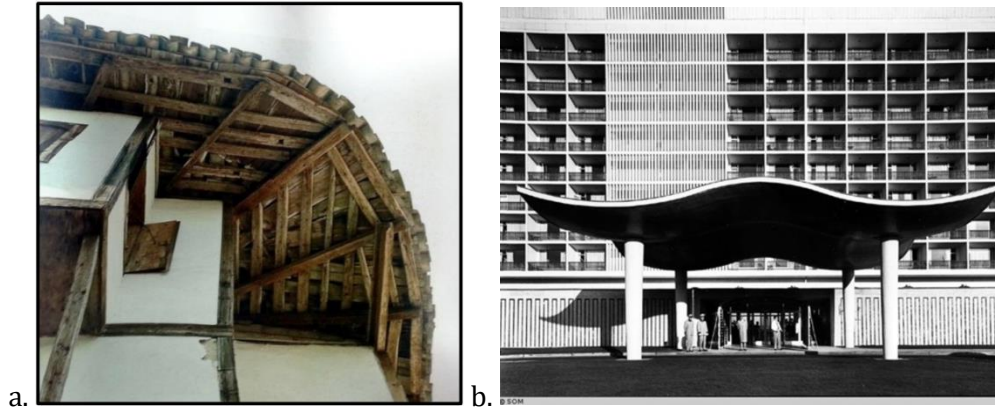


Figure 2a. An Example of Turkish House canopy (Günay,1998), 2b. Hilton Hotel İstanbul's entrance canopy (Sedat Hakkı Eldem, n.d.)

The Istanbul Hilton must be viewed not merely as a structure, but as an integral part of a global project. As Annabel Jane Wharton (2001) has argued, the Hilton hotel chain, during the era, functioned not only as hospitality venues but also as 'cultural embassies' that exported the American lifestyle, capital, and modernity. Therefore, the hotel's arrival in Istanbul should be regarded as one of the most concrete manifestations of American influence in Turkey (Wharton, 2001). This article addresses that gap by proposing "Hiltonism" not merely as a stylistic label but as an operational concept: a bundle of spatial, programmatic, and representational decisions through which a branded modern hospitality model becomes transferable. We treat the spread of these decisions as a diffusion process—what we term a domino effect—where early prototypes contribute to a chain reaction in subsequent developments via corporate standardization, tourism-development agendas, prestige economies, media visibility, and contracting practices. Importantly, we do not equate visual similarity with direct causality. Instead, we use a structured, evidence-traceable comparison to distinguish between recurring spatial/architectural cues and plausible pathways of transfer through which those cues become repeatable in different contexts. In the Turkish architectural discourse, the term "Hiltonism" was critically associated with Şevki Vanlı's critique of the formal and uncontextualized adoption of Western modernist hotel models. In this article, however, we use the term not only as a critique of imitation, but also as an analytical lens to examine how a branded modern hospitality model was translated between global standardization and local architectural cultures.

Accordingly, the study pursues three interrelated research questions:

- Conceptual question: How can "Hiltonism" be defined as an analytical construct that links architecture, hospitality programming, and socio-cultural performance—beyond a purely formal reading of modernist aesthetics?
- Mechanism question: Through which mechanisms did Hilton-associated spatial and representational patterns diffuse—locally and internationally—and how can this diffusion be framed without over-claiming linear cause-effect relations?
- Empirical question: What similarities and divergences emerge when selected hotel cases are examined through a consistent set of indicators, and what do these patterns suggest about the localization of international modernism in Türkiye and beyond?

To answer these questions, the article adopts a comparative case-based methodology supported by a transparent set of indicators that translate "Hiltonism" into observable design decisions. The analysis focuses on a curated set of hotels spanning the mid-twentieth century, reading them as nodes in a diffusion network rather than isolated objects. The indicators capture repeatable architectural and spatial cues—such as massing logic, façade modularity, balcony rhythms, ground-floor permeability and social staging, and the organization of public/semipublic hospitality programs—alongside contextual variables such as development narratives, institutional affiliations, and public representation. By coding these indicators consistently across cases, the study produces a traceable account of patterned replication while remaining explicit about the limits of inference where archival or institutional evidence is partial.

This paper's original contribution to the field is in two ways; (i) as a methodological contribution (a transparent, two-track indicator protocol separating similarity profiling from transfer plausibility), and (ii) as a contextual-historical contribution (reading Hiltonism as a shift toward globally mediated, consumption-oriented modernity in Türkiye's multi-party era, rather than as the origin of modernization). The paper asks how Hiltonism can be operationalized as a diffusion mechanism and how its translation becomes visible through repeatable socio-spatial cues and their localized variations. This article therefore uses cross-country similarity to establish a standardization baseline, while the Istanbul and Türkiye cases are examined to interpret translation, critique, and socio-cultural embedding.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the study is to discuss the impact of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, which is considered one of the most prominent examples of modernism in Turkey and opened in 1955, on the understanding of the influence of modern architecture in Turkey and the concept of "Hiltonism". The building was shaped by local contributions but reflected Western architectural styles. Hilton hotels, which were built in very similar ways in different geographies around the world, also influenced the architectural style in the country where they were opened. The article has been prepared to discuss the effect of domino via Hilton Hotels, which is known as Hiltonism, in the world architecture. The term 'domino effect' is used as a diffusion model, a chain reaction in which a branded modernist hotel prototype becomes transferable through corporate standardization, tourism-development agendas, and local prestige economies—visible as a patterned replication of specific spatial and façade decisions across time and geography.

As the method of the study, we adopt a qualitative, multi-source historical research design combining (i) local and international literature review, (ii) written media scanning (press clippings and periodicals as evidence of lifestyle transformation and public reception), (iii) oral-history inputs, and (iv) archival/original documents related to Hilton hotels across multiple geographies. To operationalize the paper's 'domino effect' claim, we identify Hilton hotels with comparable modernist façade and massing characteristics built between 1930–1965 and visualize their distribution through a geo-referenced map. Formal similarity is assessed through a transparent set of indicators—prismatic massing, modular façade rhythm, recessed balcony bays, raised/transparent ground-floor social zones, and repeatable typological decisions—used here as proxies for the portability of Hiltonism. Finally, the Turkish case is supported through case-to-case architectural comparison and socio-cultural interpretation of modernization rituals (prestige, class-coded urban practices, and Westernization debates).

This methodological design is justified by the nature of the research problem: the article investigates diffusion, translation, and socio-spatial recurrence rather than attempting to prove a single linear causal chain. The geo-referenced map and timeline establish the spatial and chronological baseline of Hilton's post-war expansion; the indicator framework translates architectural and programmatic recurrence into comparable evidence; and the Turkish case readings situate these patterns within local debates on modernization, Americanization, consumption, and heritage. Accordingly, figures and tables are used analytically rather than illustratively: the visual materials document architectural cues, the maps and timelines clarify the diffusion field, and the coding tables make the criteria and results transparent within the argument of the article.

The contribution of this article is threefold. First, it reframes Hiltonism as a hybrid phenomenon—architectural, programmatic, and socio-cultural—allowing the hotel to be read as a spatial technology of modernization rather than a standalone modernist object. Second, it operationalizes the notion of a domino effect as diffusion: a structured approach to identifying repeatable patterns and plausible transfer pathways without collapsing correlation into causation. Third, it offers a comparative perspective that situates Türkiye's experience within a broader field of post-war hospitality modernism, highlighting both alignment with international conventions and locally specific reinterpretations shaped by cultural expectations, urban settings, and development regimes.

To translate the concept of Hiltonism into a traceable analytical framework, the study employs a comparative indicator-based method. The selected hotel cases are treated as nodes within a diffusion network rather than as isolated objects. The method distinguishes between two related dimensions: similarity indicators (observable architectural and programmatic cues) and transfer-context indicators (evidence that supports plausible pathways of diffusion, adaptation, or emulation). This separation is methodologically important because it allows the study to identify patterned resemblance without automatically inferring direct causal influence.

There are 4 parameters determined in the indicator framework used to operationalize Hiltonism. These are; Morphological/spatial, Programmatic/social, Urban/representational and Transfer context. In each there are also several operational definition are determined as below;

- morphological/spatial :
 - Presence of a legible modernist massing strategy (e.g., slab/tower-bar composition, clear volumetric hierarchy, horizontally extended block) associated with mid-century international hotel typologies
 - Repetitive structural or façade grid expressing modular room organization
 - Repeated balcony or room-bay articulation creating a recognizable façade cadence
 - Visual/physical openness of the ground floor (glazing, entrances, public-facing transition zones, permeability toward landscape/city)
- Programmatic/social:
 - Lobby and reception zone organized as a public/semi-public representational space beyond purely functional circulation
 - Presence and integration of bars, restaurants, ballrooms, terraces, pools, or event spaces as part of a social prestige program
 - Deliberate relation between interior social spaces and terraces/gardens/views (e.g., Bosphorus-facing terraces, pool decks, designed landscape interface)
- Urban/representational:
 - Strategic placement and visual prominence in the urban scene (waterfronts, boulevards, gateways, high-visibility plots)
- Transfer context:
 - Evidence of direct or indirect linkage to Hilton brand systems, affiliated operators, consultants, design references, or professional networks
 - Evidence that the project was framed in public discourse as a modern prestige or international benchmark
 - Project embedded in tourism modernization, diplomatic representation, or urban development agendas.

Each case was coded using the indicator framework above in order to produce a transparent and replicable comparison. Similarity indicators (architectural, spatial, and programmatic) were scored on a 0–2 ordinal scale (0 = absent, 1 = partial/modified presence, 2 = strong presence), generating a Hiltonism Similarity Profile for each case rather than a reductive yes/no classification. Transfer-context indicators were coded on a parallel 0–2 plausibility scale (0 = no evidence, 1 = suggestive/indirect, 2 = documented/strong evidence) and reported separately as a Transfer Plausibility Profile, in order to avoid conflating resemblance with causation.

The 0–2 coding scheme was designed by the authors as an audit-friendly tool for comparative interpretation, following common qualitative coding practice where ordinal categories capture absence, partial presence, and strong presence of an observable feature. To preserve reliability, scores were assigned only when supported by explicit evidence (e.g., drawings, photographs, archival descriptions or credible secondary sources); ambiguous cases were coded conservatively and annotated in the coding sheet to maintain traceability (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The case set was constructed through purposeful comparative sampling rather than statistical representativeness. The aim of the study is not to produce an exhaustive inventory of all Hilton or Hilton-like hotels, but to examine how Hiltonism can be identified, translated, and unevenly diffused across selected contexts through a traceable analytical framework. Cases were therefore selected to maximize analytical contrast and pattern visibility across three dimensions:

- temporal position within the post-war to mid-twentieth-century hospitality modernization period,
- geographic distribution (Türkiye-centered with selected international reference points), and
- availability of sufficiently comparable evidence (architectural documentation, photographs, maps, archival/project descriptions, and secondary sources).

The Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus functions as a key anchor case due to its symbolic and infrastructural role in the Turkish modernization narrative and in the circulation of international hospitality models. Additional cases were included when they displayed potentially relevant Hilton-associated architectural/programmatic cues and offered enough documentary material to support indicator-based coding. Cases were excluded when evidence was too fragmentary, attribution was highly uncertain, or the available material did not permit a minimum level of comparative reliability. This scoped selection strategy supports the article's objective: to test Hiltonism as a diffusion-oriented analytical construct while remaining explicit about evidentiary limits and avoiding overgeneralization.

Accordingly, the selected cases are treated as analytically comparable nodes within a diffusion network, and are evaluated through the indicator and coding framework described below.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Architectural Translation and Mobility of Modern Hospitality (Akcan Axis)

This study approaches Hiltonism through the lens of architectural transfer as a process of translation rather than direct replication. In this perspective, architectural ideas do not move intact across borders; they are mediated by local actors, regulatory frameworks, construction capacities, climatic conditions, and cultural expectations. Such a framework is especially relevant for hotel architecture, where the circulation of brand standards intersects with site-specific adaptation. The international hotel is therefore not simply a container of global design principles, but a negotiated product in which imported typologies are reworked through local constraints and opportunities (Akcan, 2012).

Using this lens, Hiltonism is not treated as a fixed stylistic package. Instead, it is conceptualized as a transferable set of architectural and programmatic decisions that may appear in varied combinations and intensities. This allows the analysis to move beyond a binary distinction between “original” and “copy.” A hotel may reproduce certain Hilton-associated cues (e.g., modular façade rhythm, staged lobby-public interface, balcony articulation, or a specific ground-floor social permeability) while transforming others in response to local urban patterns, social practices, or construction regimes. In other words, similarity is analytically meaningful, but only when read alongside adaptation.

This perspective also helps prevent methodological overreach. If one assumes that any visual resemblance signals direct influence, the analysis collapses into impressionistic pattern-matching. By contrast, a translation-based framework permits a more careful interpretation: recurring design decisions may indicate the circulation of a broader hospitality model, but the strength and pathway of transfer must be assessed through contextual evidence. For this reason, the present study

distinguishes between (i) morphological-programmatic similarity and (ii) transfer plausibility, treating them as related but analytically separable dimensions.

In this sense, architectural translation provides the conceptual basis for operationalizing Hiltonism. It supports a comparative method that identifies repeatable cues while remaining attentive to local reinterpretation, hybridization, and partial adoption. This is particularly important in the Turkish context, where modern architectural forms often emerged through selective appropriation rather than simple importation.

3.2. Turkish Modernism, Nation-Building, and the Cultural Politics of Hospitality (Bozdoğan-Tekeli Axis)

The Turkish case cannot be understood solely through formal analysis of buildings. Mid-twentieth-century architecture in Türkiye was deeply entangled with modernization policies, state narratives, urban transformation, and the symbolic production of a modern public image. Within this broader field, hospitality architecture—and especially internationally legible hotels—played a dual role: they were both functional infrastructures for tourism and diplomatic exchange, and representational stages through which modernity was performed (Bozdoğan, 2001; Bozdoğan, 2019; Tekeli, 1984).

This study therefore situates Hiltonism within the tensions of Turkish modernism: between national identity and international affiliation, between local cultural codes and imported lifestyles, and between everyday urban life and elite/official representations of cosmopolitanism. In this framework, the hotel is not only a commercial building type but also a social condenser. Lobbies, bars, terraces, ballrooms, and landscaped interfaces become spaces where modern sociability is rehearsed, observed, and circulated. Such spaces participate in the cultural production of prestige and belonging, making hospitality architecture a key site for reading the politics of modernization.

This perspective is central to the article's interpretation of the Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus and subsequent hotel developments. The issue is not merely whether later buildings "look like" Hilton prototypes, but whether they reproduce a broader socio-spatial script associated with an aspirational modern public culture. This includes the orchestration of thresholds between city and hotel, the staging of visibility in shared interior spaces, and the alignment of architectural language with narratives of progress, internationalism, and urban status.

By framing Hiltonism within Turkish modernism debates, the study also avoids reducing the phenomenon to brand diffusion alone. Corporate standards matter, but they gain traction through local political economies, planning agendas, and cultural aspirations. Hiltonism, in this sense, is read as a historically situated interface between international hospitality modernism and Türkiye's own modernization trajectory. This allows the article to interpret convergence and divergence across cases not as methodological noise, but as evidence of localized negotiation.

3.3. Hilton as Corporate Modernity and Cold War Hospitality Infrastructure (Wharton Axis)

A third theoretical layer concerns Hilton as a corporate-cultural institution operating within the geopolitical and economic conditions of the post-war period. The global spread of Hilton hotels cannot be explained only through architectural fashion or tourism demand. It was also enabled by corporate standardization, transnational capital, development policy, diplomatic imaginaries, and the symbolic value of American-style hospitality in a Cold War context. In many locations, Hilton represented more than accommodation; it served as an infrastructural and representational node in broader networks of mobility, prestige, and international exchange (Wharton, 2001).

From this viewpoint, Hiltonism is understood as a form of corporate modernity: a reproducible hospitality model in which architecture, programming, service culture, and image production are mutually reinforcing. The hotel's architectural envelope, public-space choreography, amenities, and media circulation work together to produce an internationally recognizable experience. This recognizability is crucial for diffusion. It makes the model legible to investors, planners, local elites, and users, thereby increasing the likelihood that certain design and programmatic decisions will be repeated, adapted, or emulated across geographies.

This framework is particularly useful for refining the article's "domino effect" concept. Rather than framing domino effect as a simplistic one-to-one causality (Hotel A visually resembles Hotel B, therefore Hotel A caused Hotel B), the study treats it as a chain of diffusion supported by institutional and representational infrastructures. Corporate branding, tourism-development narratives, professional networks, media visibility, and contractor practices create conditions under which specific spatial solutions become transferable and repeatable. The chain reaction, therefore, is not purely formal; it is organizational, cultural, and economic.

Importantly, this perspective also clarifies why some Hilton-associated features travel more easily than others. Elements linked to image, prestige, and public-facing experience may be more widely replicated than highly specific technical or operational systems. Likewise, local conditions may intensify, suppress, or transform particular features. The comparative analysis in this article is designed to capture such patterned unevenness, thereby grounding Hiltonism in a historically informed account of global hospitality modernism rather than in a purely stylistic taxonomy.

4. HILTON'S PRESENCE IN TURKIYE

Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc. is a U.S.-based multinational hospitality company founded in 1919 by Conrad Hilton and headquartered in McLean, Virginia. The Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus opened on June 10, 1955 as Türkiye's first Hilton property and is widely recognized as the first Hilton built outside the Americas. Beyond its architectural presence, the hotel introduced new forms of urban sociability, restaurants, American-style bars, and lobby culture that became highly visible in period media and contributed to the symbolic association of modern hotels with Westernized lifestyle practices. Hilton's footprint in Türkiye has grown substantially: TÜROB's chain-hotel research reports Hilton Worldwide's operating portfolio and its expansion over time (TÜROB, 2017; TÜROB, 2019). Recent corporate communications indicate that Hilton aims to reach a network of more than 120 hotels in Türkiye when operating and pipeline properties are counted (Hilton, 2024).

The impact of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel in Turkish architecture offers a new way of life not only with its façade organization and structural appearance, but also with its new space layout, interior architecture, and the use of restaurants and American bars. The change in the lifestyle in the city that comes with the use of new hotels is observed through newspaper clippings, the changing daily life in daily magazines and newspapers, the changing daily life rituals of the business and upper income group as reflected in contemporary magazines and newspapers. Hilton Hotel, which has been shaped by the influence of modernism, has gone beyond being just an accommodation facility and has become the symbol of the modernization process and architectural understanding in Turkey. Especially in Asia and the Middle East which experienced economic and cultural transformation in the post-war period, the construction of the Hilton Hotel can be seen as a symbol of the search for integration with modernism.

One of the most important reasons for the construction of the Hilton Hotel is that the understanding of architecture in Turkey started to develop in parallel with the modernist movements in the world in the 1930s. This structure has attracted attention not only as an aesthetic innovation, but also as an economic and cultural development. In this period, Turkey's closer relations with the West and the steps towards modernization also manifested themselves in the field of architecture (Figure 3a). Beyond its functional activity, the Hilton Hotel has also been a concrete reflection of the process of the modernization ideal of Turkish society (Figure 3b). While the Hilton Hotel brought the functional and aesthetic understanding of modernism to Turkey with a transparent and minimalist design, it also brought discussions over the overlap of the period with Turkish society and culture and the adaptation of the architectural approach with the local dynamics.

The influence of the Hilton Hotel on the understanding of architecture in Turkey (Tekeli,1984), especially in the 1950s and later, triggered the tendencies to produce similar international-style modernist buildings in local architectural production. It is possible to discuss this situation through the term "Hiltonism" coined by architect Şevki Vanlı (Vanlı,1958). The term "Hiltonism" provides a conceptual framework that criticizes the proliferation of Hilton Hotel's architectural features throughout Turkey, regardless of functionality or local context. Vanlı criticizes the adaptation of

modernist understandings in the West to Turkey as a mere formal imitation, and how incompatible this situation is with local conditions and cultural identities (Vanlı,2006). These criticisms have not only an aesthetic but also an ideological dimension.

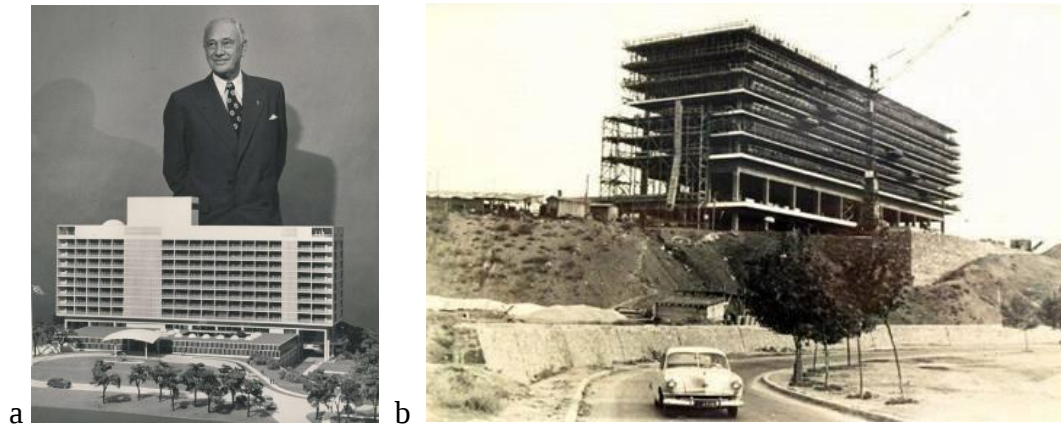


Figure 3a. Model of Hilton hotel by Fatin Rüştü Zorlu deputy prime minister of the time. (Hilton, 2025), 3b. Construction process

The influence of the international style and its reflections in Turkey, on the one hand, suggests that the architectural understanding is based on a Western-centered ideology and on the other hand, it questions the adoption of this understanding in a way that is insensitive to the social, cultural and climatic conditions of Turkey. In this context, while the Hilton Hotel represents the manifestation of modernism as it was reflected in Turkey, it simultaneously reveals a form of modernism that failed to integrate with local values and traditions, and at times even adopted an exclusionary stance toward them. The Hilton Hotel served as a catalyst in shaping architectural discourse in Turkey, aligning it with the modernist movements emerging in the West, and was further endorsed by the political authorities of the period (Figure 4a-4b). The building drew attention not only as an aesthetic innovation but also as a symbol of economic and cultural progress. This period, therefore, can be regarded as emblematic of a nationwide pursuit of modernization in contracting services, licensing systems, and political, administrative, and construction practices.

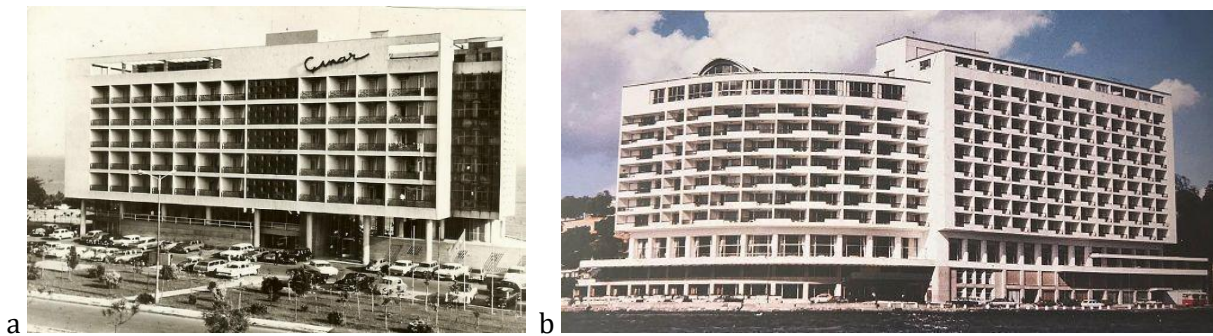


Figure 4a. Yeşilköy Çınar Hotel, İstanbul, 1958 (Böyük, 2008; Güney Yüksel & Rezafar, 2023), 4b. Grand Tarabya Hotel, İstanbul 1966 (Türkiye Tourism Encyclopedia, n.t.).

4.1. International Style and Criticism

The term International Style was first introduced in 1932 by the organizers of the First International Exhibition of Modern Architecture in New York. It came to define the dominant current of modern architecture from the 1920s through the late 1950s, and in some contexts, even into the 1970s. The principal transformation it embodied was twofold: first, a reconceptualization of architecture as the creation of volume rather than monumental mass; and second, the prioritization of regularity over

axial symmetry as the fundamental principle of design organization (Nuttgens, 1998). The Hilton Istanbul Hotel stands as one of the most

significant architectural representations of the modernization process of the 1950s in Turkey. Situated within a cultural axis that had been developing since the 1930s, it was inaugurated as the first example of the Hilton chain in both the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe. Beyond its function as an accommodation facility, the hotel emerged as a symbol of social prestige and cosmopolitan identity. This cultural impact is evident in contemporary literature and cinema. Notably, the hotel appeared in the opening scene of *From Russia with Love* (1963), featuring Sean Connery as James Bond (Hilton, 2025). Similarly, the Turkish film *Ah Güzel İstanbul* (*Oh Lovely Istanbul*, 1966), directed by Atıf Yılmaz, offers a cinematic critique of modernity in Turkey (Şumnu & Hosanlı, 2023).

The 1960s marked a period of profound transformation in urban spaces. During this decade, apartment buildings began to occupy a significant position within urban culture, symbolizing shifts in both lifestyle and spatial organization. The rapidly reconstructed social fabric following the war, along with the consumption practices imposed upon society, were critically reflected in the behaviors of film characters of the era. The emergence of the Hilton Hotel and similar structures in the urban landscape became among the most prominent icons of the new globalized living standards—signifying an increasing fascination with ostentation, the reinforcement of class distinctions, and the cumulative manifestation of a modern social order within architectural space.

The hotel, which was built with the dominant understanding and style of its period, is a typical example of modern architecture with its simple language, prismatic masses, repetitive facade elements, semi-recessed balcony bays, raising the ground floor on columns and the use of terrace roofs. Following the Hilton Hotel, the five-star Çınar Hotel (Figure 4a) in Yeşilköy and the Büyük Tarabya Hotel will be built in a similar style (Atmaca Çetin, Tuna Ultav, and Uz, 2019) (Figure 6). Deniz Park Hotel in Yeşilköy was destroyed by fire (Figure 5a), and then a 17-storey hotel was proposed in its place (Figure 5b).



Figure 5a. An image of the İstanbul Deniz Park Hotel before it was destroyed by fire (Örnek, N. 2022), 5b. The proposed hotel for the site of Deniz Park Hotel (Özdemir, G. 1958).

According to information obtained by the author through a verbal interview with Selçuk Kaderoğlu, one of the technical staff members active during the period (Kaderoğlu, 2025), the site on which the Hilton Hotel now stands was previously used as the Taksim garbage dump. The initial section of the building was constructed prior to the widespread adoption of horizontal architectural typologies. Originally named Hilton Istanbul, the hotel is now known as Hilton Bosphorus. The velvet-covered seats within the elevator, along with the presence of an attendant operating it, were among the design features that imparted a sense of exclusivity to guests. The initial core structure was later expanded with the addition of a new wing containing guest rooms. At the time of its opening, the hotel was operated under American managerial supervision.

In line with the manifesto of modern architecture, architects across the world began to design plans and façades according to principles intended to be universally valid. Modernism, from its very

inception, rejected traditional forms and instead focused on a rational design approach that transcended historical precedent. Within this new paradigm, design was no longer defined solely by visible mass but also through the experience of space itself. Tradition, on the other hand, represents a set of practices and aesthetic codes shaped and refined over long periods through collective experience. The modernist rejection of this accumulated knowledge, and the attempt to construct an entirely new architectural language, cannot be realized merely through the continuation of traditional functions—from ways of living to formal expression.

In a broader sense, the critiques implied by the term Hiltonism must be understood within the context of the early Republican period in Turkey—a time when the newly founded Republic, emerging from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, sought rapid modernization and reform. These transformations were often implemented within a limited timeframe, without full social internalization. Nevertheless, the Turkish state continued to pursue its modernization ideals with determination, situating architecture as one of the key instruments of this ideological and cultural renewal.

4.2. Thinking of the term: "Hiltonism"

The term Hiltonism emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s to describe the proliferation of the architectural language embodied by the Hilton Hotel in Istanbul across Turkey—often at the expense of local conditions and distinct spatial needs. Coined by the architect Şevki Vanlı, the term articulates a critical stance toward the Hilton Hotel's influence on the architectural discourse of the period. Hiltonism thus represents more than the diffusion of a particular architectural style; it also embodies a critique of the uncritical transplantation of a Western-centered modernist ideology onto the Turkish context, detached from local socio-cultural and environmental realities.

As Akcan (2012) argues, the transmission of an architectural form to another geography is never a mere act of replication, but rather a process of transfer laden with cultural and political significance. In this sense, the critique of Hiltonism suggests that such a "transformation" occurred without sufficient engagement with the grammar of the local vernacular—its culture, climate, and everyday practices—thereby yielding architectural outcomes that appeared alien or decontextualized within their surroundings.

Hiltonism can be understood as the architectural manifestation of a process defined by the pursuit of luxury and social status—coinciding with Turkey's construction of its modern identity by positioning the West simultaneously as a model and as the Other. By revealing that architecture functions not merely as an aesthetic endeavor but also as a social, cultural, and ideological one, the notion of Hiltonism occupies a central position in understanding the narrative of Turkey's modernization.

One of the main factors contributing to the spread of Hiltonism was the rapid urbanization process that began in the early 1950s. In the post-war period, Turkey initiated a major modernization campaign aligned with its economic development objectives. This integration with the West extended beyond the realms of economics and politics to encompass cultural and aesthetic domains as well. The ideals of modernization left a visible imprint on Turkish architecture, particularly in major urban centers where international architectural styles increasingly came to dominate. The Hilton Istanbul Hotel thus became a defining symbol of this era—representing one of the most prominent examples of modernist architecture and Western influence in Turkey through both its structural composition and design ethos. Its influence was not confined to Istanbul alone; similar architectural models began to emerge in other major cities such as Ankara, Kayseri, and Adana, particularly within the expanding business and hospitality sectors.

The capacity of the Hilton model to be designed, reproduced, and standardized across the globe transcended aesthetic considerations, reflecting instead a modernist ideal of universality. The defining characteristics of the hotel—such as the perceptibility of its modular room units and axial organization from the exterior, the unobstructed views provided by each room, and its siting within a generous open area—distinguished Hilton hotels from other contemporary structures (Figure 6).

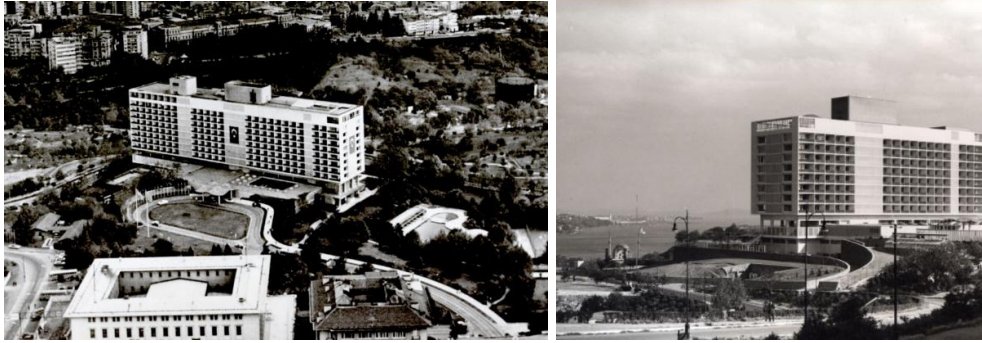


Figure 6. Hilton Bosphorus, İstanbul (Hilton, 2025)

It would be reductive to attribute the proliferation of Hiltonism solely to the preferences of architects and construction companies. The social transformations of the period, alongside the emergence of new lifestyles and value systems, rendered such modernist structures increasingly desirable. Particularly during the years of accelerated urbanization and urban restructuring, Western-influenced modernist paradigms were embraced by the public as they aligned with aspirations for economic growth and cultural innovation.

In this sense, Hiltonism also signified the dissemination of an international—specifically American—model of hotel modernism (Wharton, 2001), reflecting the broader economic and cultural objectives of the period. This architectural understanding was shaped not only by professional design preferences but also by the aspirations of social classes—especially the elites—who viewed Western modernity as a symbol of progress and sophistication.

Wharton (2001, 2018) demonstrates that the Istanbul Hilton operated not merely as a hotel, but as a Cold War cultural and political project through which American-style hospitality, comfort, and prestige were made visible in Istanbul. Similarly, Gürel (2009) shows that luxurious hotel projects, particularly the Istanbul Hilton, were instrumental in disseminating modern furniture codes and shaping contemporary domestic practices in the post-war period. Together, these studies suggest that the diffusion of Hiltonism was not simply a top-down imposition of modernity, but was also sustained by desire, emulation, consumption, and cultural adoption (Wharton, 2001, 2018; Gürel, 2009).

Within the broader ideology of modernization, American-style buildings came to be perceived as prestigious and contemporary symbols that embodied the new ways of life emerging in Turkey. In the Istanbul case, the SOM-led design approach prioritized functionality and structural clarity over purely aesthetic considerations. The concrete frame system, organized within a rectilinear grid, served as the primary structural logic of the building.

The hotel's façade reveals a clear affinity with Le Corbusier's (1923) cubist conception of form—what Frampton (2020) refers to as "cubic architecture"—as exemplified in *Unité d'Habitation* (Nuttgens, 1998). The recessed balconies and the façade's play of light and shadow, generated by the rhythmic arrangement of hotel rooms, produce a monumental yet restrained expression that maintains its composure within the urban fabric. The construction of the Hilton Hotel and similar structures thus represented not merely an architectural development but also a marker of profound social transformation. While these buildings contributed to shaping a new modern identity for Turkish cities, they simultaneously accentuated distinctions among social strata, signaling a departure from traditional Turkish architectural forms toward a modernist design ethos. The widespread acceptance of cubic architecture in major Turkish cities after the 1950s, and its rapid diffusion, catalyzed the adaptation of this modernist vocabulary by both local and international architects.

On the one hand, the critique of Hiltonism contends that its architectural conception is rooted in a modernist ideology; on the other, it problematizes the uncritical adoption of this ideology in ways that disregard Turkey's social, cultural, and climatic particularities. In this context, while the Hilton Hotel embodies the manifestation of modernism as reflected in Turkey, it simultaneously stands as

an example of a modernism detached from local values and traditions. Consequently, the proliferation of Hiltonism in Turkey signifies not merely the adoption of an architectural style but also the visible imprint of a broader cultural, social, and economic transformation. This transformation—shaped by the pursuit of integration with the West and the pervasive influence of modernization ideals—resulted in the marginalization of local cultural and architectural identities. At the same time, it revealed the extent to which modernism, propelled by Western capital and ideology, became deeply embedded within Turkey’s architectural and urban landscape.

5. FINDINGS

Following the post–World War II period, modern architects and designers encountered new challenges in redefining architectural expression (Nuttgens, 1998). The façade concept, which emphasizes the legibility of structural intervals from the exterior, became a globally adopted approach. In this system, a compositional rhythm is established through the juxtaposition of square or rectangular modules and recessed balcony bays—particularly evident in hotel designs where modular repetition defines both structure and aesthetic order.

The twentieth-century Turkish architectural system is characterized by a façade composition that emphasizes three-dimensional perception through rhythmic articulation and the play of light and shadow. This is achieved by extending the boundaries of enclosed “box-like” rooms outward to create balconies, generating a volumetric dynamism across the elevation. This design principle was prominently employed in numerous tourism-related structures across Turkey between the 1950s and 1970s. Notable examples include the Anatolian Club Hotel (İstanbul Büyükkada Oteli, 1953–1957) designed by Abdurrahman Hancı and Turgut Cansever; the Çınar Hotel (1954–1958; Figure 4a) by Rana Zipçı, Ahmet Akın, and Emin Ertam; the Grand Ephesus Hotel (1957–1963) by Paul Bonatz and Fatin Uran; and the Tarabya Hotel (1958–1965; Figure 4b) by Kadri Eroğan—all of which exemplify the influence of this architectural model (Vanlı, 2006).

Among these, the Çınar Hotel stands out as one of the most striking reflections of the Hiltonian design ethos. Its façade reveals a modular partition system that mirrors the plan organization of the Hilton Hotel (Table 1), with extensive use of transparent surfaces at the recessed ground level and pilotis dominating the semi-open spaces. During the 1950s and 1960s, similar design schemes led the Çınar Hotel—along with other comparable buildings—to be colloquially referred to as “Little Hilton” (Küçük Hilton), underscoring the pervasiveness of Hiltonism in mid-century Turkish architecture (Vanlı, 2006).



Figure 7. The Demolition of Yesilköy Çınar Hotel, İstanbul (Gzt, 2025)

Yeşilköy Çınar Hotel stands as one of the earliest examples of International Modernism, significant both for its structural characteristics and for its sociological contributions to urban life in İstanbul. However, a demolition decision has recently been issued, and the gradual destruction of the building is currently underway. This development will mark a regrettable episode in Turkish architectural history, symbolizing the nation’s ongoing inability to preserve its modern heritage (Figure 7). Here, the analogy to the Hilton is not merely a popular epithet: it is grounded in concrete architectural

decisions such as a modular room-bay façade grid, recessed balcony articulation, and a pilotis-raised, transparent ground-floor interface that stages public sociability.

Table 1 presents a deliberately scoped set of Turkish hotel examples discussed as ‘domino pieces’ of Hiltonism. Cases were included when (i) they fall within the study’s core period (1950s–1960s), (ii) they exhibit at least three of the key similarity indicators used in this article (massing clarity, façade modularity, recessed balcony/room articulation, and/or a pilotis-raised, permeable ground floor), and (iii) they are documented in architectural literature, archival sources, or period media as comparable modern hotel projects. The list is illustrative rather than exhaustive; other contemporaneous hotels may display related features but were excluded where evidence was insufficient for reliable comparative coding.

Table 1. Selected Hotels in Türkiye as a domino effect of Hiltonism (Prepared by authors).

Hotel	City	Years	Architect(s)	Hiltonism-related cues (basis for selection)
Anatolian Club Hotel (Büyükkada Otel)	Istanbul (Büyükkada)	1953–1957	Abdurrahman Hancı; Turgut Cansever	Modular façade rhythm; recessed balcony articulation; modernist massing clarity
Hilton Istanbul Bosphorus	Istanbul (Harbiye)	1955	SOM; Sedad Hakkı Eldem (local contribution)	Prototype case; modular room grid; recessed balconies; pilotis-raised ground floor; lobby/amenity staging
Porsuk Hotel (Military House)	Eskişehir	1956	Vedat Dalokay	Modernist massing; modular façade; recessed balcony/room articulation (documented visual parallels)
Büyük Efes Hotel	Izmir	1957–1963	Fatin Uran; Paul Bonatz	Modular façade logic; rhythmic balcony/room bays; ground-floor transparency / public interface

Table 1 shows that the Turkish cases do not replicate the Istanbul Hilton as complete copies; rather, they selectively reproduce specific architectural cues—particularly modular façade organization, recessed balcony/room-bay articulation, and permeable ground-floor interfaces. This supports the article’s interpretation of Hiltonism as a translated design logic rather than a fixed stylistic formula. Much like the Hilton, the Çınar Hotel elevated its ground floor on pilotis to establish a transparent threshold between public and private domains. On its façade, it employed a rhythmic and recessed composition that clearly articulated the modular grid of the room layout. This formal parallelism represents one of the most compelling examples of the direct replication of the stylistic codes of Hiltonism within Turkish modern architecture.

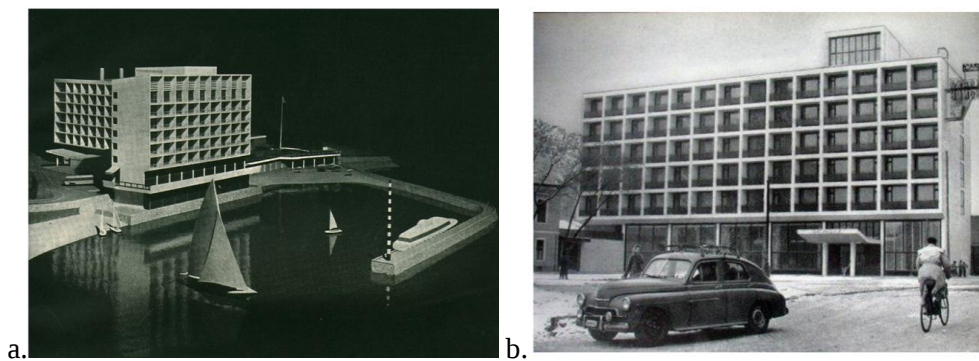


Figure 8a. Hotel Kavala, Fenerbahçe (Natura, 2021), 8b. Hotel Aranyhomok Hungary (Egykor, 2009)

Another design that can be considered among comparable projects is the Fenerbahçe Kavala Hotel, dated 1957 (Figure 8a). It was designed by Hungarian architects István Janáky, József Körner, Péter Molnár, Antal Vass, and István Zilahy, who were affiliated with the Hungarian state architectural office Lakóterv (Natura, 2021). The general formal characteristics—such as the mass elevated on pilotis, the predominance of transparent materials on the ground floor, and the modular, semi-open façade composition—demonstrate a strong resemblance between the Kavala Hotel and the Hilton Hotel.

Although the Kavala Hotel project was never realized, István Janáky later designed the Hotel Aranyhomok (Hotel Golden Sands), planned for construction in Kecskemét, Hungary, which opened in 1962 (Figure 8b). Both the Hilton and Kavala Hotels share notable similarities in terms of massing and façade articulation. This indicates that direct references to the Istanbul Hilton Hotel were reinterpreted by architects working in different geographical and cultural contexts, illustrating how the architectural vocabulary of Hiltonism transcended its original setting and influenced broader regional modernist design practices.

Under the influence of international style design principles (Tapan, 1984) and the broader modernist movement in Turkey, similar architectural forms emerged across the world during the 1950s. The impact of advancing construction technologies on these design approaches was also significant. According to Atmaca Çetin et al. (2019), the Hilton holds a distinctive position as the first modern hotel to integrate these characteristics within the context of the developing tourism sector and modern architecture. This phenomenon can also be interpreted as an attempt to align with global architectural trends. When examining the design of the Hilton Hotel—one of the earliest instances of American modernism being imported into Turkey through architectural practice and the tourism industry—a clear design paradigm becomes evident: a modular partitioning system, a reinforced-concrete structural skeleton, and monochromatic surfaces that collectively articulate the rationalist and functionalist ethos of mid-century modernism.

Architect Şevki Vanlı (1958), a contemporary witness of the period, described the hotel architecture of the time as resembling a “drawer box.” Vanlı coined the term Hiltonism to characterize this architectural attitude, approaching it from a distinctly critical standpoint. He argued that the façade designs of buildings constructed under the influence of the Hilton Hotel were overly simplistic, lacking the organic qualities of earlier architectural traditions, and ultimately “mediocre.” While Vanlı’s critique reflects a broader skepticism toward hotel buildings that adopted similar design schemes, Bozdoğan (2019) contends that such design strategies were, in fact, functionally efficient and well-suited to the typological and economic demands of the period. From a socio-cultural perspective, this mode of construction can also be seen as both pragmatic and appropriate to the material and ideological conditions of mid-century Turkey.

However, in contrast to Vanlı’s aesthetic critique, the rational and pragmatic factors behind the proliferation of this architectural language cannot be disregarded. As Bozdoğan (2019) notes, these design schemes proved remarkably efficient within the contextual conditions of the period. In the post-World War II climate of global housing and construction crises, the speed and economy offered by reinforced-concrete frame systems and standardized modular plans presented a rational solution—particularly for large-scale and repetitive programs such as hotels (Curtis, 1982). For Turkey’s newly emerging contracting sector, these models provided an accessible and predictable framework to implement, aligning well with the nation’s developmentalist economic agenda (Keyder, 1987). Consequently, Hiltonism was not merely an aesthetic inclination but also a byproduct of the economic and technological imperatives of its time.

The cataclysmic consequences of World War I had profoundly altered Europe’s internal order, paving the way for economic recession, the rise of socialist states, and eventually the devastation of World War II. What subsequently emerged was a mass culture of production, consumption, and communication. Architects and planners, as the designers of a new social order, sought alignment with international ideals. The founding of the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in 1928—whose meetings continued until 1959—marked a turning point. Their early manifestos exerted a lasting influence, seeking to reposition architecture within its true economic

and social plane. They asserted that the most effective mode of production was rooted in rationalism and standardization (Nuttgens, 1998).

In the aftermath of World War II, amid the global housing crisis, rapid reinforced-concrete construction and formal simplicity became defining features of modern architecture. Hotels, large apartment blocks, and hospitals—each characterized by repetitive floor plans—exemplified this pragmatic and systematic approach. Within this context, the Hilton Hotel not only served as a stylistic prototype but also as a functional model, its adoption encouraged by the political and economic dynamics of the 1950s tourism boom. The formal similarities among buildings inspired by the International Style thus reflected their designers' and patrons' desire to position themselves within an international architectural discourse. These structures did not necessarily convey ideological statements; rather, their external forms were directly determined by internal functions, reflecting the utilitarian and commercial priorities of their time.

The first internationally iconic Hilton project, the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico (opened 1949), was designed through a design competition and became an early template for Hilton's resort-modernism (Figure 9a-b). Its emphasis on horizontality, modular room repetition, and ocean-facing orientation anticipated design strategies later associated with the chain's postwar expansion. In this sense, the Caribe Hilton can be read as one of the early 'domino pieces' in Hilton's internationalization, illustrating how a standardized modernist hotel model was positioned as portable and repeatable across different climates and geographies.

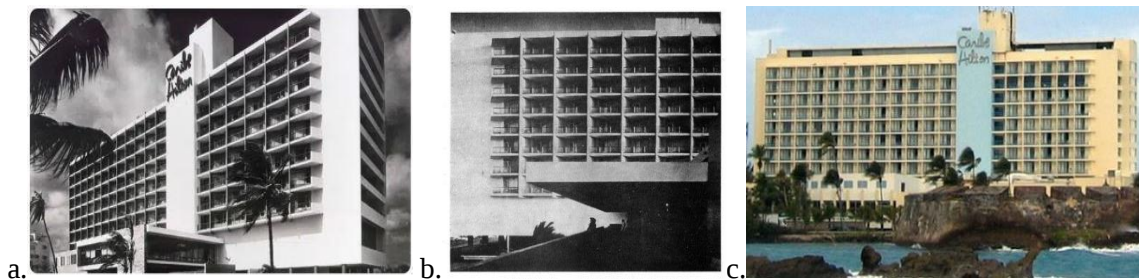


Figure 9a-b. Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico 1949 (Caribe Hilton, 1949) 9c -Caribe Hilton, Caribbean Island, 2025

Several Hilton projects are also known to have contributed to the architectural education and practice associated with the Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi (D.G.S.A., today's Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University). Among these are Hilton Hotels planned for construction in Pakistan and Sudan (Figures 10a–10b). One such project, the Karachi Hilton, was designed to meet the accommodation needs of Karachi—the largest city of Pakistan—with an initial capacity of 300 rooms and a proposed future expansion of 100 additional rooms (Kolsal, 1975). Similarly, the Khartoum Hilton was initiated in the Sudanese capital as a joint venture between the Sudanese government and the Kuwait Hotel Management Company. However, available archival documents provide no conclusive evidence regarding the completion of these projects.

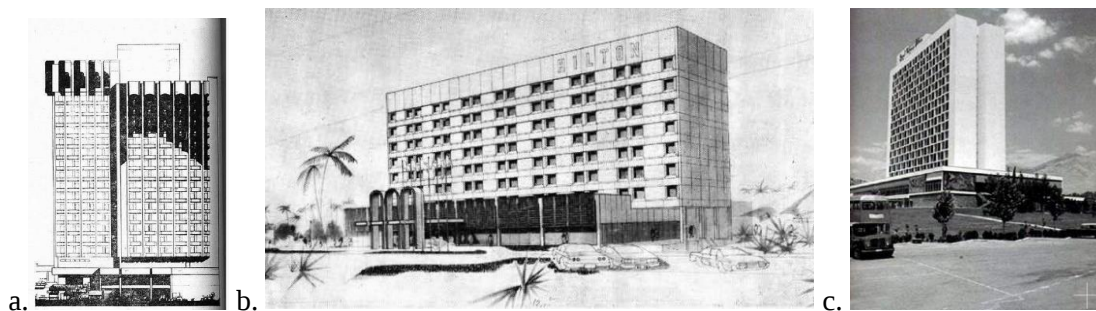


Figure 10a. Sketch drawing for Karachi Hilton Hotel, Pakistan, 10b. Sketch of Ali Kolsal for Hartum Sudan Hilton Hotel (Kolsal, 1975), 10c. Royal Tehran Hilton, 1962 (Caoi, n.d.)

The global proliferation of Hilton Hotels demonstrates the diffusion of the modernist architectural language beyond Turkey, extending its influence to diverse geographies (Figure 11). Detached from local contextual relationships, the Hilton design model applied its distinctive brand of modernism—primarily expressed through horizontal massing and a consistent aesthetic vocabulary—across different regions. The international Hilton network provides the standardization baseline of the study, while the Türkiye cases reveal how this baseline was translated into a specific socio-cultural and architectural discourse. In this sense, the Turkish examples are not treated as isolated imitations, but as localized negotiations within a broader corporate-modern hospitality network.

The global cases included in the map and timeline were selected because they represent documented Hilton developments between 1930 and 1965 that make visible the chronological expansion of the brand before and after the Istanbul Hilton. The aim is not to list all Hilton hotels, but to establish a comparative baseline for tracing how standardized hospitality-modernist cues circulated across regions. Based on figure 11 it is evident that the network expanded widely across America, Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Far East. Prior to the construction of the Hilton Istanbul, branches had already been established in Texas, Syracuse, Cincinnati, the Caribbean, and Beverly Hills (Table 2). In the years following the opening of the Hilton Istanbul, new hotels were completed in cities such as Berlin, Athens, Tehran, Washington, Hong Kong, and Rotterdam.

As shown in Table 3, façade characteristics defined by modernist lines, first emerging in the 1930s, came to dominate the architectural identity of Hilton hotels worldwide from the late 1940s through the 1970s. Beginning in the 1960s, however, the Hilton concept also evolved toward a vertical typology in certain regions. The Royal Tehran Hilton in Tehran, Iran, exemplifies this shift (Figure 10c). Whether realized as horizontal or vertical compositions, these hotels embodied the monumental and unified formal identity of the Hilton brand—an architectural language simultaneously modern, global, and emblematic of postwar corporate modernism.

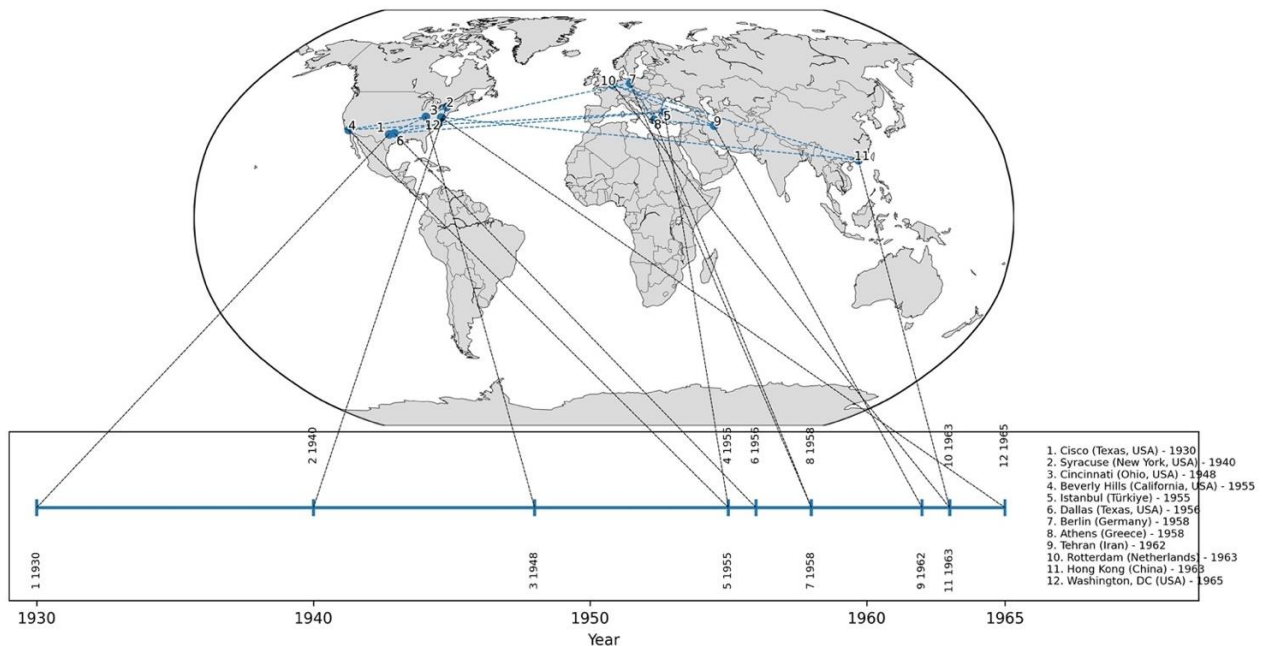


Figure 11. Map showing the geography of hotels with stylistic similarities between 1930 and 1965 (Prepared by the authors, 2025)

Table 2. The timeline analysis of the selected Hilton Hotels (1930-1965) used in the Figure 11
(Prepared by the authors, 2025)

ID	Hotel	City	Country	Year
1	Hilton (Cisco)	Cisco	Texas, USA	1930
2	Hilton Syracuse	Syracuse	New York, USA	1940
3	Hilton Cincinnati	Cincinnati	Ohio, USA	1948
4	Hilton Beverly Hills	Beverly Hills	California, USA	1955
5	Hilton Istanbul	Istanbul	Türkiye	1955
6	Hilton Statler	Dallas	Texas, USA	1956
7	Hilton Berlin	Berlin	Germany	1958
8	Hilton Athens	Athens	Greece	1958
9	Hilton Tehran	Tehran	Iran	1962
10	Hilton Rotterdam	Rotterdam	Netherlands	1963
11	Hilton Hong Kong	Hong Kong	China	1963
12	Hilton Washington	Washington, DC	USA	1965

Table 3. Visuals of the hotels with stylistic similarities between 1930 and 1965 (prepared by authors, 2025)

			
Hilton Cisco, Texas 1930		Hilton Berlin, Germany 1958	
			
Hilton Syracuse, NY 1940		Hilton Athens, Greece 1958	
			
Hilton Cincinnati, Ohio USA 1948		Hilton Tehran, Iran 1962	

			
Hilton Beverly Hills, USA 1955		Hilton Rotterdam, Netherlands 1963	
			
Hilton Istanbul, Turkiye 1955		Hilton Hong Kong, China 1963	
			
Hilton Statler, Dallas Usa 1956		Hilton Washington, USA 1965	

5.1. Interpreting Hiltonism as Diffusion Rather than Style

The findings support the argument that Hiltonism is more analytically productive when interpreted as a diffusion mechanism rather than a purely stylistic category (Table 4). Across the selected cases, recurring similarities are visible not only at the level of façade composition or massing, but also in the organization of social space, the staging of public/semi-public interfaces, and the relationship between hospitality programming and urban visibility. This confirms that the phenomenon cannot be reduced to visual resemblance alone. Instead, what travels is a broader hospitality script in which architecture, program, and representation operate together.

Table 4. Indicator framework used to operationalize Hiltonism and assess diffusion patterns (Prepared by authors).

Dimension	Indicator	Operational Definition	Coding Scale	Typical Evidence Sources	Included in Similarity Score?
Morphological / Spatial	Massing logic	Presence of a legible modernist massing strategy (e.g., slab/tower-bar composition, clear volumetric hierarchy, horizontally guest-room wing) associated with mid-century international hotel typologies	0 = absent, 1 = partial/modified, 2 = strong	Plans, elevations, photographs, architectural descriptions	Yes
Morphological / Spatial	Façade modularity	Repetitive structural or façade grid expressing modular room organization	0–2	Elevations, façade photos, drawings	Yes
Morphological / Spatial	Balcony rhythm / room articulation	Repeated balcony or room-bay articulation creating a recognizable guest-room bay façade rhythm	0–2	Façade photos, drawings, archival images	Yes

Dimension	Indicator	Operational Definition	Coding Scale	Typical Evidence Sources	Included in Similarity Score?
Morphological / Spatial	Ground-floor permeability	Visual/physical openness of the ground floor (glazing, entrances, public-facing transition zones, permeability toward landscape/city)	0–2	Plans, sections, photographs, site observations (if available)	Yes
Programmatic / Social	Lobby as social stage	Lobby and reception zone organized as a public/semi-public representational space beyond purely functional circulation	0–2	Interior photos, plans, descriptions, press coverage	Yes
Programmatic / Social	Public–semipublic amenity cluster	Presence and integration of bars, restaurants, ballrooms, terraces, pools, or event spaces as part of a social prestige program	0–2	Plans, hotel brochures, press materials, secondary sources	Yes
Programmatic / Spatial	Indoor–outdoor interface	Deliberate relation between interior social spaces and terraces/gardens/views (e.g., Bosphorus-facing terraces, pool decks, landscape-oriented public interface)	0–2	Photos, plans, landscape descriptions	Yes
Urban / Representational	Site visibility and urban staging	Strategic placement and visual prominence in the urban scene (waterfronts, boulevards, gateways, high-visibility plots)	0–2	Maps, aerials, planning documents, press descriptions	Yes (interpretive)
Transfer Context	Institutional / corporate linkage	Evidence of direct or indirect linkage to Hilton brand systems, affiliated operators, consultants, design references, or professional networks	0 = no evidence, 1 = suggestive, 2 = documented	Company records, project histories, archival sources, reports	No (reported separately)
Transfer Context	Media / prestige circulation	Evidence that the project was framed in public discourse as a modern prestige or international benchmark	0–2	Newspapers, magazines, promotional texts, policy discourse	No (reported separately)
Transfer Context	Development–policy alignment	Project embedded in tourism modernization, diplomatic representation, or urban development agendas	0–2	Policy documents, planning texts, historical studies	No (reported separately)

The indicator-based comparison also helps refine the “domino effect” concept proposed in this article. Rather than suggesting a simple one-directional influence (i.e., one hotel directly causing another), the comparative profiles indicate patterned repetition under uneven conditions. Some Hilton-associated features recur strongly across cases (for example, modular façade logic, lobby-centered social staging, or a designed indoor–outdoor interface), while others appear in partial, transformed, or context-specific forms. This unevenness is not a weakness of the concept; on the contrary, it demonstrates why a diffusion framework is necessary. A style-based reading might

classify such differences as inconsistency, whereas a diffusion-based reading reveals them as evidence of translation, selective adoption, and local recalibration.

The separation between Similarity Profile and Transfer Plausibility Profile is particularly important in this respect. By distinguishing observable spatial/programmatic recurrence from contextual evidence of institutional, media, or development linkage, the study avoids collapsing correlation into causation. This methodological choice directly addresses a common problem in comparative architectural history: visually compelling parallels can invite over-interpretation unless grounded in a transparent evidentiary protocol. The present findings suggest that Hiltonism is best understood as a field of repeatable decisions that becomes mobile through a combination of architectural legibility, commercial attractiveness, and cultural prestige.

Table 5. The evaluation of the selected hotels (prepared by authors,2025)

Dimension	Indicator	Hilton (Cisco)	Hilton Syracuse	Hilton Cincinnati	Hilton Beverly Hills	Hilton Istanbul	Hilton Statler	Hilton Berlin	Hilton Athens	Hilton Tehran	Hilton Rotterdam	Hilton Hong Kong	Hilton Washington
Morphological / Spatial	Massing logic	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Morphological / Spatial	Façade modularity	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Morphological / Spatial	Balcony rhythm / room articulation	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Morphological / Spatial	Ground-floor permeability	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Programmatic / Social	Lobby as social stage	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Programmatic / Social	Public-semipublic amenity cluster	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Programmatic / Spatial	Indoor-outdoor interface	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Urban / Representational	Site visibility and urban staging	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Transfer Context	Institutional / corporate linkage	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Transfer Context	Media / prestige circulation	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Transfer Context	Development-policy alignment	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

The coding results (Table 5) reveal a highly standardized Hilton profile across the selected cases. Six indicators display complete convergence, with all cases coded “2” for façade modularity, ground-floor permeability, lobby as social stage, public-semipublic amenity clustering, and site visibility/urban

staging, alongside consistently high transfer-context indicators (institutional linkage, media circulation, and development-policy alignment). This pattern suggests that Hiltonism operates as a reproducible socio-spatial package rather than as a loosely defined stylistic tendency. At the same time, variation concentrates in two morphological indicators—massing logic (coded 1–2) and balcony rhythm/room articulation (coded 0–2)—indicating that volumetric decisions and façade articulation are the primary sites where corporate standardization is translated through local constraints and design mediation. Finally, the indoor–outdoor interface remains uniformly moderate (coded “1”), suggesting a shared but context-sensitive tendency rather than a uniformly strong determinant within the Hilton set.

5.2. Convergences and Localized Divergences in the Turkish Context

When read through the lens of Turkish modernism, the comparative results point to a dual process of convergence and localization. On the one hand, several cases align with internationally legible hospitality-modernist conventions: geometric clarity, modular room-based façades, public-facing lobbies, and the integration of amenities as part of a prestige-oriented guest experience. On the other hand, these conventions are not reproduced uniformly. They are filtered through local planning conditions, urban morphology, cultural expectations of sociability, and shifting development priorities.

This pattern is significant for the Turkish context because it reinforces a broader historiographic point: modern architecture in Türkiye has often emerged through selective appropriation rather than passive imitation. In the case of hotel architecture, this means that Hilton-associated design and programming cues may be adopted as markers of modernity and international affiliation, while being simultaneously adjusted to local urban rhythms, social uses, and representational needs. The resulting buildings can therefore appear both internationally familiar and locally specific.

The Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus remains central to this interpretation, not simply because of its iconic status, but because of its role as a socio-spatial prototype. Its significance lies in the way it consolidated an aspirational modern hospitality environment that linked architecture to lifestyle, visibility, and urban prestige. Later cases that echo some of its cues should not automatically be interpreted as direct descendants; however, their patterned alignment suggests that the Hilton model became part of a broader design and development vocabulary. In this sense, Hiltonism in Türkiye can be read as an interface between imported hospitality modernity and locally negotiated modernization imaginaries.

This interpretation also helps explain why divergence matters. Cases that only partially align with the indicator set are not “failed” Hiltonist examples. Rather, they reveal the boundaries of transferability and the agency of local adaptation. Differences in plot conditions, development scale, investor priorities, or public orientation may alter how Hilton-associated features are retained, minimized, or recombined. Such divergence is analytically valuable because it shows that diffusion is neither uniform nor deterministic.

5.3. Hilton as Corporate Modernity and Prestige Infrastructure

The findings also support the argument that Hiltonism should be understood within a wider framework of corporate modernity. The recurring patterns identified in the sample are difficult to explain solely through architectural fashion. Their persistence is better understood as part of a broader ecosystem in which corporate branding, hospitality standards, media circulation, and development ambitions reinforce one another. In this ecosystem, the hotel functions as both built infrastructure and symbolic infrastructure: it provides accommodation and services, but it also projects a recognizable image of urban sophistication and international belonging.

This perspective clarifies why certain architectural and programmatic features appear especially “mobile.” Elements linked to visibility, public experience, and prestige—such as lobby staging, amenity clustering, and strong urban siting—are often easier to replicate or emulate than highly specific technical systems. These features are legible to a wide range of actors, including investors, municipal authorities, developers, and users. As a result, they may circulate even where direct

corporate linkage is weak or absent, carried instead by media narratives, professional references, and the aspirational logic of tourism-led development.

In this sense, the article's "domino effect" concept should be read as a chain of enabling conditions rather than a chain of isolated visual borrowings. Corporate networks and standards may provide one route of transfer, but prestige economies, planning agendas, and representational ambitions can also reproduce Hilton-like solutions indirectly. The comparative evidence suggests that Hiltonism's durability lies precisely in this multi-channel mobility. It is not only a branded template; it is also a transferable socio-spatial logic that can be adopted, adapted, and re-signified across contexts.

This interpretation contributes to ongoing discussions on post-war hospitality modernism by shifting attention from individual icons to repeatable urban-hospitality mechanisms. It encourages reading hotels not only as formal objects but as mediating institutions in the production of modern urban experience.

6. CONCLUSION

This article set out to reconsider "Hiltonism" not as a loose stylistic label, but as an analytical construct capable of explaining how a particular model of post-war modern hospitality became transferable across time and geography. Rather than treating hotels as isolated architectural objects, the study approached them as nodes within a diffusion network in which architecture, programming, and representation co-produce an internationally legible experience of modernity. In this sense, the central claim of the article is that Hiltonism operates as a hybrid phenomenon: it is at once an architectural vocabulary, a socio-spatial script of modern public life, and a prestige infrastructure embedded in corporate and cultural systems.

To advance this claim, the study introduced an indicator-based comparative methodology that operationalizes Hiltonism through observable spatial, morphological, and programmatic cues—such as massing logic, façade modularity, balcony rhythms, ground-floor permeability, lobby staging, amenity clustering, and indoor-outdoor interface—while simultaneously documenting transfer plausibility through contextual evidence. The key methodological contribution is the two-track approach that separates resemblance from influence: the analysis does not assume that visual similarity automatically implies direct causality. Instead, it produces a traceable account of patterned recurrence and uneven diffusion by distinguishing between a Hiltonism Similarity Profile and a Transfer Plausibility Profile for each case. This structure allows the article to identify robust patterns while remaining explicit about evidentiary limits.

These results strengthen the argument that Hiltonism should be interpreted as diffusion structured by corporate modernity, while also demonstrating that diffusion is neither uniform nor purely formal. The near-total convergence across core socio-spatial indicators implies that what travels most effectively is not simply a façade language but a legible hospitality script—lobby-centered sociability, amenity-based prestige programming, and a transparent public interface that stages modern urban experience. Conversely, the concentration of variability in massing logic and balcony/room articulation suggests that the "translation" of Hiltonism occurs most strongly where local conditions exert higher pressure: plot geometry, urban morphology, climate-driven façade strategies, regulatory envelopes, and construction economies. In methodological terms, the transfer-context indicators are best read as confirmatory within the branded Hilton set (where corporate linkage is structurally high), whereas differentiation and interpretation are driven primarily by morphological and socio-spatial indicators. Taken together, the coding profiles support the article's "domino effect" as a diffusion model: a chain of repeatable decisions enabled by corporate and prestige infrastructures, yet selectively recalibrated through local mediations rather than copied as a fixed template. Hiltonism diffuses as a standardized socio-spatial script, while its most visible translations emerge in massing and façade articulation under local constraints.

The comparative findings support three overarching conclusions. First, Hiltonism appears less as a singular "look" than as a transferable bundle of design and programming decisions that can be adopted partially, recombined, and translated. Across the selected cases, the strongest recurring features are those linked to legibility and public experience—particularly the choreography of the

lobby and semi-public zones, the clustering of amenities as a prestige program, and the careful staging of visibility at the ground-floor interface. These elements are not incidental; they are the mechanisms through which hospitality modernism becomes socially meaningful. In other words, what diffuses is not only an architectural form, but also a performative script for modern urban sociability.

Second, the Turkish context highlights the importance of localization. The cases suggest that Hilton-associated cues were absorbed into Türkiye's modernization landscape through selective appropriation rather than direct reproduction. Hotels aligned with international modernist conventions and branded hospitality expectations, yet they also negotiated local urban settings, cultural norms of sociability, and shifting development priorities. This supports a broader historiographic interpretation of Turkish modernism as a field shaped by translation and tension—between national narratives and global affiliations, local architectural cultures and imported typologies, and everyday urban life and elite representations of cosmopolitan modernity. The Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus is particularly significant here, not merely as an icon, but as a socio-spatial prototype that condensed a modern hospitality image into an experiential and representational environment. Subsequent echoes of this environment should be read as patterned diffusion under changing local conditions, rather than as a simplistic genealogical chain.

Third, the findings underline that Hiltonism is inseparable from corporate modernity and prestige economies. The repeatability of Hilton-associated spatial solutions is best explained not only by architectural fashion but by the presence of enabling infrastructures: corporate standardization, tourism-development agendas, media circulation, professional reference networks, and contracting practices. These infrastructures help certain features become mobile, legible, and therefore emulable even in cases where direct institutional linkage is limited. The article's "domino effect" concept is thus clarified as a diffusion model: a chain reaction driven by multiple channels of transfer, in which architectural cues travel alongside cultural expectations and development logics. Interpreted in this way, Hiltonism offers a robust tool for reading how hospitality architecture participates in the production of modernity as an urban spectacle and an everyday social practice.

Beyond its empirical insights, the study contributes to scholarship on architectural transfer, Turkish modernism, and post-war hospitality by offering a method that is both interpretive and auditable. It demonstrates how a diffusion-oriented approach can preserve the richness of cultural-historical reading while incorporating a transparent comparative protocol. At the same time, the article acknowledges that archival unevenness and the interpretive nature of some indicators limit the strength of causal claims for individual cases. The intention is not to establish a definitive one-to-one influence map for every example, but to provide a framework that can be expanded, validated, and deepened through broader samples and richer documentary access.

Looking forward, the proposed framework invites several extensions. Archival research into operator records, consultancy networks, procurement documents, and planning histories would strengthen transfer plausibility assessments and illuminate the negotiation processes behind particular spatial decisions. Methodologically, the indicator set can be tested at larger scales and refined through inter-coder validation, weighting strategies, and clustering into sub-indices that distinguish architectural morphology from socio-spatial performance. Finally, the approach opens an important bridge to heritage and adaptive reuse debates: as many mid-century hotels face redevelopment, Hiltonism can help articulate values that exceed façade preservation, including socio-spatial choreography, public memory, and representational function within the city.

In conclusion, Hiltonism provides a compelling lens to understand how modern hospitality prototypes traveled, settled, and transformed. By treating the hotel as both architecture and cultural infrastructure—and by reading diffusion as translation rather than mere imitation—the article shows that the legacy of post-war hospitality modernism is not only written in forms, but also in the spatial organization of modern life itself.

Future Research Directions

The proposed framework opens several pathways for future research. A first priority is archival deepening. Access to project archives, operator records, consultancy networks, procurement documents, and correspondence could significantly strengthen the transfer-plausibility dimension and help distinguish direct institutional influence from indirect emulation. Such material would be especially valuable for tracing how specific design and programming decisions were negotiated among architects, clients, operators, and public authorities.

A second direction concerns methodological extension and validation. The indicator framework developed here could be tested on a larger sample and refined through inter-coder comparison to improve reliability. Future studies may also assign different weights to indicators or cluster them into sub-indices (e.g., architectural morphology, socio-spatial programming, urban prestige interface) in order to compare diffusion patterns across regions and periods more systematically.

Third, the framework can be expanded beyond formal and representational analysis toward user-centered and experiential dimensions. Oral histories, memoirs, travel writing, media reception, and ethnographic accounts could provide richer evidence on how Hilton-associated spaces were perceived, inhabited, and socially performed. This would deepen the argument that Hiltonism is not only a visual or architectural phenomenon, but also a cultural script enacted through hospitality practices.

Fourth, the article's findings invite stronger engagement with heritage and adaptive reuse debates. As many mid-century hotels face redevelopment pressure, the concept of Hiltonism may help identify values that exceed façade preservation, including socio-spatial choreography, public memory, and urban representational functions. Future research could therefore connect diffusion analysis to conservation decision-making, especially in contexts where modern hospitality buildings are recognized unevenly as heritage.

Finally, comparative work across different geopolitical contexts would help test the broader applicability of the model. Extending the analysis to other post-war regions could reveal whether Hiltonism functions as a globally consistent corporate-modern mechanism, a regionally differentiated transfer logic, or a family of related but historically distinct hospitality diffusion patterns.

Taken together, these findings position Hiltonism as a diffusion-based interpretive framework that links architecture, hospitality programming, and prestige infrastructures, while remaining attentive to local translation and evidentiary limits.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Research Problem & Purpose

Post-war modernism did not circulate as a neutral design language; it travelled through institutions, corporate standards, tourism economies, media narratives, and prestige cultures. In Türkiye, the Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus (1955) became a key node in this circulation—both as an architectural milestone and as a socio-cultural stage where Westernized urban practices (lobby culture, American-style bars, restaurants, and new rituals of public sociability) gained visibility. Yet the mechanisms through which this prototype became repeatable—how a branded hospitality model translated into local production contexts and influenced subsequent hotel developments—remain insufficiently explained in a methodologically traceable way.

This study addresses that gap by reframing “Hiltonism” not merely as a stylistic label, but as an operational concept: a bundle of spatial, programmatic, and representational decisions through which modern hospitality becomes transferable. The article proposes the “domino effect” as a diffusion model that accounts for patterned replication without collapsing visual similarity into direct causality. The purpose is threefold:

- to contextualize Hiltonism within Türkiye's modernization debates and architectural translation processes,
- to identify recurring Hilton-associated cues across selected cases in Türkiye and beyond, and

- to interpret how corporate modernity, tourism-development agendas, and prestige economies enabled the spread—and the critique—of this architectural vocabulary.

Methodology

The article adopts a qualitative, multi-source historical research design integrating (i) local and international literature review, (ii) written media scanning (periodicals and press materials as evidence of reception and lifestyle transformation), (iii) oral-history inputs where available, and (iv) archival or original project documents related to Hilton hotels and comparable modernist hotel cases.

To operationalize the “domino effect” claim, the study constructs a purposefully selected comparative case set (rather than a statistically representative sample), anchored by the Istanbul Hilton Bosphorus and expanded through cases that maximize analytical contrast across time, geography, and evidentiary availability. A geo-referenced mapping exercise visualizes the distribution of stylistically comparable hotels built between 1930–1965, supporting a timeline reading of Hilton’s international expansion.

Formal similarity is assessed through a transparent indicator framework structured in four dimensions: (1) morphological/spatial indicators (e.g., prismatic massing, façade modularity, balcony rhythms, ground-floor permeability), (2) programmatic/social indicators (e.g., lobby as social stage, amenity clustering, indoor–outdoor interface), (3) urban/representational indicators (e.g., siting, visibility, urban staging), and (4) transfer-context indicators (e.g., institutional linkage, media circulation, development-policy alignment). Similarity indicators are coded on a 0–2 scale (absent/partial/strong), while transfer-context indicators are reported separately to preserve methodological clarity between resemblance and transfer plausibility.

Findings

The findings suggest that Hiltonism is better understood as a diffusion mechanism than as a singular “look.” In the Istanbul case, the Hilton Bosphorus embodies a dialectical tension between universal modernist rationalism and local mediation (including the project’s local architectural contributions and context-sensitive gestures). Beyond architecture, the hotel functioned as a cultural apparatus that made modern hospitality practices publicly legible and socially aspirational, thereby accelerating the acceptance—and contestation—of modernist aesthetics in Türkiye.

Across Türkiye, multiple hotel examples display patterned recurrence of Hilton-associated cues: modular room-based façades, recessed balcony bays, pilotis-supported ground levels, and transparent public interfaces. These recurring decisions reflect both functional/economic rationales (standardization, speed of construction, repeatable plans) and socio-cultural motivations (prestige, cosmopolitan identity, modernization narratives). The diffusion, however, is uneven: some cases adopt the vocabulary strongly, while others translate it partially according to plot conditions, program scale, and local urban culture.

The mapping and timeline analysis indicate that comparable modernist hotel forms were not confined to Türkiye; they appeared across America, Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and other regions, suggesting that the portability of the Hilton model was supported by corporate modernity and post-war tourism-development logics. The study also highlights contemporary heritage implications: mid-century hotel buildings that carry this legacy may face demolition or transformation pressures, underscoring the need to recognize modern architectural heritage beyond iconic monuments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The article concludes that Hiltonism should be conceptualized as a hybrid phenomenon—architectural, programmatic, and socio-cultural—through which a branded hospitality prototype becomes transferable and repeatable across different contexts. The “domino effect” is therefore not a simple chain of visual borrowings, but a diffusion process enabled by corporate standardization, prestige economies, media visibility, and development agendas. Methodologically, the study contributes an evidence-traceable comparative framework that distinguishes similarity from transfer plausibility, allowing the interpretation of patterned recurrence without over-claiming direct causality.

Based on these conclusions, the article recommends: (i) treating mid-century hotels as socio-spatial infrastructures of modernization when interpreting Turkish architectural history, (ii) expanding archival research (operator records, consultant networks, procurement documents) to strengthen transfer-pathway evidence, (iii) validating the indicator framework through larger samples and inter-coder checks, and (iv) integrating user-centered sources (oral histories, reception studies) to better capture Hiltonism as a lived cultural script. From a heritage perspective, the study calls for stronger recognition and documentation of modern hospitality buildings as part of modern architectural heritage, with conservation approaches that consider not only façades but also public-space choreography, cultural memory, and representational functions.

CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The scientific responsibilities and areas of contribution undertaken by the author(s) in the research, development, and writing processes of this article are presented in the table below.

Author Contribution Statement		
A. Concept and Design	B. Literature review	C. Writing
D. Data Collection	E. Analysis	F. Critical Review
İlke Ciritci: A/B/C/D/E/F		
Türkan Uzun: A/B		

PUBLICATION ETHICS STATEMENT

This study does not require ethics committee approval as it does not involve the use of human or animal subjects or the collection of data from participants through methods such as interviews, surveys, or focus groups.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no financial or personal conflict of interest with any person, institution, or organization that could negatively affect the research, data collection, or publication process of this article.

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