

International Compilation of Research and Studies in

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



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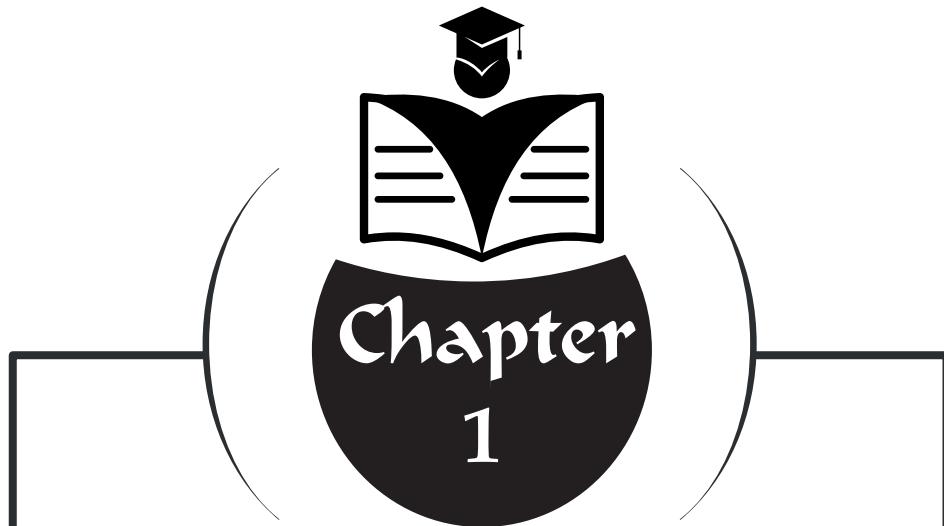
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CHILD (MINOR) MARRIAGES IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: IN THE LIGHT OF FATWAS AND THE OTTOMAN COURT RECORDS

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Ali ÇAPAR¹

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Introduction:

Minor marriages were a ubiquitous yet diverse phenomenon across various ancient and medieval civilizations, including those in China, India, Rome, and the Islamic world (Motzki, 1996: 129). Similar to other religious communities and medieval societies, Muslims also practiced minor marriages. This chapter investigates the evolution of minor marriage practices among Muslim communities in Ottoman Anatolia and the Middle East by tracing the jurisprudential development of fatwas issued by prominent scholars and *şeyhüislams* from the 8th to the 19th centuries.

The study focuses on earlier fatwas issued by these religious authorities, which provided the foundation for those later issued by Ottoman muftis and grand muftis between the 16th and 19th centuries. While examining the evolution of the fatwas given on the issue of child marriages, the chapter explores that there was no consensus among muftis on some major topics on child marriages, such as at what age a minor becomes a major and suitable for marriage, when a female child was considered ready for consummation of her marriage, on the issue of guardianship of a minor child, and financial support of a minor bride between the time of arrangement of a marriage and the consummation of it. The primary aim of this chapter is to understand the origins of minor marriages in Islamic societies and to examine the differing views among scholars regarding the age of maturity for boys and girls, the arrangement and consummation of minor marriages, and related divorce cases in the Ottoman Empire. Such research provides vital insights into the structural dynamics of family life and the multifaceted religious, social, and pecuniary motivations underpinning minor marriages in Ottoman Anatolia and the Middle East throughout the early modern period. The arguments presented will be supported by fatwas and Ottoman court records concerning child marriages from this period.

In the context of Islamic legal orthopraxy, a fatwa is a formal, authoritative, but non-binding legal opinion issued by a mufti (a qualified jurisconsult) in response to a question regarding the norms and practices of Shari'a (Islamic law). Fatwas are indispensable sources for identification of social matters within Muslim societies, as they address real social problems involving actual people rather than simple theoretical concepts or juristic speculation (Hallaq, 1994: 38-61). The inquiries posed to the *mufti* on a problem had to be expressed to let him to give short responses. His answers had to be on the basis of *fikh* (Islamic jurisprudence) principles. The social problems brought to the jurists in the form of questions reflect various family issues, such as child marriage, dowry, divorce, guardianship, and inheritance. The fatwas which had given before the establishment of the Ottoman Empire (8th -14th centuries) on family-related issues were

considered by Ottoman jurists and muftis, and they remained applicable in the early modern Ottoman Empire.

Another important source for the understanding of minor marriages in the Ottoman Empire is the court records. While the state attempted to mandate the registration of marriages during the classical period, enforcement remained inconsistent across the Empire. People were required to obtain a permit from a judge and register their marriages in court, but many preferred to use an *imam* to seal their marriage contracts, and the state continued to recognize unregistered marriages as valid (Martykanova, 200: 158). However, the majority of the divorce cases were recorded in the court registers. Therefore, I rely on fatwas while discussing topics, such as the arrangement of minor marriages, guardianship, and consummation of marriages, and I employ fatwas and court records to most often in minor marriages.

The Origin of Minor Marriages in Islam and the Issue of Guardianship:

The most prominent precedent for minor marriage in Islam is the marriage of the Prophet Muhammad to Aisha, who was at the age of 8 or 9, which created a basis (or legal precedent) for minor marriages (Baugh, 2009: 33-92); Ali, 2010).¹ As the Qur'an does not specify a minimum age for marriage, the determination of eligibility for marriage is defined by physical markers of sexual maturity. For girls, the primary indicator of sexual maturity was the onset of menstruation, while for boys it was the first nocturnal seminal emission. Many jurists, the most prominent of them are Abu Davud al-Sijistani, Ishak b Mansur al-Kausaj (a respected Hanbali jurists lived in the 9th century), and Abd Allah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal, who was a well-known an Arab Muslim jurist, theologian, and hadith traditionalist lived in Baghdad between 780 and 855, claimed that girls reached sexual maturity at the age of 9 and boys at the age of 12. If the child did not show any clear signs of physical maturity, the age of 15 was generally considered by jurists as the maximum age of minority for both boys and girls (Yazbak, 2002: 391; Bardakoğlu, 2023; Tan, 2018: 783-805). However, legal opinions varied across eras and regions. For instance, the sixteenth century Ottoman grand mufti Ebu's Suud Efendi proposed different numbers regarding the maximum age of minority, proposing that, in the absence of physical markers, the age of 17 for girls and 18 for boys could be regarded as the maximum age of reaching maturity (Peirce, 1997: 173; Düzdağ, 2012: 29). On the other hand, Ottoman court records from the 16th to 19th centuries often indicate that girls were

¹ The absence of references to Aisha's early marriage in key primary sources from the city where the event purportedly occurred is notable. Based on this silence in the early records, Little posits that the narrative of Aisha's early marriage was a later invention, originating in eighth-century Iraq, and subsequently retrojected into the life of Muhammad. See: Little, JJ. "The Hadith of 'A'išah's Marital Age: A Study in the Evolution of Early Islamic Historical Memory." PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2022.

considered to have reached puberty at the age of 12 or 13, and boys by age 13 or 14. Once the maturity was established, an individual could personally contract a marriage or, if a contract had been previously arranged by a guardian proceed to consummation (Yazbak, 2002: 391).

Physical maturity, however, was not the sole prerequisite of readiness for marriage or adulthood; mental maturity was also required. Even after reaching puberty, family still had full control over the mature child. As Judith Tucker notes that “the Hanafi muftis agreed, however, that at least in Hanafi jurisprudence the onset of puberty did not necessarily usher in an age of full independence. A boy or girl might, for example, reach puberty but still be subject to the tutelage (damm) of a parent or other relation. This concept of formal tutelage recognized the fact that a child might reach physical maturity without necessarily having acquired the maturity of mind essential to full participation in the community as an adult” (Tucker, 1998: 119).² However, there were no certain determinants for the attainment of mental maturity, so each gender was subject to separate rationales. This principle had both positive and negative impacts on both boys and girls. While it could prevent early marriages by asserting a lack of mental maturity, it might be a factor to prevent young people, who have just reached maturity, from acting freely (Baugh, 2011: 82).

Minor people had a guardian responsible for managing their property and personal affairs, including decisions about marriage. The interpretation of Sharia law varied among different Sunni schools of legal thought (madhhabs), such as the Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanafi schools, which were practiced in different regions of the Ottoman Empire. While these schools shared many fundamental principles, they differed in their views on guardianship of minor children. While the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence recognized the authority of the extended family, with the father as head and the mother as the logical authority after him, the Malikis gave much importance to patriarchal relationships. The Hanafis, the predominant *madhab* in the Ottoman Empire, also prioritized the patriarchal family structure, with the father and paternal grandfather holding authority over minor children (Sonbol, 1996: 250).

Legal consensus generally permits a father to marry off his minor daughter without her consent. Muwaffaq al-Din ibn Qudamas, a Hanbali Jurist living in the 13th century, states that “[A]s for the prepubescent virgin there is no disagreement with regard to [the father's ability to compel her to marry]”. Ibn al-Mundhir, the most famous of the early compilers of consensus opinions, d.930] said, “all of the scholars from whom we have learned have reached consensus that a father's contracting of marriage for his prepubescent virgin daughter is permissible, if he marries her to an equal,” and he is allowed to

² Also see: İbrahim Halebî vd, *Mevkûfât: Mültekâ Tercümesi* 3 (İstanbul: Sağlam Yay., 2016), 214.

contract her a marriage even if she protests and forbids it (Baugh, 2011: 9). In addition, she could not challenge his decision even after reaching adulthood.

The father is considered as the natural guardian of a minor, and in the case of his absence or death, the paternal grandfather assumes this role (Yazbak, 2002: 392-393). A natural guardian could enforce his decision on economic affairs and marriage for his or her ward, and the minor had no possibility to protest or disobey the decision given by the guardian. Yazbak claims that that was true even when the guardian arranged a marriage for the minor with an unsuitable partner or with low dower, even though many jurists warden guardians to ensure appropriate matches and fair dowers (Yazbak, 2002: 392-393). However, Tucker claims that jurists generally discouraged despotic behavior, especially in marriage matters. In that case, the *kadi* had a right to intervene over the right of the father to marry off his minor daughter. Tucker states that the marriage which was organized by the father of a minor girl could be dissolved by *kadi* if the father was known for his poor judgment and his inability to predict the outcomes of his actions. In that, according to the mufti, Khayr al-Din b. Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Ramli, who lived in the 17th century Palestine, the *kadi* could proclaim the marriage legally defective, which would allow a minor girl to dissolve her marriage. Even though we do not know how often the *kadi* steps in and proclaim the marriage legally defective, it gave an opportunity to a minor girl to avoid the results of her father's decision regarding her marriage (Tucker, 1998: 42).

The hierarchy of guardianship also adapted to the absence or death of the natural guardian. When the natural guardians are absent due to military campaigns, trade or relocation to another city, the primary non-natural guardian, typically mother, could arrange a marriage for her daughter without getting consent and permission of the natural guardian. If natural guardian later appeared in the court to annul the marriage on the ground that his consent or permission had not been taken, the judge would not accept his request (Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, 1872: 36). In the case of death of natural guardians, the mother usually assumed the guardianship of the minor (Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, 1872: 35). However, if the mother of the minor person is non-Muslim, she was often not appointed as a guardian of the minor daughter. In that case, a Muslim relative from the paternal family, such as uncle or cousin, was preferred as guardian. A fatwa given on that issue by Çatalcalı Ali Efendi addressed a situation in which a minor girl, Hindi, had two relatives -her non-Muslim (infidel) mother and her paternal aunt's son, Amr-, who would have the authority of arranging a marriage on behalf of the minor girl? The fatwa determined that Amr should arrange the marriage, indicating the significant role of religion in determining a minor's guardian (Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, 1872: 36).

In some cases, the father of the minor girl died before the consummation of the marriage. In such cases, the marriage contract that had been arranged by the father, who was the natural guardian, remained in effect, and the minor girl could not confront that decision even upon reaching maturity. The case that happened in Bursa in the late 18th century provides a clear example to that issue. In 1784, Molla Salih appeared before the Bursa court, claiming that a marriage contract existed between him and Emetullah, the daughter of Ali Efendi, despite Emetullah's refusal to accept it. Salih argued that the contract had been arranged ten years ago by her father, in the presence of two witnesses, Ahmed Efendi and Derviș Efendi, and that the stipulated bridewealth had been paid. However, it is unclear whether Emetullah received the bridewealth after reaching maturity. After listening both sides and the witnesses, the judge announced that the marriage contract was still in effect even though the girl's father died, and he recommended Emetullah to submit her to her husband (Bursa *Şer'iye Sicili*, no: 221, 13a/ b. 76).

Some scholars claim that if the marriage was arranged by proxy of a father or grandfather, it was still valid, and the minor girl had no choice but to annul the marriage upon reaching puberty. In the question asked to Khary al-Din provides an example of that issue.

“Question: There is a minor girl who was married by her brother, who acted as a proxy of the father of the minor girl when he was on a vacation. Her husband claims that as the brother was the agent of the father, she does not have a choice to cancel the marriage. On the other hand, the minor girl claimed that, the marriage was arranged by her brother during absence of her father. If the husband proves his claim, is her choice canceled or not?

Answer: Yes, if the husband provides evidence for his claim, then her choice is canceled... The marriages which are arranged by natural guardians, father and grandfather, cannot be canceled, but if the marriage was arranged by a proxy of her father, then the minor girl does not have a choice to cancel the marriage when she reaches majority. If the marriage was arranged by her brother, who acts as her guardian, then she has a choice.” (Tucker, 1998: 47).

Consummation of Marriage:

A critical distinction in Islamic jurisprudence is the separation between the marriage contract and the act of consummation. While a contract could be arranged by a guardian on behalf of a minor, the marriage was considered incomplete until consummated. Muslim jurists emphasize the difference between the marriage contract, which is arranged on the child's behalf by his or her guardian, and consummation, which took place only when the person

in question physically, and in some cases mentally, ready for it (Motzki, 1996:130).

The determination of “readiness” was typically made by the father, a guardian, the adult partner, or knowledgeable women within the community. If a girl living in her family’s house was not considered ready for sexual intercourse, her father could refuse to hand her over to her husband. In many cases, that decision of the father created disputes between him and the husband, and the husband had a right to bring the case to the court. On the other hand, the father could hand the girl over to her husband even though she did not seem mentally ready to engage in sexual intercourse, in which case she could flee from her husband’s house to that of her mother (Motzki, 1996:130). Amira Sonbol observes that in nineteenth-century Egypt, fathers frequently used this refusal as a strategic tool to renegotiate dowries or to halt a match they realized was unsuitable. In other words, signing a marriage contract did not necessarily provide permission to the husband to engage in intimate relations with his contracted minor wife (Sonbol, 1996: 242).

Questions regarding the consummation of marriage with a minor were frequently addressed by muftis and jurists, who provided varying answers. In the question asked to Ishak b Mansur al-Kausaj, a respected Hanbali jurist who lived in the 9th century, he provided his opinion on the consummation of marriage with a minor as follows:

“I asked Ishaq about the minor orphan given in marriage by her wali [guardian]: Is her option to dissolve the marriage [an automatic] separation or not? Can her husband have intercourse with her before she is of age? When is she of age? Can she opt before she is of age?

Ishaq said, The Sunna concerning that is that she can opt to end marriage when she is of age. She is of age when she has reached her ninth year, because at that age she can begin to menstruate and bear children. If her wali gave her in marriage and her husband wishes to have intercourse with her before she is of age, he can not lawfully do so. [He cannot lawfully do so] until she exercises her option whether to remain married or not, and her exercise of this option before she is of age has no legal effect... And I do not think it is ever up to a wali to give a minor girl, one under nine years of age, in marriage, unless she specifically desires it....” (Spectorsky, 1993: 145).

Another important scholar, the Ottoman Grand Mufti Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, offered a more case-specific interpretation. He expressed the view that if a 9-year-old girl was considered ready for consummation, her husband had the right to bring her to his home to live with him. However, in another fatwa, Çatalcalı Ali Efendi stated that if the girl was 7 or 8 years old, skinny, and not

ready for consummation, her husband could not bring her to his home. The girl was allowed to live with her family until she reached the age of 9, which prominent Muslim scholars considered the legal age of maturity (Çatalçalı Ali Efendi, 1872: 51).

A Hanafi scholar and mufti, Khayr al-Din b. Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Ramli provides a fatwa, which points another opinion regarding the consummation of marriage. In his fatwas on consummation of a marriage with a minor, al-Ramli claimed that the occurrence of menstruation or attainment of sexual maturity were not necessary. The fatwa reads as follows:

“Khayr al-Din al-Ramli was asked: if a husband wants to consummate a marriage with his minor wife, claiming that she can endure intercourse, and her father claims that she cannot endure it, what is the legal ruling?

The mufti answered: If she is plump and buxom and able to endure intercourse with men, and the stipulated immediate dower has been received promptly, the father must give her to her husband. But if he has [concerns regarding her ability to endure sexual intercourse], then he requests a consultation from knowledgeable women. If they say that she can endure sexual intercourse, [the kadi] orders the father to give her to her husband. If they say that “she is not ready, the then qadi does not so instruct the father. And God knows best” (Khayr al-Din al-Ramli, 1893: 32; Yazbak, 2002: 398; Tucker, 1998: 148).

Beyond physical capacity, some fatwas aimed to protect the psychological well-being of the minor. In one case, al-Ramli was asked about a prepubescent minor girl who may have been forced into sexual intercourse by her husband. The girl, who was afraid of sexual intercourse, escaped from her husband's house and took shelter in her father's house. In his reply to that question, al-Ramli advised that she should not be returned to her husband if she could not endure sexual intercourse and should remain in her father's house until she felt ready (Khayr al-Din al-Ramli, 1893: 32; Yazbak, 2002: 398). Therefore, the consummation of marriage has been controversial due to the absence of clear, codified rules and regulations. While some scholars claimed that girls can consummate their marriage at the age of 9, other scholars claimed that they are ready when they were plump and buxom. On the other hand, some jurists pointed out that the minor girl must reach maturity and feel ready for engaging in sexual intercourse. These different interpretations demonstrate the lack of codified family law in the Ottoman Empire.

Following the marriage minors, some certain issues, such as providing for the minor bride living with her family, were discussed by the jurist in the Ottoman Empire. As it is stated that a married minor mostly stayed with

her or his family until reaching puberty (Baugh, 2011: 95). When a minor bride remained in her family's house, her husband was expected to provide her support; and her father persisted in compensating for this support before giving permission for the consummation of the marriage. However, legal schools differed on this point: the Hanafi school argued that a husband was not required to support a minor wife if he did not yet have "service or enjoyment" from the marriage. In contrast, the Shafi'i held that the husband was obliged to provide support regardless of whether the marriage had been consummated. These conflicting legal traditions created a variety of practices across the Ottoman provinces, often dependent on local madhab predominance and custom (Sonbol, 1996: 242).

Financial Motivation:

While class, environment, and tradition influenced the decision to arrange minor marriages, financial considerations often played a pivotal role. Under Islamic law, a guardian was required to demand the bridewealth (*mahr*) at the time of the contract and hold it in trust until the girl reached majority. However, even though it was against the Hanafi doctrine, the available court registers of Anatolian and Middle Eastern cities between the 16th and 19th centuries indicate that it was almost a local custom among villagers and the urban poor people whereby guardians used that money for their own purposes, such as meeting household needs, paying debts, marrying male members of the family... etc (Motzki, 1996: 138). This practice of using the *mahr* for personal expenses was in direct contradiction to Islamic law, and jurists were aware of these illegal practices. Numerous fatwas were issued emphasizing the *mahr* must be proper, paid, and must be in possession of the bride (Tucker, 1998: 54). Another financial motive for the family to arrange child marriage, especially poor families, was eliminating the cost of their daughter's or ward's maintenance, education, and clothing.

Brides typically secured their financial standing through the receipt of the *mahr* from the husband and support in form of money, jewelry, or essential household assets from their family for their marriage. Obtaining these resources early on provided women with some economic security and allowed them to make financial decisions that could affect their entire families. However, the practice of spending *mahr* by her guardian for personal expenses was a factor that prevented a woman from involving in the social and economic life as *mahr* was one of the only few resources for her. There were many examples of women involved in economic activities in Antakya (Antioch) in the 18th and 19th centuries, such as buying houses and moneylending activities by using *mahr* as a resource for these economic activities (Çapar, 2017: 275-287). Consequently, when a guardian misappropriated a minor's *mahr*, it did more than violate legal doctrine; it stripped the woman of her primary means

of social and economic participation. Furthermore, if a father exhausted the mahr before his daughter reached maturity, she had no legal standing to demand a second payment from her husband. In his fatwa concerning that matter, Çatalcali Ali Efendi, claimed that the wife who just reached maturity and could not get the paid mahr from her father was not allowed to ask her husband for another mahr. In addition, the wife has to submit herself to her husband, and she should not resist him by saying that my husband cannot touch me without paying me another mahr (Çatalcali Ali Efendi, 1872: 43).

The economic leverage of the mahr is further illustrated by cases where fathers nullified existing contracts in favor of higher bidders. Although Sharia prohibited a new contract while a previous one remained valid, Mahmoud Yazbak's research in Palestine highlights instances where economic pragmatism superseded legal norms. In one case, Zamil, from a village near Nablus in Palestine, came to the Ottoman court with a claim that he made a contract with Husayn to marry the latter's minor in 1877. When they arranged that marriage agreement, Zamil promised that he would pay the dower during the next harvest season, which did not happen. In 1884, the daughter became mature, and Zamil wanted to pay the promised dower, 3000 gurushes, to consummate the marriage. However, Zamil realized that the father had contracted another marriage with Hamid, who agreed to pay 4000 gurushes as her dower, for his minor daughter. Since Zamil failed to pay the promised dower on time, the minor's father felt free to contract a new contract with a new person, who paid her dower at the time of contract. According to Sharia, the father could not arrange a new marriage contract so long as the first one was not nullified with the approval of the groom. In addition, the father of a minor girl could not demand the dower if the groom proved that he was not able to pay it on time (Yazbak, 2002: 401). However, both parties reached an agreement before appearing in court, and Zamil was convinced to annul his marriage contract so that the daughter could marry her new suitor. The available records do not clarify whether Zamil was compensated or how he was persuaded to annul the marriage, even though the kadi would have ratified the original contract and allowed him to marry her. The key issue in this case was the father's decision to nullify the marriage contract, disregarding Sharia law, likely motivated by the higher dower and the belief that the new suitor was a better match for his daughter (Yazbak, 2002: 401).

Divorce and Khayr al-Bulugh:

Ottoman society mostly accepted the doctrinal tenets of the Hanafi school, which credited divorce as a mainly one-sided male right but provided specific avenues for dissolution. The three main methods were talak (repudiation), hul' (negotiated dissolution), and tefrik (judicial annulment). The most widespread procedure, talak—divorce by repudiation—involved a verbal

utterance needing no administrative formality or the presence of official witnesses. The husband required simply to pronounce the phrase “boş ol” to dissolve the marriage. Following this statement, the husband was expected to abstain from marital relations for the ensuing three months, known as *iddet*. During the mandatory three-month waiting period, the husband possessed the unilateral right to restore the marriage without the necessity of a renewed marriage contract; otherwise, failing such reconciliation at the end of *iddet*, the dissolution was rendered absolute (Davis, 1986: 119).

The *hul* dissolution provided a secondary mechanism for ending a marriage. The term of *hul* implies a “removal” of the marriage garment and subsequent liberation of the wife from her marital ties through a self-initiated divorce process (Zilfi, 1997: 270; Elbirlilik, 2013, 160). This mechanism was effectively bilateral dissolution as the right of dissolution was given to wife by husband in exchange for forfeiture of her mahr (dower) and maintenance. Elbirlilik states that *hul* divorce functioned as a vital instrument of negotiation, to legally end to a failing marriage (Elbirlilik, 2013: 160-161). Either party could use the court for divorce, although, as Zilfi notes, it was typically wives who started the process (Zilfi, 1997: 271).

Tefrik represented the judicial annulment of the marital bond by the court. This process allowed the court to intervene upon the wife’s request under circumstances such as domestic cruelty, abandonment, or sexual neglect. Moreover, if the husband failed to provide financial support, was imprisoned, or was absent for an extended period, the court could dissolve the marriage (Yüksek, 2014: 350-352). Women could petition the court regarding any mistreatment they experienced. If they provided sufficient evidence showing that the marriage become deleterious to her well-being, the court would intervene to compel the husband to grant a divorce. Elbirlilik argues that such judicial interventions remained infrequent during the 18th century due to the Hanafi jurists’ discouragements of this type of divorce (Elbirlilik, 2013: 172-173).

In the context of minor marriages, the right to dissolve a union was deferred until the individual reached physical and mental maturity. In the question brought in front of Abd Allah bin Ahmad bin Hanbal regarding divorce of a minor, he answered that the minor had to be mentally mature to initiate a divorce (Spectorsky, 1993: 137).³ Another jurist, Ishaq bin Mansur al-Kausaj, emphasizes same points regarding the divorce of a minor. He states that the minor must show signs of pubescent developments or be at the age of fifteen to bring his or her marriage to an end (Spectorsky, 1993: 165).⁴ Most of

3 ‘He relates to us and said: I asked my father about the divorce of the minor youth. He said, “If he is mentally mature, his divorce is valid. If he is not, then it is not.”

4 I said, ‘What about the divorce of the minor youth?’ Ahmad said, ‘If he is mentally mature [it is valid].’

the minor marriages were between mature males and minor girls. Islamic law provides more advantages to a mature male in the event of divorce. If the husband decided to divorce his minor wife, he was not required to pay the dower, the divorce carried no legal consequences, and he could remarry her once she had matured sexually and mentally (Spectorsky, 1993: 165).⁵

While a marriage arranged by a “natural guardian” (father or paternal grandfather) was generally irrevocable, a marriage arranged by a “non-natural guardian” (mother, uncle, or brother) could be annulled by the girl the moment she reached maturity. When the father and grandfather were deceased or absent due to a journey or military service, other relatives—primarily mothers, uncles, and brothers, acted as guardians or proxies of the natural guardians, giving them the right to marry off the minor. However, it was not possible for a minor to annul a marriage contract arranged by a natural guardian. In contrast, a minor could challenge any decision made on their behalf by a non-natural guardian in court after reaching legal majority. This procedure, known as *khiyar al-buluğ* (the option of dissolving marriage at the time reaching puberty), is well documented in Ottoman court records of different cities, indicating that young women likely well aware of this option and used it as a means to rid themselves of an unwanted husband.⁶ They probably learned about it from their sisters or neighbors, and its usage as an effective strategy to annul a marriage attracted the attention of young women all around the empire. For instance, in the early 17th century, Ismihan applied to the court in Konya, claiming that she had been forced to marry Suleyman by her stepfather, Mehmed, who was her non-natural guardian. She asserted that the marriage was arranged without her consent. Upon reaching puberty, she declared that she had attained legal majority and refused to remain with her husband. Her mother also testified that she did not consent to the marriage, but that her husband, Ismihan’s stepfather, had forced her into it. The court ruled in favor of Ismihan, granting her a divorce and ordering her mother to return the dowry to the groom (Konya Şer’iye Sicili, no: 14, p.11/b.34). In another case in the same city, Raziye sought to annul her marriage. She claimed that her mother, Alime, had arranged a marriage on her behalf with Nebi when she was a minor. One night, after experiencing her first menstruation, Raziye immediately sought witnesses to prove that she had reached maturity and then annulled the marriage contract arranged on her behalf by her mother. The court ruled in favor of Raziye and

Ishaw said, “As long as he has not matured, or reached the age of fifteen, or shown signs of pubescent developments [he cannot divorce].”

5 “Ishak was asked about a man who gives an orphan in marriage to a husband who divorces her before she is sexually mature.

He said, she does not receive a dower, and she need not wait an ‘idda. Further, his divorcing her has no legal consequences, and he can marry her [again] after she has matured sexually.”

6 See: Balikesir Şer’iye Sicili, no:753, b.89; Konya Şer’iye Sicili, no:14, b.34; Konya Şer’iye Sicili, no:59, b.64; Antakya Şer’iye Sicili, no:2, b.48; Nablus Şer’iye Sicili, no:43, b.196.

asked her mother to return the dowry, which was 100 gurush, to the groom (Konya Şer'iye Sicili, no: 59, p.59/b.64).

A minor who reached legal majority was not required to appear in court immediately after her first menstruation. It was sufficient for her to make a public declaration of her first menstruation in the presence of witnesses, who could be relatives or neighbors. In a case from Gaziantep in February 1690, Mühti appeared in court, claiming that her paternal uncle had arranged a marriage contract on her behalf with his son. Following her first menstruation, she made a public declaration in the presence of witnesses, including Molla Ahmed and Seyyid Yusuf. She appeared in court twenty-one months after her first menstruation, and the kadi asked her to present witnesses to confirm her case. Following the confirmation of the case by the witnesses, the judge decided to annul the marriage contract (Gaziantep Şer'iye Sicili, no:39, p. 128/a).

The only and most important rule in that process was to make public declaration of the occurrence of the menstruation immediately so that she could have witnesses when she applied to the court to annul her marriage. Çatalcalı Ali Efendi claims that the only and most important rule in that process was to make public declaration of the occurrence of the menstruation immediately so that she could have witnesses when she applied to the court to annul her marriage. Otherwise, her silence would be interpreted as that she had consented to the continuation of the marriage. One of the fatwas supporting that practice was given by Çatalcalı Ali Efendi (Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, 1272: 41). In the question asked to Çatalcalı Ali Efendi provides us an example to that issue.

“Question: Hindi, a minor girl, was married by her mother to Zeyd, who paid the requested mehr, bridewealth. Zeynep reached puberty, but she did not announce that she wants to annul her marriage. Can she annul her marriage through the practice of khayr al-bulug a month after the occurrence of her first menstruation?

Answer: She cannot.”⁷

A case supporting this practice and fatwa occurred in the Gaziantep court in 1697. Fatma, from the village of Oruş, sought to annul a marriage contract arranged by her stepfather when she was still a minor. However, she applied to the court four days after her first menstruation and had not made a public declaration of the event. In court, she claimed that she now wanted

⁷ “Hind-i sağıreyi veliyy-i akrabası anası Zeynep, Zeyd'e tezvîc ittikten sonra Hindi baliğe olub bade'l akd mezbûre 'alîma olduğu anda nefşini ihtiyan ve işhad idüp, hiyâr-ı buluğla akd-i mezbûr Zeyd'in huzurunda hakime fesh itdirmeyeğe kadire olur mu? El-Cevap: Olur.” Çatalcalı Ali Efendi, Fetava-yi Ali Efendi ma'an-nukul. (İstanbul: Tabhane-yi Amire, vol. I), p. 41.

to annul the marriage contract arranged on her behalf by her non-natural guardian. The judge requested witnesses to confirm the occurrence of her first menstruation and her refusal of the marriage contract. When she could not present the necessary witnesses, the judge interpreted her four days of silence as consent to the continuation of the marriage and ruled that the marriage contract remained in effect (Gaziantep *Ser'iye Sicili*, no:47, s.149/b).

Conclusion:

Majority of marriages in pre-modern Muslim societies are considered as child marriages by modern Western understanding. The reason behind that consideration is the different opinions on when a person is begun to be considered as an adult. In Islamic law, the beginning of puberty is considered as the end of childhood, and a person could be considered as an adult, whereas the end of puberty is accepted the beginning of adultery by modern Western legal thinking. Therefore, since each society set a different age limit regarding when a child becoming an adult, most of the marriages concluded during pre-modern time in Islamic societies are classified as child marriages by Western understanding, while child marriages refers to the one concluded between minors in the classical Islamic legal view (Motzki, 1996: 130). This study sheds light on the practice of child marriages in Ottoman Anatolia and the Middle East, illuminating the complex interplay between religious, legal, and socio-economic factors that shaped these practices between the 16th and 19th centuries. Through the analysis of fatwas and Ottoman court records, this research underscores the complexity of legal interpretations surrounding the age of maturity, guardianship, marriage consummation, and the dissolution of marriages. The findings reveal significant variability and sometimes contradictions in the application of Islamic legal principles, reflecting the diverse realities of Ottoman society. Therefore, absence of a codified family law concerning child marriages formed a basis for various implementation of that type of marriages in the Ottoman Anatolia and Middle East between 16th and 19th centuries.

The financial motivations behind child marriages, particularly in poor and rural families, further emphasize the rationality that influenced these practices. The misuse of *mahr* by guardians, despite being legally condemned, reflects broader socio-economic dynamics and the pragmatic adaptations of Islamic legal principles to local contexts. These findings contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between law, society, and economy in the Ottoman Empire and challenge monolithic interpretations of Islamic legal practices.

The option of puberty (*khiyar al-bulug*) emerges as a crucial mechanism for young women to challenge and dissolve unwanted marriages,

demonstrating an awareness and utilization of legal rights within the constraints of a patriarchal society. This legal mechanisms, *khiyar al-bulug*, provided a crucial, albeit limited, avenue for young women to assert agency in a patriarchal system. The appearance of women in the court suggests that women were not passive subjects of these legal structures.

Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader understanding of family life, gender dynamics, and the legal culture in the Ottoman Empire, illustrating how religious and legal doctrines were interpreted and applied in everyday life. The findings underscore the importance of examining historical practices within their specific socio-cultural contexts, offering insights into the complexities of child marriages in the Ottoman world and their enduring legacy in contemporary discussions on the subject.

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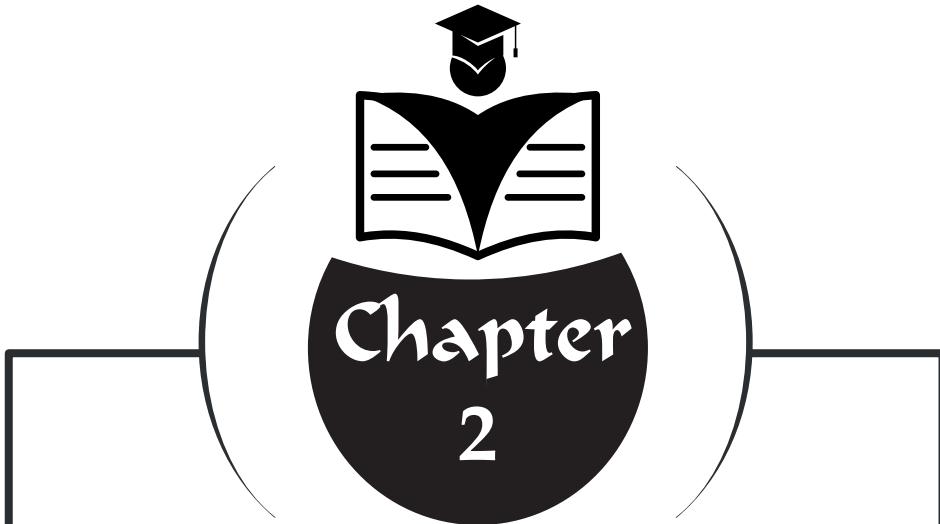
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DIASPORA AND POLITICAL IDENTITY: CONTEXTUAL SOURCES OF POLITICAL IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG YOUNG TURKISH AMERICANS¹

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INTRODUCTION

The mass migration of Turks to the United States dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In these migrations, which took place primarily for economic reasons, the main reasons why Turks did not maintain their presence as a permanent community in American society are attributed to the fact that Turks had the goal of working for a short period of time and returning back and that they could not establish a cultural affinity with American society (Karpat, 1993; Akgün, 2002; Avcı, 2007). Due to their lack of cultural affinity and geographical dispersal, they have not had a noticeable social and political impact on American society. This has led to a very limited academic interest in Turks. However, in the post-1980 period, there has been an ongoing increase in the number of Turks migrating to the U.S. for educational, economic, etc. reasons (Yavuzer, 2009). With the increase in the number of Turks, the visibility of their presence in the American society has led to the rise in the number of academic studies on Turkish Americans. Therefore, the numerical increase in the number of Turks and their social and cultural visibility in the American society has led to an academic interest in Turks and an increase in the number of academic studies.

Most of the studies on Turks in the U.S. can be broadly categorized into two categories. The first one is the studies in which the historical dimension of immigration is at the center. These studies generally cover topics such as when the Turks immigrated to the U.S., the stories and history of the Turks who immigrated, the periods in which the Turkish presence in the U.S. increased, and how the Turks have affected the relations between the U.S. and Türkiye. *Turkish Migration to the United States from Ottoman Times to the Present*, edited by Deniz Balgamiş and Kemal Karpat (2008), evaluates Turkish migration from various perspectives by focusing on its historical dimension. Frank Ahmed's (1993) study, which is one of the first studies on Turkish Americans, also contains important data on the migration history of Turks in the United States (See also Halman, 1980; Akgün, 2000; Kaya, 2004; Grabowski, 2005; Acehan, 2005 and Acehan, 2010). Another category of studies on Turkish Americans consists of cultural studies. These studies, which emphasize issues such as the integration experiences of Turks as a community, their ethnic and religious identities, and their social and political outlook, constitute important literature on the presence of Turks in American society (For some of the recent studies, see: Kaya, 2003; Kaya, 2005; Kaya, 2007; Çolak Bostancı, 2014; Güngör, 2015; Şenyürekli and Detzner, 2008; Şenyürekli and Menjívar, 2012; Şan and Akyiğit, 2021).

As a matter of fact, when the literature on Turkish Americans is reviewed, it is seen that studies have been conducted in various fields and at an increasing rate in the post-2000 period. One of the notable early studies on young Turkish

Americans is Şebnem Akçapar Köşer's project, titled *Turkish Highly Skilled Migration to the United States: New Findings and Policy Recommendations*. The study is the analysis of highly skilled migration from Türkiye to the U.S., particularly focusing on the "brain drain" phenomenon and proposing policy approaches to transform it into a "brain gain" or "brain exchange" for Türkiye (Akçapar Köşer, 2009). However, it can be stated that the absence of a specific study on the formation of the political identities of young Turkish Americans among the existing studies is a deficiency in terms of literature. As can be seen in the references cited above, in various studies on Turkish Americans, the issue of identity comes to the fore, and there are also indirect evaluations of political identity (Akçapar Köşer and Yurdakul 2009; Otcu, 2010; Isik Ercan, 2014; Kaya, 2003; Kaya, 2005; Kaya; 2007; Şan and Akyigit, 2021). The limited number of specific studies on young Turks in the U.S. generally focus on issues such as education, school adaptation, and language skills. While there are many studies on young Turks in Europe, the limited number of studies on young Turks in the U.S. represents an important gap in the literature on young Turks in the U.S. Considering the lack of academic studies focusing on the political identities of young Turks in the U.S. The problem of this study is to determine the contextual sources of the formation of political identities of young Turks living in the U.S. Focusing on the political socialization process as a field study, the study examines the potential of family, close environment, school and social media, which are the determinant sources in this process, to influence and direct young people's relationship with politics. Therefore, the aim of the study is to emphasize the contextual resources in the construction of the political identity of young Turkish Americans.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Political identity is shaped by the politicization of ethnic, religious, and other cultural identities during the socialization process. This process is thoroughly delineated in the extant literature on the subject of political socialization (see (Akin, 2009: 159-161; German, 2014:17-26; Sigel, 1965:1-9; Clausen, 1968). The concept of political socialization precisely captures some dynamics. A variety of dynamics are involved in the process of political socialization. These dynamics encompass groups where close relationships are maintained, such as family and peers, and more formal relationships, such as school, work, and media.

Pierre Bourdieu's explanation of political identity is closely connected to his ideas about habitus, field, capital, and symbolic power. He says that political identity is not just a matter of choice or affiliation, but rather a result of a person's upbringing and their position in different social groups. (Farrel, 2010). Bourdieu talks about the idea of "habitus" to explain how people develop long-lasting attitudes based on their social position and life experiences. In

this view, people's political preferences and behaviors are not just based on logic. Instead, they are influenced by deep-rooted attitudes that are formed early in life and are made stronger by ongoing social experiences (Bourdieu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1983). For Bourdieu, the way we become politically aware starts in the family and is made stronger through school, where we learn values and ways of thinking that are specific to our social class. This process subtly encourages people to get more or less involved in politics.

The socialization process tends to unfold more harmoniously in homogeneous societies, characterized by uniform socio-economic and socio-cultural structures. However, in a society marked by significant socio-economic and socio-cultural differences, it can be challenging for the socialization process to maintain harmonious progression for each individual. Consequently, in societies where the socialization process is not proceeding harmoniously, there is a high likelihood of politicization of marginalized identities and radicalization of political identity. In contexts where immigrants face challenges in assimilating into the dominant culture and identity, their political identities are often marked by a confrontational tone. As various studies have identified, radicalization often emerges from intergroup tensions and conflicts within a social process (Veldhuis and Staun, 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008; Borum, 2011). In this context, studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between changes in attitudes toward Muslims and the Islamic faith in the West after the September 11, 2001, attacks and the rise of Islamophobia (Peek, 2011; Kumar, 2012; Seggie and Sanford, 2010).

Therefore, it is argued that one of the reasons for the politicization and radicalization of ethnic and religious identity among Muslim communities, including Turks in the West, is the rise of Islamophobia in the West. Research on Islamophobia is a current topic of discussion in academic and public forums. Furthermore, identities acquired during the socialization process are formed in relation to the cultural context. Therefore, the relationship between identity and cultural context is important (Phinny and Baldelomar 2011). In this regard, when examining the formation of the political identities of Turkish youth in the US, it is important to consider that their political identities are shaped in the diaspora and in a multicultural environment.

DIASPORA AND POLITICAL IDENTITY

The concept of diaspora refers to the migration of people from their homeland, usually for political, social or economic reasons. Diasporas are characterized by a sense of collective identity and a standard connection with their homeland, even if they are geographically dispersed. Political identity refers to an individual's identification with a particular political group or ideology. The relationship between diaspora and political identity is complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, diasporas can play an essential role in

shaping political identity by providing a shared sense of identity and a platform for political participation. For example, members of a diaspora community may identify with a particular political movement or ideology based on shared experiences of displacement and marginalization. On the other hand, political identity can also shape diasporic communities by influencing their beliefs, values, and practices. For example, political ideologies such as nationalism or socialism can be adopted by diasporic communities and used to frame their struggle for social justice and political rights.

Various phenomena need to be taken into account when analyzing diasporic communities. It should be emphasized that an analysis based solely on the cultural characteristics of diasporic communities is not sufficient. In particular, it is a methodological necessity to emphasize external factors such as political and historical factors that affect the diasporic community and its identity in order to make sense of the new identity and relations of the diasporic community. In this context, while Robin Cohen examines how diasporas are formed and how the identities of diasporic communities are shaped, he also problematizes the concept of diaspora. He emphasizes the changes the concept has undergone. Especially in the study of diasporic communities, he highlights the impact of globalization on the evolution of diasporic networks and the role of global cities (Cohen, 1997: 165-169). Myria Georgiou focuses on how media can be used to construct and sustain diasporic identities (2012). Khachig Tölöyan's article is one of the methodological critiques of diaspora studies. Tölöyan emphasizes the inadequacy of traditional approaches and emphasizes the role of historical factors in shaping diasporic identity (2007). Another critical work in this field is James Clifford, who explores the role of diaspora in shaping cultural identities. In his book "Diasporas" (1994), Clifford argues that diasporas can provide a sense of cultural continuity and connection to the homeland even in the face of displacement and dislocation. He also contends that diasporas can be seen as sites of cultural production where new forms of identity and cultural expression can emerge.

Approaches that define diaspora through ethnic and national affiliations explain diaspora by emphasizing a group's connection to a particular region or state (Hall, 1990; Brah, 1996). This classical approach to diaspora defines diasporic identity as an extension of ethnic and national identities. However, instead of defining diaspora identity as an extension of another belonging, it is more appropriate to define it as an identity in itself because a migrant community rebuilds its identity in the diaspora. The diasporic identity that emerges as a result of this reconstruction is categorically different from the previous identity of the migrant community. Therefore, as Brubaker (2005) emphasizes, it is necessary to think of diaspora as a category of practice and try to use it as a category of analysis, rather than limited identities such as ethnic or national belonging.

On the other hand, the change in space with migration also affects identity. This is because there is a close relationship between identity and geography. In the country of origin, the link between identity and geography dissolves (Castles and Miller 2009), but in the diaspora, a tighter bond can be established between political identity and the geography of the country of origin. This bond persists in a different way and as a constitutive element in the construction of identity. Therefore, it is evident that the concept of homeland, which reminds the country of origin, has a significant impact on the formation of the political identity constructed in the diaspora. The need for homeland and belonging, which occupy a central place in the daily lives and political identities of immigrants, leads to the attribution of both a symbolic and existential value to the concept of homeland (Koser and Lutz, 1998). As a matter of fact, studies on Turkish immigrants show that Turks feel an emotional attachment to Türkiye, and this attachment plays a role in shaping their identities, even though they are trying to adapt to the country they live in (Ogan, 2001). In addition, studies show that the belonging that Turks in the diaspora have established with Türkiye is intensely reflected in their daily life practices and continues to exist (Göktuna Yaylaci, 2015). Therefore, psychological factors such as longing and nostalgia for the country of origin can become a determining factor in the formation of a new identity. Moreover, migration is a psychological and sociological process that leaves lasting effects on identity in general and political identity in particular. As a result of this process, it is generally claimed that a hybrid identity emerges (Akhtar, 1995; Akhtar, 1999). In support of hybrid identity, there are also theoretical approaches that identities have become more fluid with the increase in social and physical mobility with globalization (Bauman, 2004; Karakaş, 2015).

THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH DIASPORA

The concept of “youth diaspora” shows that younger generations, especially those born in other countries, experience diaspora differently from their first-generation immigrant parents. These young people are different from previous generations. They are often born and raised in the host country, and they have two cultures. This combination of other cultures is very important in creating their “hybrid identities”. Research shows that the idea of diaspora identity is always changing. It is a process that is made up of many different parts, and is created, continued and shared between generations through stories and memories (Lulle, 2015; Baser and Böcü, 2024).

The political identity of young people living in other countries is influenced by their engagement with politics in their home country and the political landscape of the country they live in. Studies show that governments often try to influence or control their second-generation diaspora, which is the group of people who have left their country of origin to live elsewhere (Østergaard-

Nielsen, 2016; Aksu and Aksel, 2025). This can lead to young people having strong feelings about whether to support or resist these governments. Research on Turkish American identities shows that the second generation often proudly holds both Turkish and American identities, which is different from some first-generation immigrants. The political identity of Turkish youth, including those living abroad, is often seen as having two sides, being both cultural and made up of many different parts. This is influenced by a mix of religious and ethnic factors, as well as a feeling of being a citizen of the world (Micallef, 2004; Kaya, 2009).

Before proceeding to the methodological framework, it is essential to note that understanding the political identities of young diaspora members requires an approach sensitive to generational differences and contextual influences. The multifaceted nature of youth diaspora necessitates qualitative inquiry to capture lived experiences and subjective meanings. Therefore, the research design aims to explore how these dynamics materialize in the everyday lives of young Turkish Americans through an in-depth and process-oriented analysis.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aims to examine the contextual resources and experiences that determine the formation of the political identity of Turkish American youth between the ages of 18-26, whose families have immigrated from Türkiye, who are the U.S. citizens, and who live in the Washington Metropolitan Area (District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia). The qualitative research method will be used in the fieldwork of the research. The qualitative research was preferred precisely because it is a method for understanding the process as well as the results and because it is a method that enables participants to describe their personal experiences, perceptions, thoughts and attitudes in their own words (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) because political identity is formed in a process.

The population of the study will be limited to Turkish American youth between the ages of 18-26 living in the U.S. The sampling frame will be composed of Turkish American youth living in the Washington Metropolitan Area. The Washington Metropolitan Region, which constitutes the research area, is one of the regions where the Turkish population is concentrated at a certain level. In fact, while determining the sample area, statistics on Turks in the U.S. were utilized from various sources. Sample selection was realized after the basic characteristics of the interviewees were determined. The interviewees were selected through snowball sampling, one of the non-random sampling techniques. As the study used the snowball technique, the participants likely had similar experiences and opinions. So, using a different technique probably would've given a different result. The interviews were conducted in person, primarily in Turkish with occasional use of English. Participants were

interviewed primarily at the Diyanet Center of America in Maryland, and in cafes in Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia. The data were collected between January and May 2023. In the research, in-depth interviews, one of the qualitative research techniques, were preferred to collect data. A semi-structured interview form consisting of open-ended questions was used in the interviews.

While analyzing the data in the study, the data collected (interviews, observations and notes) were first organized and made open to interpretation. Descriptive technique was used to analysis the data. In descriptive analysis, the researcher primarily includes the participants' own statements. The researcher tries to present the situation as it is. This approach focuses on summarizing and interpreting the verbal or written accounts of the participants in a systematic way. The core aim is to describe the patterns, themes, and characteristics present in the data without necessarily seeking to establish cause-and-effect relationships or generate new theories. Therefore, I employed a technique known as descriptive analysis, which involves examining the data closely. The data was divided into smaller parts so that it could be examined more easily. Then, the main ideas or themes present in the content were identified and grouped. The main aim was to present the data as it is, rather than appealing to external theories or seeking causal links. To achieve this, original statements and data points were utilized extensively to reveal new patterns and characteristics. This approach allowed us to understand and interpret the data accurately (Neuman, 2014: 477-512).

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH DATA

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

This article forms part of a larger study. Although more than 20 people were interviewed in the context of the topic of the article, data collected from only 20 of the participants were used. The participants were Turkish residents of the Washington Metropolitan Area. The age range was 18-26, and the gender distribution was 11 males and 9 females. Only 8 of the participants were born in the U.S. and the rest were born in Türkiye and immigrated to the U.S. with their families at a young age. Seven of the participants are high school graduates, five are university graduates and the rest are university students. It is seen that there is no significant difference in the socio-economic status of the participants, and that they are economically dependent on their families or work in family businesses. Two of the university graduates work professionally in the field they graduated from. Based on the information provided by the participants, it can be said that they come from middle-income families.

Traces of the Family's Migration History

Those who emigrated from Türkiye for political reasons, particularly before 2000, mostly settled in Germany and France. However, a small number went to the United States (Aksel, 2019). Traces of this migration experience can be seen in the political identities of young Turkish Americans today. Belonging to an immigrant family affects an individual's identity formation, and these effects may differ from person to person. Migration requires a family to adapt to a different cultural context. Immigrant families often want to preserve their own culture while at the same time trying to integrate into a new culture. This shapes individuals' cultural identities. Immigrants often adopt both the culture of their country of birth/living and their family's culture of origin. This dual identity is part of the individual's personal identity. Therefore, the experiences of growing up in an immigrant family have a profound impact on an individual's political identity. The traces of a family's migration history can shape their views on politics, identity, and belonging.

It is seen that the participants have a vivid memory of the family's migration history. Especially the economic difficulties encountered after migration and the process of adapting to the new country are the most emphasized issues. However, unlike the others, there are two families who migrated in the late 1990s due to the political environment in Türkiye. These individuals, who were born in the U.S., state that their families migrated for political reasons and that this situation had a direct impact on their political identities.

“My family migrated for political reasons. It was talked about from time to time in our house. My father and mother constantly follow political developments in Türkiye. They settled here, but their minds are always on Türkiye” (P5)

“I was born after my parents came here. I learned the reasons for their migration later. They were forced in Türkiye. This happened during February 28th. Then they came here with the advice of an acquaintance” (P13)

P5's statement shows that their family's migration experience influenced their political socialization. Indeed, the fact that their parents “constantly follow political developments in Türkiye” implies that they have been socialized in a particular political perspective that might be shaped by their migration experiences. This is consistent with research on the political socialization of migrants, which suggests that migration experiences can shape their political attitudes and behaviors (Careja et al., 2011). The statements of P5 and P13 emphasize the experience of forced migration, which is a common phenomenon mostly among refugees and asylum seekers. The participant's family left Türkiye due to the military memorandum of February 28, 1997,

which is frequently referred to as the “postmodern coup.” This event had significant political and social repercussions within Türkiye. The “postmodern coup” was a political event which aimed to uphold secularism and resulted in a significant curtailment of certain religious freedoms and activities. This shift in policy has precipitated the closure of religious schools, the imposition of restrictions on headscarves in public institutions, and the dismissal of public sector employees based on their religious beliefs.

This “forced” migration experience probably had a profound impact on the participants’ family in terms of their sense of identity, belonging, and political attitudes. P13’s statement that political developments in Türkiye were discussed in the family circle, that the family maintained its conservative identity, and that he was raised in a conservative environment indicates that even if he did not directly live through that period, migration experiences are passed down between generations, albeit indirectly (Levitt, 2009). Stories and narratives passed down from one generation to another can shape an individual’s political identity. The fact that both participants explained that their political identities were close to their parents’ political identities shows the intergenerational transmission of political values. In families where political reasons were influential in their migration, this led to a stronger identification of children with the political identity of their parents. This situation makes it possible to establish a relationship between the reason for migration and the formation of political identity.

Among the other participants’ families’ reasons for migration, there are no political considerations. It is explained that their families migrated for economic reasons and for a better future. Being interested in political issues is not seen as a priority. Explanation of two of the participants:

“My family migrated for economic reasons. I was 10 years old at the time. My father worked in different jobs. I did not have much difficulty, but my parents had a hard time. They did not speak English well; they had to work hard. They had to survive economically first rather than being interested in politics.” (P3)

“They came here for economic reasons. It is different from Türkiye. If you have no one, you have to work hard to survive. It is a different place in terms of culture. My father was a member of a party in Türkiye. He was not interested in any political party or politics here. Politics is not talked about much here anyway.” (P7)

The views of these two participants provide an insight into how the experience of migrating for economic reasons can affect the way people engage with politics. P3’s explanation suggests that economic survival became the main priority for his parents, which might lead to a decline in interest in politics.

On the other hand, P7's statement that his family also migrated for economic reasons and that his father, who was a member of a political party in Türkiye, lost interest in politics in the U.S., suggests that migrant families' interest in politics may be lost or diminished due to economic priorities. For those who migrate for economic reasons, the priority is to survive economically. Instead of focusing on politics, which does not directly affect their lives, it is a more rational choice to focus on working.

“Actually, my family was doing well in Türkiye. When my father's friends came, he decided to come too. Then he brought my mother and brother. When he first came, he worked in restaurants. Now he has his own business. He is not interested in politics here. He is only interested in Türkiye. He follows the elections.” (P4)

Although the negative economic conditions in Türkiye are not cited as the main reason for migration, the decision to follow the father's friends points to a social “pull” factor. The existing social network facilitates individuals' decision-making and migration process (Blumenstock and Tan, 2016). Like other families, they prioritized economic stability but remained connected to political developments in Türkiye. Some of the families also came for the purpose of education but stayed afterwards. Even though they migrated from the country of origin for education, they continued to stay if they were able to establish themselves in the country of destination. The statement of one of the participants whose family came in this way:

“My father came for his master's degree. After he finished his studies, he found a job. Since he already knew English, it was easy for him to stay. He kept in touch with Türkiye. My mother is also Turkish. Both of them vote regularly. But they are not fanatical”. (P11)

In general, when the migration history of families is analyzed, the number of those who migrated for political reasons is quite low. Most of them state that their families migrated for economic reasons. Apart from this, there are also those who came and settled for educational purposes. The family of one of the participants came to the United States with a Green Card. Therefore, since the reasons for the migration of Turkish families vary, the possibility of establishing a direct general relationship between the reason for migration and the determinant dynamic in the formation of political identity will be weak for the participants of this study. In this context, it would be more appropriate to focus on the relationship between the post-migration process and political identity.

Family and Close Environment

Family and close environment have a certain influence on the political socialization of individuals. Especially parents play an important role in the

transmission of political attitudes and values. This is because parents often pass on their own political views to their children, which in turn affects the way young people perceive and interpret the world and social problems (Sala, 2019). Within the family, behaviors such as conversations about current developments, participation in elections, and participation in political activities are learned by children through observation. Apart from the family, the immediate environment such as school and friends also influence the formation of young people's political identities. In particular, encounters with the political attitudes of different individuals from the immediate environment determine the shaping of young people's political identity. The question "Do you have any differences with your family and close environment at the political level?" is an indirect question, but it is capable of measuring the influence of family and close environment. The answers vary according to the personal experiences of the participants and the political dynamics of their environment. However, it is observed that the answers are close to each other. While most of them experience strong cohesion with their family and social environment, some experience different degrees of divergence. Explanation by three different participants:

"There is no significant difference between us; we generally share the same political views." (P3)

"There is no difference between me and my family, but there are people among my friends who think differently from me." (P11)

"It depends on the person; some of my friends and family agree with my views, but I also have friends with completely different views. I get along with them too." (P15)

P3 and P11 are in strong agreement with their family and close circle on their political views. This shows that shared cultural values and experiences in an immigrant community, as emphasized above, can contribute to a degree of political homogeneity among some young people. It also shows political cohesion within the family. Adherence to traditional norms is clearly evident in Turkish families, albeit sometimes at a symbolic level. Adherence to traditional norms can also lead to political cohesion. However, political diversity may emerge with the influence of the circle of friends, which is one of the components of the close environment outside the family. As in the case of P11, some participants stated that there were people with different views in their close circle, but this did not pose a problem for them. P15 talks about an environment with political diversity. This shows that they live in a socially diverse environment. As a matter of fact, he also stated that he is open to different cultures and political views.

Some of the participants emphasized that their families in particular were not interested in politics. Migrants' lack of interest in politics can be explained by two reasons. Firstly, the effort and strategy of primarily economic and cultural survival

in the country of residence may lead to a reduced interest in politics. Alessandra Ciurlo and Diego Meza's (2024) study on the Colombian diaspora in Rome supports this claim. Another reason is that a study by Claudia Diehl and Michael Blohm (2001) for Germany concludes that the political exclusion of immigrants leads to a lack of interest in politics. The U.S. is a country where social exclusion is not particularly evident, especially for communities such as Turks. Therefore, it can be said that the strategy of economic survival comes to the fore.

“Yes, my family and close circle are apolitical; they are not very interested, but I am a bit interested. Everyone is already working very intensely. There is no time for politics.” (P7)

P7's political participation is partially contrasted with the lack of interest of his close circle. The fact that the participant states that everyone works shows that a relationship can be established between economic conditions and interest in politics among migrants. Economic concerns support apolitical tendencies. The reason why individuals show interest even if their family and close environment are indifferent may be the effect of studying social sciences at university. There were also some participants who stated that they had different political tendencies from their family and close circle.

“Yes, there is a significant difference; my family is more conservative, and I am liberal.” (P19)

“Politics is a controversial topic in my family, and we avoid discussing it to keep the peace. They still think like they are in Türkiye. They also live like this. The reality here is different.” (P1)

Turkish youth in the U.S. may tend to be more liberal due to their exposure to American values. In fact, this is not a common tendency among Turkish youth. Families try to somehow preserve traditional Turkish and religious values and pass them on to their children. This can sometimes lead to a tension between generations. The statements of P19 and P1 can be interpreted in this context. As is common among migrants, there is a tension between adaptation to the new place and cultural preservation. This tension is more pronounced in the second and subsequent generations. Avoiding this tension may be a strategy to maintain cohesion, especially in families where intergenerational differences or cultural influences create political differences. Therefore, harmony within the family is more important.

One theoretical approach that facilitates understanding the influence of family and close circle on the formation of individuals' political identities is Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. The socialization process within the family unit exerts a profound influence on an individual's political inclinations. These are not inherently explicit political ideologies, but rather underlying approaches to

world perception. The political identities of Turkish youth in the US should also be discussed within the context of a diasporic habitus. The sociocultural milieu of the diaspora exerts a significant influence on Turkish youth, prompting them to align their political inclinations with those of their families. Families have been observed to exhibit a propensity to preserve internal cohesion in the face of external threats, which are often perceived as sources of uncertainty.

Therefore, considering the statements of the participants, even if their families and close circles are interested in politics, there is no mention of an intensely politicized environment. It can be said that political compatibility with the family and close environment stands out. A significant cultural and social compatibility leads to political compatibility. Therefore, even if the personal experiences of Turkish youth differ, the tendency to be compatible with their family and close environment is more dominant. It may be the transmission of traditional values that ensures this compatibility. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the role of traditional values in the formation of political identity among Turkish youth. There is also a tendency for some individuals to have a different political view from their family and not to see political diversity as an obstacle in their relationships.

School Environment

The school environment is a setting where students of different cultures and ethnic identities encounter and build rapport. In particular, it provides some insights into how individual political identities are formed through social interactions and institutional settings. Although the experiences of the interviewees differed, in general terms, it can be said that Turks do not show direct interest in US domestic politics but are more influenced by the environment and debates.

“The school environment was an interesting experience for me. My family is a bit interested in politics. When I was in high school, we sometimes talked about it in class and with my schoolmates. American students were also very interested in politics. There were sometimes fierce debates between Democrats and Republicans. Everyone was free to express their opinions. These debates were good for me. I did not take sides, but it made me interested in politics.”
(P10)

“In the family environment, we mostly talk about politics in Türkiye. In high school classes, we were asked what we thought about US history and current issues. Sometimes, there were discussions in class. There were more political discussions about inequality, discrimination and homosexuality. Students were more interested in the presidential elections. I did not talk about these issues

because I was an immigrant, and my family did not want me to.”
(P16)

Participant P10’s explanation shows that the American school environment is a space of political socialization that enables students to participate actively in political debates. It leads to the development of political interest even if they have not yet taken a position themselves. P16’s explanation shows the influence of the family context on the student’s political identity. While the family is mainly interested in political issues in Türkiye, the school stands out as a social space that deals with political issues in the U.S. The lack of active participation in discussions about inequality and homosexuality points to social positioning as an “immigrant”, which leads to a certain reticence and possibly cultural alienation. P4’s statement points to a similar reticence.

“I witnessed political discussions among some students both in high school and at university. I did not talk about it because it did not concern me. I am more interested in politics in Türkiye.” (P4)

P4’s statement that he/she does not participate in political debates and does not find them interesting indicates a passive attitude towards the U.S. political culture. The individual may be staying away from political debates in the U.S. because he/she does not feel a deep personal connection to them. Therefore, Türkiye’s political issues are more prominent. This limits his/her awareness of and engagement in political debates in the U.S. The focus on political developments in Türkiye shows that the student’s political identity is still strongly influenced by political realities and discourses in Türkiye. At the same time, this orientation also indicates his/her attachment to the culture of his country of origin, which is deeply rooted in his/her identity. Being interested in the homeland, which is more familiar and distant and therefore less costly to polarize, could be an escape strategy. P2, on the other hand, even though she tried to stay away from the debates, her involvement in debates about Türkiye led to the development of her interest in politics.

“I never got involved in political discussions in high school. I spent time with my Turkish friends outside of school. It was a bit different at university. When my friends and professors found out I was Turkish, they would ask me questions about Türkiye. Especially when Brunson was arrested, I faced a lot of questions about Türkiye. Trying to answer these questions made it difficult for me. I started to follow the events in Türkiye closely.” (P2)

The fact that P2 does not get involved in the debates and prefers to spend time with his/her Turkish friends outside of school can be explained as an indicator of cultural isolation, as well as an indication that he/she is not willing to identify with American political debates. It can be said that he/she

has a strong cultural identity and, like P4, tends to use a strategy of avoiding political issues with conflict potential. Even if he/she initially preferred to stay away from issues that did not directly concern him/her, the fact that he/she was subjected to various questions in the following period led to a change in his/her attitude. The fact that he/she received questions about Türkiye, especially in connection with the arrest of American pastor Andrew Brunson in 2018, shows how political events in one's country of origin can affect one's political identity in an international context. Questions from friends and professors represent a form of political identity construction in which the student is made an "expert" on developments in Türkiye based on his/her origin. Since he/she is Turkish, his/her identity is increasingly associated with developments in Türkiye. Therefore, it leads to the development of a sense of political responsibility towards his/her country due to an externally assigned role. On the other hand, it can be said that the tension of being Turkish determines his/her political identity and interest.

The explanation of P9 below points to a moderate political culture in an international community where a more moderate political environment focuses on the exchange and diversity of ideas rather than ideological conflicts. The university environment fosters political identity formation through interaction with different cultural and ideological perspectives rather than through intense political debates.

"Political debates sometimes happen at the university where I study. I am also interested in them. But they are not polarizing. Students are more interested in their studies. There are people from all over the world in the university environment. Students spend more time with their circle of friends with whom they have cultural affinity. My close friends are Turkish and Egyptian." (P9)

Turks who were not American-born or had arrived after a certain age often expressed various difficulties with linguistic integration. Therefore, it can be argued that Turkish students primarily focus on language acquisition and integration into the school environment, thus avoiding political discussions. This is because language proficiency determines participation not only in political debates but also in other discussions and social activities. Participants also stated that they were not explicitly discriminated against because of their Turkish and Muslim identity but that American students kept a certain distance from other immigrants, including themselves. In this context, P1's statement is as follows:

"When I started school, I had difficulties because I did not speak English, but once I learned it, it became easier. I was not discriminated against because I am Turkish and Muslim. They respect me. Politics was not talked about in high school. When I started university, I became interested in politics." (P1)

Although there is an education policy in the United States that is generally positive towards multiculturalism, students may be less likely to avoid behaviors and expressions that express ethnic, religious, and cultural discrimination. Cultural diversity in schools can help to understand different political concerns, but it can also facilitate the politicization of students due to diversity. In some cases, it can lead to further politicization by segregating students into groups that emphasize their own cultural identities. On the other hand, in countries like the U.S., language barriers and different communication styles can lead to misunderstandings, which can make political discussions more difficult. In particular, students from different cultural contexts often bring their cultural identities and beliefs from their home countries. Therefore, tensions arising from differences in the school environment can lead to the politicization of young people. In the case of Turkish youth, it can be seen that discussions in the school environment led to the development of a political consciousness, albeit at a low level, and sometimes an interest in politics.

Religion and Cultural Identity

Religion and cultural identity can play an important role in shaping political views, especially on issues of morality, social policy and governance. Turkish American youth were mostly socialized in their early years in an environment where the Muslim religion and Turkish culture were influential. Therefore, the influence of Islam and Turkishness on their ideological and political views cannot be denied. In this context, some questions were asked to measure the impact of the participants' sensitivities on religious and cultural issues on their political views and identities. Here are the views of some of the participants who care about religion and culture and say that they are influential in the formation of their political views:

“Being a Turk affects my political views. I have never had a problem because of my identity, but there are prejudices against Islam. People have no knowledge about Islam. It is what they see in the media.” (P7)

“Politically, I am interested in how migrant communities are treated. I am a Muslim and Turkish immigrant myself. I support equality and anti-discrimination policies.” (P2)

Both explanations show that religion and cultural identity influence political identity in some way. Participant P7 emphasizes the impact of media portrayals in shaping perceptions of Islam. In particular, he/she tends to adopt a more defensive stance against prejudices in the media. This is in line with the concept of social identity theory where individuals can develop a political identity based on religion and cultural identity in response to perceived threats. The other individual's focus on migrants' rights reflects a personal connection

to the issue and emphasizes the role of lived experiences in shaping political views. Participants who accept religion and cultural identity at a more neutral level and support the current order in this direction are more disturbed by the transfer of religion and cultural identity to the political sphere.

“As a secular Turk, my cultural identity is more about language and culture than religion. I am proud of our history and culture, but I am distant from political movements that try to impose religion on politics.” (P20)

“The politicization of religion like in Türkiye disturbs me. I find the political discourse in the U.S. polarizing. I support policies that promote freedom of religion for everyone, not just Muslims.” (P4)

“My cultural identity is a part of me, but living in the U.S. broadens my perspective. I support the multiculturalism environment here.” (P15)

P20’s statement emphasizes a secular Turkish identity. The individual’s opposition to the imposition of religion in politics likely reflects his/her commitment to secular values shaped by Türkiye’s historical context. There are also studies showing the politicization of various religious movements in the U.S. (Wilcox, 1989; Campbell, 2020). In 2023, when the research was conducted, the main criticism of the Republican Party supporters against the government was the claim that the Christian identity of the U.S. was being eroded. Therefore, the politicization of religion in the U.S. is also perceived as a problem for immigrants. As a matter of fact, it is seen that P4 is also concerned in this direction. They evaluate freedom of religion from a liberal perspective and explain their discomfort with the polarizing political discourse of the U.S. with the example of Türkiye. P15, on the other hand, emphasizes the impact of living in a multicultural society on personal identity and puts a more inclusive worldview compatible with multiculturalism shaped by his experiences in the U.S. at the center of his/her political identity.

In the context of religion and cultural identity, gender debates have been a hot topic in recent years, both in different countries and in the United States. Many traditional religious and cultural values see homosexuality or gender reassignment as historically incompatible with their teachings. These debates are also reflected in the political sphere and party politics. Gender is a very popular debate in the U.S. and is often brought up by political actors. Therefore, since it is a current issue affecting political identity, it is also on the agenda of some young Turks. In the interviews conducted in the context of the impact of religion and cultural identity on political identity, the explanation of P11, one of the participants who mentioned this issue:

“I’m an American citizen; when I was voting, I was supporting the Democrats who were moderate towards immigrants, but lately, they’ve been very supportive of LGBT. I do not like it. Therefore, I do not sympathize with them like I used to.” (P11)

P11’s statement illustrates the fluid nature of political identity. His/her support for the Democrats was likely influenced by their pro-immigrant stance. However, the perceived orientation towards LGBT extremism led to a reassessment of his/her political sympathies. This illustrates how specific policy positions and their perceived consequences can significantly influence individual political identities. P18 explained:

“In America, everyone believes what they want. They live their culture. These do not bother me. I am not very religious, but I am Muslim. People can be gay, but it bothers me that politicians propagandize it a lot.” (P18)

P18’s statement reflects a more nuanced view of social and political issues. While acknowledging the diversity of American society and individual freedoms, he/she expresses his/her discomfort with politicians’ overemphasis on homosexuality. It can be said that there is a tension between the participant’s cultural and religious values and the dominant political discourse in the U.S.

In general, the efforts of immigrants, who are in the minority in terms of numbers, to hold on to their authentic culture can lead to radicalization of political identity. Some Turks experience a tension between holding on to authentic culture and the dominant culture. However, this tension is not at a level that radicalizes political identity. The possible reason for this is American multiculturalism. In a multicultural environment, the likelihood of conflict between cultures is low, so the likelihood of cultural identity turning into a radical political identity is also low. The fact that cultural values among Turks do not transform into a radical political identity can be attributed to this situation.

Use of Social Media

The unique characteristics of traditional and new social media have profoundly influenced the way young people engage with politics, albeit in different ways. Traditional media such as television, radio, and print media have played a central role in shaping public opinion and informing citizens about political issues. Political narratives and news selection in traditional media can shape opinions and create thought patterns that are more conformist or adhere to certain traditional values. On the other hand, new social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok offer a much more direct and dynamic interaction with politics. Social media transforms political

participation, giving young people a platform to express their opinions, connect with others and, in many cases organize movements and protests. Because users can follow content and profiles that reflect their interests, social media encourages the personalization of information, which can reinforce existing political biases or beliefs. Turkish youth remain distant from traditional media. They use social media extensively. While there are those who actively post on social media, there are also those who post less and use it mostly for news and entertainment purposes. Almost all participants stated that they follow political developments on social media. Therefore, it may be more appropriate to consider new social media rather than traditional media in the context of the formation of political identity among young people.

Explanation of P10, who has a social media account but states that he/she follows current political developments on social media even if he does not actively share his/her social media accounts:

“I follow the news mostly on social media. I follow journalists. I follow some politicians both here and in Türkiye. Since I stay with my family, I watch TV while they watch TV. They watch Turkish TV series. Television is not used for news. Everyone gets information from the internet.” (P10)

It can be said that social media as a primary source of information is quite common among young people. In the years when social media first became widespread, it was mostly used for communication and entertainment among young people (Williamson, 2012). However, in later times, social media started to turn into an indirect or direct source of information among young people (Sveningsson, 2015; Edgerly, 2016). Moreover, “it is estimated that in the future, after a few generations, social media may share the role of the family as a mediator in political socialization” (Metin, 2016: 262). P10 stated that he/she follows the news mainly through social media accounts and the internet, which reflects a growing trend in today’s societies where digital platforms have become the main sources of information, especially among young people. Moreover, the fact that the participant follows journalists and politicians both in the U.S. and Türkiye shows that young people are constructing a political identity that is not limited to a single country. As a matter of fact, the following statements of P8 and P14, two of the other interviewees, who stated that they follow political developments in both countries on social media, carry the potential of a new identity that transcends national borders.

“I follow the articles of Turkish journalists. I follow both American and Turkish writers on social media. I also follow politicians.” (P4)

“I follow both here and Türkiye on social media. I haven’t watched TV for a long time. There are a few newspapers I read online.

Thanks to social media, I can follow Türkiye closely. It is easier to follow on social media." (14)

However, even if the participants follow American politicians and journalists, it is clear that their main interest is Türkiye. Both the views of the participants above and P14's statement "I post mostly in Turkish on my account. Most of my followers are Turkish" indicate that the main interest is Türkiye. Following news and politicians from different countries has the possibility of enabling a hybrid political identity based on negotiation between place of residence and country of origin. However, even if there are signs of this among Turks, it is difficult to say that it is a widespread tendency based on the available data.

Although they actively use social media, it is seen that there is a distance due to distrust towards the discussions and comments here. The statements of two participants who actively use social media in this direction:

"I am not very interested in politics. Sometimes, I watch the discussions of politicians and journalists on social media. I follow Facebook groups. Sometimes, I comment, but I don't find the discussions on social media very healthy. Everyone comments as if they have information on the related topic." (P8)

"I use social media for entertainment and sharing. I sometimes watch the debates in Türkiye on YouTube. There are accounts I follow. Everyone comments. I don't find it reliable. I follow the political developments here on social media. I am more interested in this place because I live here." (P15)

P8's statement reveals a critical attitude towards discussions on social networks and states that he/she "does not find them very healthy". This attitude reflects a growing distrust of digital platforms as a space for political debate. In particular, posts on social platforms that trigger polarization for interaction purposes, where information is easily circulated in a biased manner and often out of context, lead to distrust towards social media. A similar situation is also emphasized in P15's statement. P15 follows political debates in Türkiye on social media but does not find it reliable. He/she says that his interest is more oriented towards where he/she lives. Likewise, participant P17, who finds political debates in Türkiye more superficial, states that his/her political interest is directed towards the U.S.

"I have a television at home. I use it mostly to watch TV series. I also use social media, but I don't follow it much because the debates in Türkiye are very superficial. Political debates in Türkiye seem simple to me. I follow politicians in the U.S. I read online newspapers." (P17)

It is seen that social media is actively used among Turkish youth. The fact that they follow politicians and journalists suggests that some of them are informed and influenced by political developments even if they are not directly involved in them. The fact that they stated in the interview that most of the posts on their social media accounts and most of the people they follow are Turkish shows that their interest is in their country of origin even if they live in the U.S. Through social media, their interest in the country of origin is not only not lost but also directly affects their political identities. Therefore, Turkish youth tend to consume more information and posts from Türkiye. This also shows that the cultural bond with the country of origin is still strong.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the influences on the political identities of young Turks living in the United States, and the connection between diaspora identity and political socialization. We did in-depth interviews with Turkish young people aged 18-26 living in the Washington Metropolitan Area. These interviews revealed how family, friends, school, religion and culture, and social media influence how interested these people are in politics and how they form their political identities.

The results show that family and the people around young Turks have a big effect on how they develop their political identity. Specifically, while young people from families who migrated for economic reasons were less interested in politics, those from families with political migration backgrounds were more likely to share their parents' political beliefs. This suggests that the reason for the migration has an effect on the political identity of the people who move. In general, Turkish families tended to follow traditional rules, which meant that everyone in the family was more likely to have the same political views.

The school environment, rather than encouraging young Turks to directly engage with US domestic politics, seemed to guide them towards political interest through discussions and exposure. Some of the people taking part said that getting involved in discussions about politics at school made them interested in politics. But others, because of their family or because they lived in a remote area, chose not to get involved in US political debates. The effect of political events in the country where people are born (for example, the Brunson case) on political identity in other countries was also clear. It was found that language and cultural differences stop people taking part in political discussions.

Young Turks' political views were strongly influenced by their religious and cultural identities, especially when it came to ethics, social policies and governance. Some participants, who felt connected to Türkiye and Islam, supported immigrant rights, equality, and policies that prohibit discrimination.

However, some people did not like the way religion was being used to push political agendas and said that they were committed to secular values. Living in a multicultural environment was also identified as encouraging a more open-minded way of thinking that affects how people think about politics. Contemporary issues like gender debates were also found to influence the political views of some young Turks.

Social media is now the main way young Turks find out about politics. While tracking politicians and journalists in both the U.S. and Türkiye suggests the potential for a hybrid political identity that can be identified across national borders, the main focus remained on Türkiye, with most social media content being in Turkish. Also, many people did not trust online discussions. However, it was found that social media still plays a big role in keeping people connected to their country of origin and influencing their political beliefs.

Young people maintain social and cultural ties with Türkiye, and this influences their political attitudes to some extent. Ties to the homeland reflect nostalgia and emotional attachment. The continuation of ties indicates a diasporic identity in which young people maintain their attachment to both cultures. These ties may lead to a tension between loyalty to cultural identity and adaptation to the political environment of the place where they live. Moreover, these strong ties to Türkiye can lead to a sense of cultural pride that resists Americanization. A sense of cultural pride also strengthens solidarity in diaspora communities. Young people's diasporic identity makes them interested in political developments not only at the local level but also at the transnational level. Social media in particular is a powerful factor in maintaining these ties. As an intermediary institution, social media makes it possible for them to follow the political developments of the two countries. As a matter of fact, young people stated that they follow social media more than traditional media. Following social media platforms that disseminate news and developments from Türkiye strengthens their ties with Türkiye. It also reinforces their political identities in relation to Türkiye and causes them to be politically active.

In conclusion, the political identities of young Turks in the United States are shaped in many different ways. These include family background, friends, education, religion and culture, and how they use digital media. This study adds to the existing literature by providing more in-depth understanding of how political identity is formed within a diaspora context.

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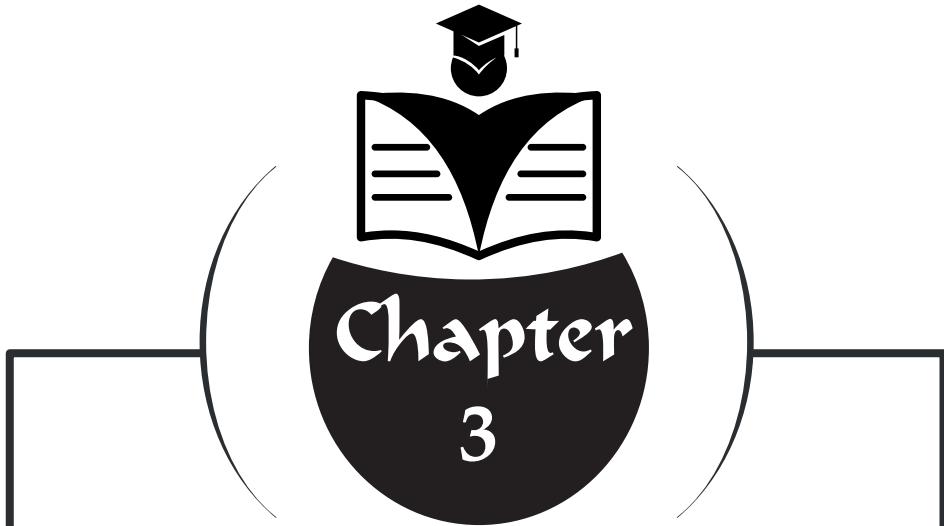
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THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF MARKETING MYOPIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW FROM LEVITT TO DIGITAL MARKETING

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1. Introduction

Since its early emergence, the marketing discipline has continuously evolved in response to changes in the economic, technological, and sociocultural environment. In particular, digitalisation, globalisation, and the growing influence of consumers in marketing processes have fundamentally reshaped how firms perceive markets and develop strategies. Today, digital technologies affect not only communication and sales activities but also market research, customer relationship management, and value creation processes. As a result, marketing has become more interactive, data-driven, and consumer-oriented (Kotler et al., 2017).

The rapid spread of internet and mobile technologies on a global scale has significantly increased consumers' access to information. Millions of consumers can now compare products, share brand experiences, and actively participate in purchasing decisions through online platforms. This development has largely reduced the information advantage traditionally held by firms and has transformed consumers into more informed, demanding, and selective market actors (Labrecque et al., 2013). At the same time, the integration of big data, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic decision-making into marketing activities has enabled firms to analyse consumer behaviour in greater detail. However, it has also shifted strategic decision-making toward a predominantly data-focused logic (Wedel & Kannan, 2016).

Technological progress does not always translate into sustainable competitive advantage for firms. On the contrary, excessive reliance on digital tools and short-term performance indicators may prevent firms from fully understanding changing customer needs. Companies that focus only on existing products, technologies, or customer segments risk overlooking emerging market opportunities. This narrow perspective can lead to strategic blindness, limited innovation capacity, and long-term market decline (Day & Moorman, 2010).

The inability of firms to adequately perceive evolving customer expectations and market dynamics has long been discussed in the marketing literature through the concept of marketing myopia. Introduced by Levitt (1960), marketing myopia highlights the strategic mistake of defining businesses based on products rather than customer needs. According to Levitt, business failure is not caused by market saturation but by managerial short-sightedness, which ultimately weakens long-term competitiveness.

In the digital era, marketing myopia has expanded beyond product orientation and has taken new forms such as data myopia, technology myopia, and algorithmic myopia. Despite access to large volumes of data, firms often struggle to develop deep customer insights and may lose strategic vision due to excessive focus on metrics and analytics (Kannan & Li, 2017).

From this perspective, marketing myopia is no longer a historical issue but a contemporary and multidimensional strategic risk.

This study aims to examine the historical development of marketing myopia by building on Levitt's original framework and to explore how the concept has gained new meanings within the context of digital marketing. The study compares traditional and contemporary forms of marketing myopia and discusses the effects of digitalisation, big data, and algorithmic decision-making on marketing strategies. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the marketing myopia literature and to offer a conceptual framework for developing a more sustainable and customer-oriented marketing approach in the digital age.

2. The Classical Marketing Myopia Approach

The concept of marketing myopia was first introduced by Theodore Levitt in 1960 and has remained highly relevant in marketing and business strategy despite the passage of time. Levitt argued that firms tend to define their industries and markets too narrowly, which significantly limits their ability to grow and adapt in the long run. This narrow perspective prevents firms from adequately responding to changing market conditions, technological developments, and evolving consumer expectations. Over time, marketing myopia has moved beyond a purely conceptual critique and has become a central reference point in empirical research and theoretical debates that seek to explain structural and strategic problems faced by firms.

At its core, marketing myopia reflects a short-term and firm-centered managerial mindset. Managers operating under this perspective prioritize existing products, technologies, or internal capabilities rather than customer needs and market dynamics. This tendency becomes particularly risky during periods of disruptive innovation. Mizik and Jacobson (2007) note that myopic managerial thinking shares key characteristics with classical marketing myopia and leads managers to underestimate long-term market performance and shifts in consumer preferences. Similarly, Lindsay and Hopkins (2010) argue that many firms fail to respond to disruptive innovations because managers assess their competitive environment from a limited viewpoint. Such lack of awareness may result in missed strategic opportunities, slower growth, and significant financial losses. Burgelman and Grove (2007) further emphasize that this restricted perspective narrows firms' strategic options and weakens the sustainability of competitive advantage.

The historical roots of marketing myopia are closely linked to Levitt's critique of the railroad industry. Levitt argued that railroad companies defined themselves as part of the railroad business rather than the broader transportation sector, which caused them to overlook alternative modes of transport. This example illustrates how narrow industry definitions can lead

to structural decline and strategic stagnation (Burgelman & Grove, 2007). Although Levitt's arguments were based on historical cases, similar patterns can still be observed across different industries today. Stock (2002) suggests that the logic of marketing myopia remains relevant not only in marketing but also in fields such as logistics, highlighting the continuing need for firms to redefine competitive boundaries.

The contemporary business environment is characterized by rapid technological change, digital transformation, and constantly evolving consumer expectations. Within this context, marketing myopia has become an even more critical issue for firms. Lusch and Watts (2018) argue that increasing global competition has pushed marketing practices toward more fragmented and inward-looking approaches, which heightens the risk of ignoring broader market dynamics. Firms that fail to move beyond product-centered strategies may experience a decline in competitive strength. In contrast, Bueno et al. (2016) emphasize that strong market orientation plays a key role in preventing marketing myopia. A consumer-focused approach enables firms to systematically analyze customer feedback and respond more effectively to changing demands.

Another important dimension in discussions of marketing myopia concerns ethics and social responsibility. When firms ignore social and environmental expectations, significant gaps may emerge between organizations and their stakeholders. Wagner-Tsukamoto (2019) argues that integrating corporate social responsibility into marketing strategies can reduce the negative effects associated with marketing myopia. By focusing not only on economic goals but also on ethical values and societal expectations, firms can develop more sustainable and comprehensive strategic approaches. Such an orientation is particularly important for building long-term trust and legitimacy in modern markets.

Recent studies indicate that traditional marketing approaches need to be reconsidered. Kunz (2024) points out that although customer-centered approaches are widely supported in innovation management theory, many firms fail to prioritize the consumer perspective in practice, which limits their innovation capacity. For this reason, contemporary firms need to adopt a multidimensional perspective that simultaneously considers market dynamics, consumer needs, and ethical responsibilities. Preventing marketing myopia requires firms to reassess how they define themselves, increase consumer participation, integrate ethical and social responsibility principles into strategic decision-making, and support innovation beyond research and development activities at the organizational level.

The marketing myopia framework continues to offer a strong and relevant analytical lens for evaluating firms' strategic orientations. In today's competitive

environment, it is more critical than ever for firms to move beyond narrow product or industry definitions and adopt a broader perspective on markets and value creation. In the twenty-first century, marked by rapid technological change and shifting consumer behavior, understanding marketing myopia and avoiding its pitfalls has become a fundamental condition for achieving sustainable growth and long-term competitive advantage.

2.1. Critiques of Marketing Myopia

The concept of marketing myopia was first introduced by Theodore Levitt in 1960 to describe a narrow managerial mindset in which firms focus excessively on their existing products and services while neglecting customer needs and broader market developments. According to Levitt, this limited perspective exposes firms to significant strategic risks because it assumes that consumer preferences remain stable over time. In reality, rapid changes in technology, competition, and social conditions continuously reshape markets. Firms that fail to recognize these dynamics often lose their ability to compete and weaken their long-term value creation capacity. From this perspective, marketing myopia represents a structural problem that can damage firm-customer relationships and undermine sustainable performance.

An important dimension of Levitt's critique concerns the rigid and unreflective application of customer orientation. Levitt argued that an exclusive focus on current customer demands may prevent firms from recognizing fundamental industry shifts and technological disruptions. When managerial attention is restricted to existing expectations, innovation tends to be limited to incremental improvements rather than the exploration of new solutions. Supporting this view, Lichtenhaler (2016) suggests that an excessively reactive market orientation may negatively affect knowledge exploration. Firms that concentrate too strongly on expressed customer needs may overlook innovations that are not yet articulated but hold transformative potential.

Similar findings are reported by Lin et al. (2020), who show that firms with a high level of reactive market orientation may ignore opportunities created by emerging technologies when customer feedback dominates strategic decision making. Empirical evidence indicates that this tendency slows technological progress and reduces overall innovation capability. While such firms may achieve short-term customer satisfaction, they often face declining competitiveness and increasing strategic vulnerability in the long run.

Another criticism associated with marketing myopia relates to firms becoming insensitive to technological capabilities and innovation processes. Recent literature emphasizes that market orientation should not be limited to customer focus alone but should be integrated with technological

awareness and innovation strategies. Bueno et al. (2016) argue that market orientation is closely linked to knowledge management and innovation and that sustainable competitive advantage requires the strategic consideration of new technologies. In highly digitalized markets, firms that fail to adopt this broader perspective risk rapid marginalization.

The innovation deficit caused by marketing myopia is also highlighted in more recent studies. Yıldız and Alan (2025) note that organizations that prioritize customer satisfaction excessively may overlook the strategic benefits offered by new technologies. Contemporary approaches such as Industry 5.0, which combine technological advancement with human-centered values, require firms to redefine their strategic orientations. In this context, marketing should move beyond a purely reactive stance and incorporate a proactive and technology-informed perspective.

The need to balance customer orientation and innovation is also emphasized by Odello (2024). While acknowledging the positive contribution of customer feedback to firm performance, Odello argues that this approach may also prevent firms from identifying breakthrough innovations. In rapidly changing competitive environments, excessive reliance on existing consumer preferences can limit firms' engagement with radical innovations and emerging trends.

Recent discussions on marketing myopia have expanded through the concept of the new marketing myopia. Delapedra and Silva (2021) argue that firms risk ignoring not only technological requirements but also the expectations of other stakeholders. This perspective suggests that marketing myopia is not solely the result of customer overemphasis but also of failing to consider the interdependencies between market dynamics, stakeholder relationships, and innovation needs. A one-dimensional understanding of customer orientation may therefore prevent firms from accurately positioning themselves within complex market structures.

Overall, critiques of marketing myopia highlight the importance of establishing a dynamic balance between meeting customer needs and embracing technological innovation. While Levitt's framework remains a foundational reference, contemporary perspectives emphasize the need for continuous strategic alignment. Firms that integrate customer orientation, innovation, and technological adaptation within a holistic approach are more likely to achieve resilient and sustainable performance in today's competitive environment.

3. The New Marketing Myopia Approach

In contemporary marketing scholarship, growing recognition of the interaction between stakeholder interests, ethical principles, and

sustainability has led to a rethinking of traditional marketing paradigms. This shift is frequently discussed within the framework of marketing myopia and highlights the limitations of approaches that rely narrowly on profit-oriented performance indicators. Marketing is increasingly understood as a value creation process that requires alignment between business practices and stakeholder expectations. This perspective extends beyond economic outcomes and places greater emphasis on social value and environmental sustainability.

Stakeholder-oriented marketing emphasizes that firms should consider not only consumers but also employees, suppliers, investors, and society at large when developing marketing strategies. Lacznik and Shultz (2020) argue for a socially responsible marketing doctrine grounded in social contract theory and suggest that corporate citizenship and environmental sustainability are central components of marketing ethics. From this viewpoint, stakeholders play a key role in defining ethical boundaries, and long-term business success depends on strategies that are consistent with stakeholder values. Similarly, Tan and Salo (2021) examine ethical marketing practices within the context of stakeholder capitalism and emphasize that responsiveness to societal expectations has become unavoidable for firms.

The concept of new marketing myopia has emerged to describe problems arising from traditional marketing approaches that prioritize short-term financial gains while neglecting the long-term effects on stakeholders and the environment. Carroll (2016) notes that renewed interest in corporate social responsibility is closely linked to changing consumer expectations and higher ethical standards. In this sense, marketing myopia can weaken firms' ability to adapt to rapidly changing market conditions and reduce strategic flexibility. Singh and Kumar (2025) draw attention to ethical risks associated with emerging and controversial techniques such as neuromarketing and argue that placing stakeholder well-being above profit maximization is an effective way to address new marketing myopia.

The intersection of ethics and marketing has become more visible as consumers increasingly consider ethical issues in their purchasing decisions. Breidbach and Maglio (2020) examine ethical dilemmas in data-driven marketing environments and emphasize the need for ethical frameworks that prioritize transparency and accountability in data use. This trend reflects growing consumer sensitivity to ethical consumption. Hassan et al. (2021) identify key factors influencing ethical consumption behavior and argue that ethical consumption should be encouraged as a social norm.

Sustainability has emerged as a core element of the stakeholder perspective in marketing and requires firms to balance economic objectives with environmental and social responsibilities. Shahzad et al. (2025), based

on evidence from different cultural contexts, highlight the role of ethical practices in promoting sustainable consumption. They argue that firms operating in global markets should develop flexible strategies that take into account the values and expectations of diverse societies. This view aligns with the work of Lyu and Zhang (2024) on corporate governance, which emphasizes that effective governance structures should treat corporate ethics and sustainability as complementary goals that protect stakeholder interests.

Looking ahead, it is essential for marketing practitioners to translate these theoretical insights into practical strategies. The adoption of strict ethical standards, as proposed by Singh and Kumar (2025), offers a guiding framework for the transition toward more responsible marketing practices. In addition, understanding and addressing the ethical consumption gap highlighted by Casais and Faria (2021) can help firms build stronger relationships with ethically conscious consumers. In the context of luxury marketing, Batat (2021) shows that consumer perceptions of food ethics differ across segments and that recognizing these differences in marketing strategies can strengthen brand trust and loyalty.

Overall, marketing practices are increasingly shaped by commitments to stakeholder well-being, ethical principles, and sustainability. This transformation encourages marketers to move beyond traditional performance metrics and adopt integrated approaches that prioritize long-term relationships, ethical integrity, and ecological responsibility. The concept of new marketing myopia clearly demonstrates that firms seeking sustainable competitive advantage must develop forward-looking, holistic, and value-driven marketing strategies.

4. Marketing Myopia in the Digital Marketing Era

With the widespread adoption of digital technologies, firms now face new challenges and opportunities that can both intensify and reduce marketing myopia. In particular, big data and artificial intelligence based applications enable the redesign of marketing strategies and support more accurate analysis of customer insights through advanced personalization. These technologies offer firms powerful tools to better understand customers, yet their impact depends largely on how they are strategically and ethically applied.

Digital technologies have fundamentally transformed traditional marketing paradigms and have led to the emergence of large-scale data sets that allow firms to gain deeper insights into customer behavior. In this context, integrating data-driven decision-making with a genuine customer-oriented perspective is critical for avoiding marketing myopia. Sestino et al. (2020) argue that the integration of the Internet of Things and big data into business processes supports flexible organizational structures and strengthens a customer-centered view. This approach enables firms to

respond more quickly to changing consumer expectations and helps reduce the negative effects of marketing myopia. Similarly, Du et al. (2020) emphasize that analyzing diverse data types from multiple sources allows marketers to generate actionable insights and prevents marketing activities from becoming narrowly focused.

Omnichannel marketing has emerged as a key outcome of digitalization in marketing strategy. However, this approach also introduces challenges related to data integration and marketing attribution. Cui et al. (2020) note that difficulties in managing omnichannel strategies can create misalignment between customer expectations and firm actions. When customer journeys are not understood in a holistic manner, such misalignment may deepen marketing myopia. For this reason, digital marketing strategies should be managed through an integrated perspective that captures all customer touchpoints.

Big data and artificial intelligence form the foundation of personalization strategies developed to address marketing myopia. Artificial intelligence systems analyze customer data to identify individual preferences, behaviors, and interests, which enables firms to tailor products, services, and communication messages more effectively. Desta and Amantie (2024) show that artificial intelligence enhances storytelling and customer engagement in marketing, leading to higher levels of customer loyalty and retention. Big data driven personalization aligns marketing strategies more closely with customer interests, enriches consumer experiences, and strengthens brand loyalty (Mahi et al., 2024).

Machine learning plays a particularly important role in this process by enabling firms to anticipate customer needs and expectations based on historical data. Miklošík et al. (2019) report that machine learning tools optimize decision-making processes and improve the effectiveness of marketing strategies. This capability allows firms to remain sensitive to changes in consumer behavior and reduces the risk of falling into marketing myopia. Given the constantly evolving nature of the digital environment, marketing approaches based on data-driven and learning systems are becoming increasingly important.

Despite these advantages, the use of big data and artificial intelligence also raises significant ethical concerns. Excessive reliance on these technologies and potential biases embedded in artificial intelligence algorithms pose risks that may undermine consumer trust. Ashok et al. (2022) warn that the uncontrolled use of artificial intelligence systems can lead to ethical problems and suggest that this situation may represent a new form of marketing myopia. For this reason, transparency, accountability, and ethical principles are essential in digital marketing practices.

Big data generated through digital interactions has become more important than ever for developing customer insights. Analyzing detailed data on consumer behavior allows marketing strategies to be shaped in a more informed and effective manner. Gupta et al. (2020) propose a framework for integrating digital analytics into marketing practices and argue that this process plays a critical role in realigning brand messages with customer needs. Such alignment supports the development of long-term relationships with consumers and reduces the risk of marketing myopia.

In the digital marketing era, firms possess both significant opportunities and important risks in their efforts to overcome marketing myopia. Effective use of big data and artificial intelligence enables the development of personalized marketing strategies that better reflect customer expectations. At the same time, marketers must remain attentive to ethical considerations and continuously deepen their analysis of customer insights. When this holistic approach is adopted, firms can navigate the complexity of the digital environment, avoid marketing myopia, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

4.1. Digital Blindness and Algorithmic Myopia

As digital platforms continue to expand and data-driven decision-making becomes central to business activities, concerns related to digital blindness and algorithmic myopia have gained increasing attention in the literature. These concepts refer to the risk that excessive reliance on quantitative indicators may weaken strategic judgment and prioritize short-term gains over long-term value creation.

The growing role of algorithms as gatekeepers in media and information distribution has significant implications for strategic decision-making. Algorithms tend to prioritize engagement-based metrics, which reshapes traditional notions of news value and promotes content designed for visibility and shareability. This shift has been shown to limit the depth of investigative journalism (Hastuti, 2025). Research indicates that algorithmic systems restructure gatekeeping functions by placing engagement metrics at the center of content evaluation, which transforms how value is defined. When platforms are optimized according to these metrics, firms may focus narrowly on numerical performance indicators while overlooking qualitative insights. This narrowing of perception is described as digital blindness (Hastuti, 2025; Fauziyyah, 2025). In addition, strategies that optimize for virality increase the risks of polarization and misinformation, creating serious threats to brand reputation and marketing effectiveness (Hastuti, 2025).

The growing pressure on firms to deliver immediate results has further intensified attention to short-term performance indicators. Hamoud et al. (2021) show that education platforms promoting data-driven decision-

making may neglect contextual factors because decisions are often based solely on available quantitative data. This tendency reflects a broader pattern in digital economies where rapid outputs from algorithm-supported marketing strategies receive priority, while deeper insights into consumer behavior and long-term brand positioning receive less attention. The urgency associated with short-term outcomes also strengthens cognitive biases such as present bias, which encourages decision-makers to favor immediate returns over sustainable growth strategies (Fauziyyah, 2025). This environment reinforces algorithmic myopia, where strategies that generate quick feedback are prioritized at the expense of long-term competitive advantage.

Algorithmic influence also extends to organizational structure and culture. Li (2025) notes that firms undergoing digital transformation often develop cultures that place operational efficiency above strategic coherence. Companies adopting platform-based business models frequently measure success through metric-focused evaluation systems, which may legitimize superficial approaches that overlook creativity and innovation. To address these risks, scholars suggest forming cross-functional teams and integrating diverse data sources. A broader understanding of value creation that includes qualitative assessments alongside quantitative indicators can help reduce dependence on algorithms (Jones et al., 2025). However, this approach requires strong organizational commitment to systematically incorporating qualitative insights into decision-making processes.

Another important issue related to algorithmic dependence is the phenomenon known as the information cocoon. Personalized content delivered through digital platforms, particularly among younger generations, can limit exposure to diverse information and weaken critical thinking abilities (Ni, 2025). As students and consumers increasingly encounter content filtered by algorithms, they remain within a restricted information environment. This limitation reduces access to alternative viewpoints and reinforces existing biases. As a result, digital blindness deepens and decision-makers may overlook contradictory evidence without awareness.

In response to the complex challenges created by algorithmic pressure, firms need to develop deliberate strategies to reduce associated risks. Promoting algorithmic literacy among stakeholders is a critical step in this process. Awareness of potential biases embedded in algorithmic decision-making enables users to question and critically evaluate system outputs (Fauziyyah, 2025). Increasing transparency in algorithmic processes can also reduce mistrust toward automated systems and strengthen organizational credibility. Decision-making mechanisms that combine qualitative judgment with quantitative analysis allow firms to develop more flexible, adaptive, and sustainable strategies.

Overall, excessive dependence on data and quantitative indicators within digital platforms poses serious risks to strategic intuition and long-term growth. In environments where algorithmic influence and short-term performance metrics dominate, recent research clearly demonstrates the need for balanced decision-making approaches. Integrating qualitative insights with quantitative data and ensuring transparency in algorithmic processes can help firms move beyond digital blindness and develop more sustainable and adaptable strategic frameworks.

5. Methodology

This study is a conceptual investigation that aims to examine the historical development of the concept of marketing myopia and its evolving dimensions within the context of digital marketing. No empirical data were collected for this research. The study is based entirely on a review of existing academic literature. The main reason for choosing a literature review approach is that marketing myopia is a concept with strong theoretical foundations that has been reinterpreted over time across different disciplines and contexts. A literature-based approach allows this concept to be evaluated in a comprehensive manner by drawing on accumulated scholarly knowledge.

A literature review is a fundamental research method that seeks to systematically examine existing academic studies on a given topic and to develop a conceptual synthesis (Tranfield et al., 2003). This method provides an appropriate framework for analyzing marketing myopia from Levitt's (1960) original formulation to its contemporary interpretations shaped by digitalization, big data, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic decision-making. Unlike empirical methods, a literature review makes it possible to trace the evolution of concepts, identify key theoretical shifts, and reveal dominant trends within the literature.

Within the scope of this study, peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and theoretical works published in the fields of marketing, digital marketing, marketing strategy, and marketing ethics were examined. The literature selection process was guided by key concepts such as marketing myopia, digital marketing, algorithmic myopia, big data, stakeholder orientation, and sustainability. Priority was given to studies that provide theoretical contributions and reflect the conceptual development of the topic.

The literature review process was structured to reveal the developmental trajectory of the concept. In the first stage, the classical definition and core assumptions of marketing myopia were examined. In the second stage, major critiques of the concept and expanded theoretical perspectives were reviewed. In the final stage, contemporary debates related to data myopia, technology myopia, and algorithmic myopia within the digital marketing environment were discussed. This structured approach enabled an analysis of marketing

myopia within a framework of historical continuity.

The literature review method adopted in this study allows for an integrated evaluation of both the classical and contemporary dimensions of marketing myopia and supports a renewed discussion of the concept's relevance in the digital age. Rather than aiming for empirical generalization, the study is positioned as a literature-based inquiry that seeks to provide theoretical depth and conceptual clarification.

6. Findings

The comprehensive literature review conducted in this study shows that marketing myopia should not be understood solely as a historical managerial mistake. Instead, it has become a multidimensional strategic problem that has been reshaped and intensified through digitalization. The reviewed studies indicate that marketing myopia has evolved from traditional product- and sales-oriented thinking into contemporary forms driven by data, technology, and algorithms (Levitt, 1960; Day, 1994; Kannan and Li, 2017).

Early literature on classical marketing myopia demonstrates that narrowly defining business activities and placing customer needs in a secondary position weakens long-term competitive advantage. Levitt's (1960) original conceptualization emphasizes that firms which define themselves by their products or existing technologies rather than by the value they create for customers develop a form of strategic blindness. This perspective is widely accepted in the literature, particularly in contexts where markets change rapidly, as such firms struggle to perceive environmental shifts and adapt accordingly. Day (1994) argues that market-oriented organizations achieve competitive advantage by continuously monitoring customer needs, while myopic managerial approaches undermine these capabilities.

Another important finding from the literature is that marketing myopia is not limited to product-centered thinking. An overly narrow interpretation of customer orientation can lead to similar outcomes. Studies show that when firms focus only on responding to current customer demands, they may overlook emerging or unarticulated needs. This tendency links marketing myopia closely to weak strategic foresight and pressure for short-term performance. Rust et al. (2004) stress that customer value creation should be addressed from a long-term perspective and warn that sales-driven and short-term financial approaches can erode customer equity over time.

Research on new marketing myopia provides strong evidence that limiting marketing efforts to customer satisfaction alone is insufficient. The reviewed literature highlights that ignoring stakeholder expectations, ethical responsibilities, and sustainability concerns represents a contemporary form of marketing myopia (Kotler, 2003; Kotler et al., 2017). Excessive focus on

short-term financial indicators often pushes social and environmental impacts into the background, creating serious risks for brand trust and organizational legitimacy in the long run. From this perspective, marketing myopia emerges not only as a strategic problem but also as a normative and ethical issue.

Findings related to digital marketing clearly indicate that marketing myopia has taken on new forms. While the integration of big data, artificial intelligence, and digital analytics enables firms to analyze customer behavior in greater detail, excessive reliance on these technologies can generate new types of myopia (Wedel and Kannan, 2016). The literature shows that decision-making based solely on measurable metrics may neglect the emotional, symbolic, and contextual dimensions of customer experience. Kannan and Li (2017) argue that evaluating digital marketing strategies only through data outputs confines marketing decisions to a narrow optimization logic.

Within this context, algorithmic myopia has become increasingly visible in digital marketing environments. The reviewed studies indicate that algorithms designed to prioritize short-term performance indicators such as clicks, engagement, and conversion rates may weaken strategic judgment and long-term brand positioning. Algorithm-driven decision-making shapes marketing activities around immediate outcomes while pushing qualitative elements such as relationship continuity and brand meaning into the background. This tendency aligns with what the literature describes as digital blindness, which refers to perceptual narrowing caused by excessive dependence on quantitative data (Wedel and Kannan, 2016).

The literature also shows that neglecting ethical considerations in digital marketing practices represents another contemporary expression of marketing myopia. Data-driven personalization strategies that are not supported by transparency, accountability, and consumer privacy principles may improve short-term performance but can undermine consumer trust over time (Kotler et al., 2017). These findings suggest that marketing myopia in the digital age has become a multilayered issue that includes strategic, ethical, and governance-related dimensions.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that marketing myopia has become more complex, multidimensional, and dynamic with the rise of digitalization. Alongside traditional product- and sales-oriented myopia, new forms shaped by data, technology, and algorithms threaten firms' long-term value creation capacity. The literature strongly emphasizes that reducing these risks requires an integrated strategic framework that combines customer orientation, stakeholder perspectives, ethical responsibility, and sustainability principles (Day, 1994; Rust et al., 2004; Kotler et al., 2017).

7. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to re-examine marketing myopia, one of the foundational concepts in marketing literature, by building on Levitt's (1960) classical framework and reassessing the concept within the context of digital marketing. Based on a systematic review of the literature, the analysis demonstrates that marketing myopia should not be regarded as an outdated managerial error. Rather, it has evolved into a more complex and multidimensional strategic challenge shaped by digitalization, big data, and algorithm-driven decision-making processes.

The findings largely align with Levitt's (1960) original argument, confirming that organizations which define themselves through products, technologies, or short-term performance indicators instead of customer needs tend to weaken their long-term competitive advantage. In parallel with Day's (1994) work on market-oriented organizations, the literature indicates that marketing myopia constrains organizational learning and limits firms' ability to adapt to environmental change. This evidence suggests that marketing myopia is not merely a marketing-related issue but a broader strategic management problem.

Beyond the classical literature, this study draws attention to emerging risk areas within digital marketing contexts. Consistent with the framework proposed by Kannan and Li (2017), the findings show that big data and analytical tools have strong potential to support marketing decisions. However, excessive dependence on these tools introduces new forms of myopia, commonly referred to as data myopia and algorithmic myopia. As emphasized by Wedel and Kannan (2016), decision-making processes that rely exclusively on measurable metrics may overlook the emotional, experiential, and contextual dimensions of customer experience.

The results also correspond with the holistic and value-based marketing perspective advanced by Kotler (2003) and Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2017). The growing emphasis on stakeholder orientation and sustainable marketing in the literature indicates that marketing myopia cannot be explained solely through a lack of customer focus. Neglecting ethical, social, and environmental responsibilities represents another contemporary form of myopia. In this sense, the study supports recent literature that frames marketing myopia in the digital age as a normative and ethical issue as well as a strategic one.

The original contribution of this study lies in its reinterpretation of marketing myopia as a dynamic concept rather than a purely historical one. By bridging classical and contemporary perspectives, the study proposes a broader framework that extends beyond product orientation to include data myopia, technology myopia, and algorithmic myopia. This approach adds

conceptual depth to the marketing myopia literature by situating the concept within the broader process of digital transformation and demonstrating its continued relevance.

In addition, the study emphasizes that marketing myopia in digital environments is a multilayered phenomenon that involves not only strategic considerations but also ethical and governance-related dimensions. By synthesizing existing debates from a holistic perspective, the study reframes marketing myopia as a challenge linked to sustainable value creation rather than as a narrow managerial failure.

This research is conceptual in nature and is based solely on a review of existing literature. Consequently, the findings are not supported by empirical data, which limits their generalizability. Moreover, the study addresses marketing myopia at a general theoretical level and does not provide in-depth analysis within a specific industry, country, or digital platform. The predominance of conceptual and theoretical sources in the reviewed literature represents another limitation of the study.

Based on the findings, several directions for future research can be proposed. Future studies may empirically examine marketing myopia, data myopia, and algorithmic myopia using quantitative and qualitative methods. Comparative research could explore how marketing myopia manifests across different digital platforms, such as e-commerce, social media, or service industries. New models may be developed to assess marketing performance using long-term indicators such as customer value and brand equity rather than short-term metrics alone. Further research could also focus on conceptual frameworks that place algorithmic transparency, data ethics, and consumer privacy at the center of digital marketing practices. From a managerial perspective, firms are encouraged to design digital marketing strategies that integrate qualitative customer insights and stakeholder expectations alongside algorithmic outputs. In addition, training programs aimed at improving algorithmic literacy and critical data usage among marketing managers should be developed.

Overall, this study demonstrates that marketing myopia has not disappeared in the digital age. Instead, it has taken on new and more complex forms. The literature clearly indicates that achieving sustainable competitive advantage requires firms to integrate customer orientation, ethical responsibility, stakeholder perspectives, and long-term value creation within a unified strategic framework. In this respect, the study contributes conceptually to the digital marketing literature and repositions ongoing debates on marketing myopia through a contemporary lens.

Finally, this study offers meaningful contributions at both theoretical and practical levels. From a theoretical standpoint, it revisits Levitt's (1960)

classical concept of marketing myopia within the digital marketing context and argues that the concept should be expanded beyond product and sales orientation to include data, technology, and algorithmic dimensions. By linking marketing myopia to digitalization, big data, and algorithmic decision-making, the study synthesizes fragmented discussions in the literature and strengthens the concept's contemporary relevance. From a practical perspective, the study highlights the strategic and ethical risks associated with decision-making processes that rely solely on short-term performance metrics in digital marketing. It emphasizes that marketing managers should not treat algorithmic outputs as absolute truths but should evaluate them in conjunction with qualitative customer insights, stakeholder expectations, and long-term value creation goals. This perspective supports the development of more sustainable, ethical, and strategically coherent marketing practices.

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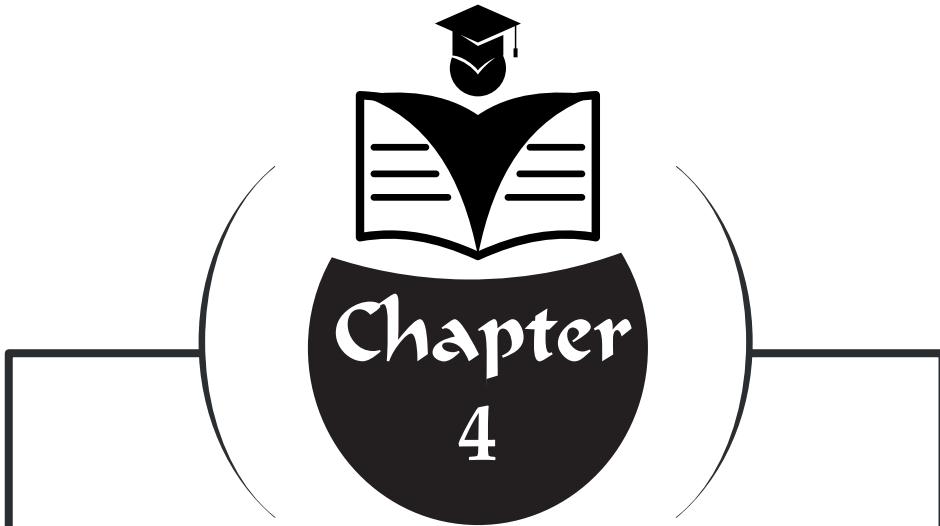
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ANTLER-CARVED ORNAMENTS OF THE PAZYRYK ELITE: KURGAN 36 OF THE BEREL BURIAL COMPLEX¹

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1 This paper is based on the Master's thesis entitled "*Kurgan 36 at Berel*", completed at the Department of Art History, Pamukkale University, under the supervision of Associate Professor Gökçen Kurtuluş Öztaşkin.

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Introduction

Among the Early Iron Age cultures of the Altai region, the Pazyryk cultural horizon demonstrates an especially advanced mastery of antler working, evident in both functional and ritual contexts. The finds from Pazyryk period Kurgan 36 at Berel burial ground, which located in Eastern Kazakhstan, provide important evidence for this tradition, revealing antler objects that combine technical precision with rich zoomorphic and symbolic imagery. These artefacts not only reflect high levels of artisanal skill but also offer insight into the ideological world, social structure, and artistic conventions of the Pazyryk elite.

Bone artefacts in early Southwestern Altai. Bone carving art, encompassing objects produced from bone, antler, and horn, represents one of the most sophisticated expressions of craftsmanship among prehistoric and early nomadic societies. Within this broader tradition, antler art occupies a distinctive place due to the material's durability, elasticity, and strong symbolic associations with animals, power, and regeneration. Archaeological excavations at the Ust-Narym settlement on the Irtysh River revealed a slotted (composite) bone dagger from the Neolithic layer that represents an exceptional find in the context of early weaponry in Kazakhstan. This object is regarded as the earliest known example of a hand-to-hand combat weapon in the region and has been securely dated to the Neolithic period by multiple researchers (Chernikov, 1959, p. 99; Korobkova, 1963; 1969; Grebenyukov, 2015, p. 60). The dagger's design, raw material selection, and manufacturing techniques demonstrate a high level of technological sophistication for this period. It was carved from the posterior left metatarsal bone of a wild auroch using several tools, forming a durable bone frame. Thin, sharp flint inserts were set into longitudinal grooves along the side faces and fixed with a specialized adhesive, creating an effective piercing-cutting edge. The presence of an additional socket for a short handle indicates that the dagger was intended for practical use in close combat rather than for purely symbolic purposes (Samashev, 2023, p. 739-740).

In addition to the dagger, the Ust-Narym settlement yielded other bone implements, including awls and perforators, pointing to a well-developed bone industry within the Neolithic community. Taken together, these finds suggest that bone-working at Ust-Narym was not limited to domestic or craft activities but also extended into the sphere of weapon production, reflecting the multifunctional role of osseous materials in the technological and social practices of early populations in the Irtysh River region (Chernikov, 1959, figure 39).

At the Shiderty-3 settlement, a burial uncovered in the central area yielded important evidence for bone carving practices. The most significant find was a

necklace placed beneath the lower jaw of the deceased, composed of carefully worked osseous elements, including a river beaver incisor and incisors and canines of saiga antelope from no fewer than five individuals (Merts, 2019, p. 71). The selection, modification, and arrangement of these animal teeth indicate deliberate craftsmanship and the use of bone and dental materials for personal adornment. As the burial was located at the base of the Chalcolithic layer, the assemblage may be attributed to either the Late Neolithic or the Chalcolithic period, providing valuable insight into early traditions of bone carving and ornament production in the region (V. Merts, 2019).

By the Chalcolithic period, bone-working had become fully embedded in nearly all spheres of production. Researchers note the absence of specialized economic activities that did not involve bone tools or implements. The material culture of this period allows for the classification of bone artifacts into functional groups associated with subsistence and craft activities, including hunting, fishing, veterinary practices, woodworking, ceramic and leather production, as well as basketry and textile manufacture (Zaibert, 2009, p. 194, Sirazheva, 2025).

The Menovnoe XI burial ground, dated to the Chalcolithic period, provides one of the most informative assemblages of bone artifacts from this time. A female burial yielded an exceptionally rich set of osseous ornaments. A total of 240 leaf-shaped pendants were recovered from the upper part of the body; these were carved from thin bone plaques, measuring 0.8–1.8 cm in length, with flattened upper ends and perforations for sewing (Tkacheva & Tkachev, 2008).

At Early Bronze Age sites in Eastern Kazakhstan region, a total of 22 bone artifacts have been recorded. Among the most diagnostic finds are bone arrowheads recovered from both settlements and burial contexts, including Grigorievka, Izmailovka (kurgan 7), Shauke 3, Ak-Chiy I (kurgan 3), and Grigorievka 2. In addition to projectile points, the assemblages include bone knives, spatula-like implements, bone plaques and various ornaments. Personal adornments are represented by shell objects resembling *Carbicula*, as well as pendants, while certain tool types are traditionally associated with hide-processing activities. Astragali of small ruminants are also well attested, originating from sites such as Michurino I, Grigorievka 2, Shiderty 2 and 10, Novaya Shulba X, Izmailovka (kurgan 7), Zhilandy 1, Shauke 1, and Lesnoe 3, further illustrating the diversity and functional range of osseous materials in Early Bronze Age contexts (I. Merts, 2017).

Most Middle and Late Bronze Age settlements in Eastern Kazakhstan—including Trushnikovo, Malo-Krasnoyarsk, Ust-Narym, and others—as well as contemporaneous burial grounds, have yielded a wide range of bone and

antler artifacts. These assemblages comprise tools, personal ornaments, and osseous armaments, attesting to the sustained importance of osseous materials within Bronze Age technological and symbolic systems (Maksimova, 1959; Chernikov, 1960; Tkacheva, 1997; Yermolayeva, 2012; L. Kutlu 2024a, L. Kutlu, 2024b). The abundance and diversity of such finds indicate a mature bone-carving tradition that remained integral alongside lithic and metal industries.

Early Iron Age and Pazyryk Culture in Eastern Kazakhstan. In contrast to the largely sedentary or semi-sedentary Bronze Age communities, the Early Saka period marks a clear chronological and cultural shift associated with the rise of nomadic lifeways in the Eurasian steppes. The advent of mounted pastoralism and the appearance of mobile horse-riding groups transformed both material culture and artistic expression, with bone and antler carving adapting to new functional demands and aesthetic principles characteristic of Early Iron Age steppe societies.

Numerous bone implements were also recovered during the excavations of the Akbauyr settlement. These finds include tuyeres and spatulas associated with metallurgical production, as well as a range of drilling, leatherworking, pottery making and cutting tools, attesting to the functional diversity of bone artifacts within the site's craft activities (Samashev, 2022, Samashev et al., 2024; Kutlu & Kutlu, 2024; Samashev et. al., 2025).

In the Kazakh Altai region, the Early Iron Age is generally examined within the framework of the Mayemer and Pazyryk cultures. The earlier phase, represented by the Mayemer Culture, is documented at kurgan cemeteries such as Mayemer, Solnechnyi Belok, Kurtu, Izmailovka, Zevakino, Tarasu, Kondratyevka, Kuruk 2, and others. The subsequent Pazyryk Culture is represented by some of the most renowned kurgan complexes of the Altai, including the elite Pazyryk, Bashadar, and Tuyekta burial grounds, as well as the Ukok Plateau, all located within the Russian Federation, in addition to the Berel Valley kurgans in Eastern Kazakhstan (Gryaznov, 1947; Rudenko, 1953, 1960; Sorokin, 1966; Shulga, 2005; Tishkin, 2007; Samashev, 2011; Samashev et al., 2017; Kutlu & Kutlu, 2022; L. Kutlu, 2023).

Researchers generally systematize bone and antler artifacts of the Early Iron Age into three major categories: (1) items associated with warfare and hunting, including elements of mounted equipment; (2) objects of everyday domestic use; and (3) items related to the spiritual life of the population. The first category is the most numerous and includes bow overlays, arrowheads, and fittings for the scabbards of daggers and akinakai, as well as a wide range of horse gear such as complete bridle sets, horn three-holed psalia, saddle components (including saddle bows), bone saddle ornaments, girth buckles, and buckle blocks. The second category is represented primarily by tool

handles, which can be subdivided into handles for knives, mirrors, awls, and various indeterminate implements (piercers). The third category encompasses artifacts interpreted as having ritual or symbolic significance; among the most important ritual objects are bone spoons, amulets made from the fangs of predatory animals, and other items associated with ceremonial practices and beliefs (Borodovsky, 2007; Sirazheva, 2025).

The eastern extension of the Pazyryk culture in Kazakhstan is represented by the Berel kurgans. The Berel burial complex is located in the Katonkaragay district of East Kazakhstan Region, near the easternmost point of Kazakhstan where the borders with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China converge, approximately 7 km southwest of the village of Berel. The cemetery covers about 174 hectares and is situated on an elevated terrace above the riverbed in a valley framed by tributaries of the Bukhtarma River and the Kempir and Kaynar mountains (Plan 1), at an altitude of 1120 m above sea level. Based on their spatial clustering, the kurgans are divided into four main groups (M. Kutlu, 2020a; Kutlu & Kutlu, 2020; Kutlu & Kutlu, 2021).

Within the extensive Berel burial complex, Kurgan 36 stands out as especially significant. Archaeologists have identified more than 100 kurgans at Berel, dating to different periods; Kurgan 36, the focus of this study, belongs to the late 4th–early 3rd century BC. Researchers attribute this kurgan to the Pazyryk culture and uncovered within it an exceptionally well-preserved horse skeleton that remained undisturbed until excavation. The horse was equipped with numerous elements of tack, saddle and decorative fittings. Craftspeople carved these ornaments from maral deer antlers, a material rarely employed for horse equipment. Taken together, the assemblage represents one of the richest known collections of Pazyryk horse gear made from deer antler (Samashev & Borodovsky, 2004)

Architectural features of Kurgan 36. Berel Kurgan 36 is located in Group I, approximately 81 m north of Kurgan 11. Studies on the construction sequence of Pazyryk-period kurgans suggest that monuments situated closer to the river (to the south) were generally built earlier than those to the North (Marsadolov, 2011). Radiocarbon and dendrochronological dates from Berel Kurgans 1 and 11 support this pattern: dendrochronology dates Kurgan 1 in the southern Group III to 363 BC, while Kurgan 11 in Group I dates to 297 BC, indicating a 66-year interval between the two largest and richest mounds of the cemetery (Samashev, 2011). Accordingly, Kurgan 36—located at the northern edge of both the cemetery and Group I—must have been constructed after 297 BC. Its proximity to Kurgan 11, interpreted as a ruler's kurgan, suggests that the individual buried in Kurgan 36 belonged to the ruling dynasty.

Z. Samashev (2011) classified the Berel kurgans into five typological groups based on architectural and assemblage characteristics. Within this

framework, Kurgan 36 is assigned to Type IV due to its elliptical superstructure and the unique construction of its outer burial chamber entirely from stone, unlike other Pazyryk-period kurgans at Berel. The mound measures 12 × 9.6 m and has an oval plan. While several kurgans (e.g., Kurgans 18, 4, and 11) contain domed stone coverings centered over the burial pit, Kurgan 36—despite its modest diameter and low profile—features a centrally placed upright stone (1.2 m high) within the burial pit. This element likely served to enhance structural stability and to create a domed visual effect.

The superstructure was built without mortar or formal masonry techniques. A crepidoma formed by vertically set slate slabs defined the perimeter, while stone layers were laid inward toward the central stele in a double, inclined arrangement, employing a zigzag (“sword”) technique comparable to that of Kurgan 11, though using significantly smaller stones. The burial pit follows the same northeast–southwest orientation as the mound and was filled with soil mixed with small stones. At a depth of 1.7 m, an outer burial chamber constructed of large rectangular stones set without mortar—unique among Berel Pazyryk kurgans—was encountered. Inside the stone covering lay a wooden burial chamber containing the coffin. A horse skeleton was found between the stone wall and the wooden chamber on the north side, a feature also observed in Kurgan 1. Considering the presence of multiple horse burials outside the wooden chamber in Kurgan 1, the stone construction in Kurgan 36 is best interpreted as an outer burial chamber rather than backfill or wall lining. The use of stones weighing up to 500 kg and the labor required to shape this chamber constitute further evidence for the high social status of the interred individual (Samashev, 2018; L. Kutlu, 2022).

Inside the stone-built outer burial chamber, the wooden burial structure consists of a rectangular, frame-like box approximately 0.75–0.81 m high, lacking both a floor and a lid. Based on the depth of the wooden chamber and associated elements, the burial pit is estimated to have been approximately 4.5–5 m deep. Within the wooden chamber, a single human individual was interred in a log-carved coffin, with the head oriented east. The kurgan was completely looted; consequently, the only securely documented feature of the burial is the eastward orientation of the body. Disarticulated human bones were found near the northeastern wall of the chamber, together with fragments of gold leaf and cylindrical beads made of white paste. As such beads are more commonly associated with female burials, the interment is tentatively interpreted as female. Traces of decayed felt adhering to the chamber walls suggest that a felt hanging or carpet once lined the wooden structure. A fallen antler-carved figural plaque was recovered from the floor of the wooden chamber, likely displaced post-depositionally (Samashev, 2018; L. Kutlu, 2022).

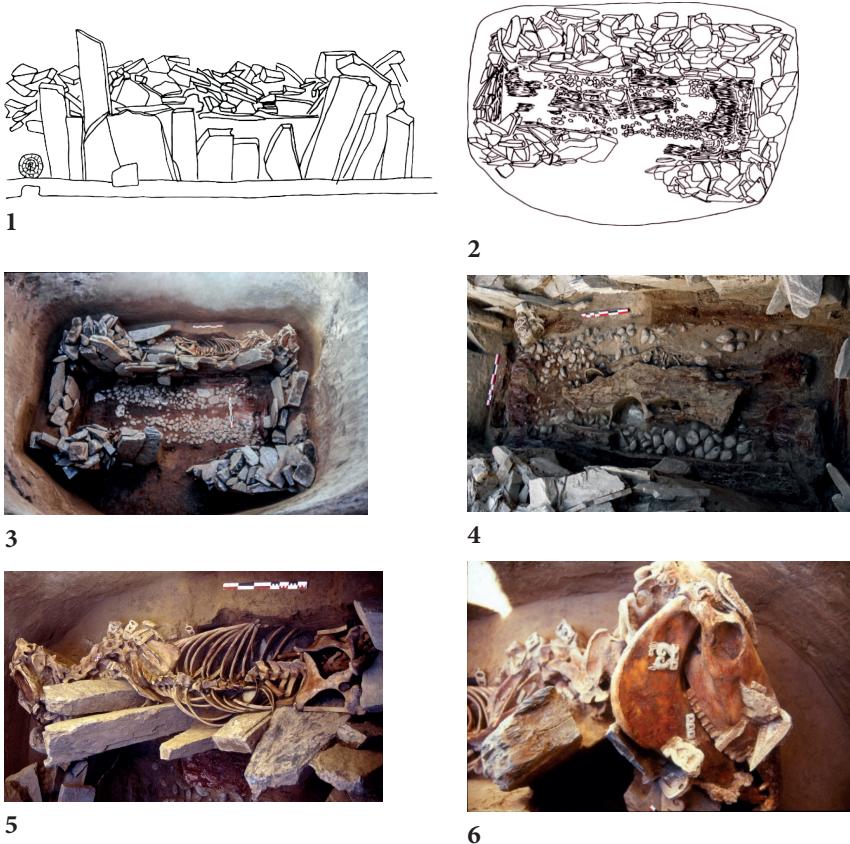


Figure 1: 1) Stone slabs erected around the wooden burial chamber; 2) Plan of the burial pit; 3) Photo of burial pit; 4) Burial chamber; 5) Horse skeleton; 6) Head of buried animal with decorative plaques (Samashev, 2018)

A horse burial was identified between the northern wall of the burial pit and the wooden chamber. The horse was placed within a stone-lined box on a specially prepared stone platform and remained undisturbed. The animal, a 7–8-year-old stallion, was laid with its legs folded beneath the body and its head oriented east, supported by a stone beneath the neck. Osteological analysis indicates a medium-built horse with an estimated withers height of approximately 1.36–1.44 m. The horse showed evidence of earlier trauma but was kept in relatively good condition. Death was caused by a blow to the left side of the forehead with a blunt, round-ended implement (Samashev, 2018; L. Kutlu, 2022).

Horse equipment ornaments. Within the framework of this study, the complete assemblage of finds, and their stylistic features were examined using established art-historical and archaeological analytical methods. The horse

harness ornaments—comprising 62 items carved from deer antler—were documented and analyzed according to their placement on the horse's body and their functional and visual relationships to one another. Accordingly, the harness and saddle decorations were classified into four principal groups, following a hierarchical order from the head to the tail of the animal 1) rein decorations; 2) breast-strap decorations; 3) saddle decorations and 4) crupper (sash) strap decorations (L. Kutlu, 2022).

However, during the excavation, remnants of coverings made of organic material, such as felt or fabric, soft saddles, mane coverings, and saddle tassels – fish-shaped pendants hanging downwards – were occasionally found on the horse skeletons. Alongside remnants of saddle rump coverings, girth buckles were also found. The vast majority of finds made from deer antlers were dyed red, and some were wrapped in gold and tin leaf (Borodovsky, 2016a; Borodovsky, 2016b; Samashev, 2018).

Among the decorative plaques adorning the *horse harness* from Kurgan 36, certain forms, motifs, and compositional schemes occur exclusively within the rein assemblage. These include a circular forehead plaque; a nose plaque tapering to a pointed end and terminating in an oval; figural plaques depicting antithetically arranged griffin-like creatures; and cheekpieces decorated with composite beasts featuring bird beaks and elk antlers. At the same time, the *rein ornaments* also incorporate forms, motifs, and compositions shared with other harness groups. Examples include horseshoe-shaped plaques and small rectangular plaques ornamented with concave quadrangular recesses flanking tassel-fringe perforations, indicating a deliberate integration of decorative vocabularies across different harness components.

The breast-strap ornaments comprise elements decorating three principal straps: the main strap encircling the horse's chest and two shorter straps obliquely connecting the chest strap to the saddle. The most prominent and distinctive object in this group is the drop-shaped pendant with a tassel-fringe perforation attached to the breast strap, functioning visually as a piece of jewelry. Its size and form clearly indicate that it was specifically designed for the chest and unsuitable for placement elsewhere on the horse's body. The forward-facing surfaces of the two lateral straps are decorated with small plaques and figural plaques. Although a single iconographic motif is repeated in the figural plaques, each example reveals subtle variations that reflect individual artistic execution rather than mechanical replication.

The saddle ornaments represent elements specific to this component of the harness. From a developmental perspective, the introduction of soft saddles with pommels constitutes a significant innovation in horse equipment. Archaeological evidence suggests that such saddles were developed in response

to the demands of nomadic mobility and long-distance travel, particularly in military contexts, and are characteristic of the Pazyryk culture rather than the “Early” Scythian periods. At the Berel Kurgan 36, saddle-related ornaments include antler-made curved elements forming the structural basis of the front and rear pommels, a girth-strap buckle comparable in form to examples from other Pazyryk kurgans but distinguished by its decorative treatment, and buckles associated with the saddle-hook straps.

Horseshoe-shaped saddle plaques identified in the Kurgan 36 have been described as unique within the Pazyryk cultural assemblage; however, this interpretation may be reconsidered (Samashev, 2018). These plaques can plausibly be understood as highly stylized and simplified representations of bird figures—specifically emphasizing the wings—paralleling avian motifs documented in other Pazyryk contexts, such as the Tuyakta kurgans (Barkova, 1987)

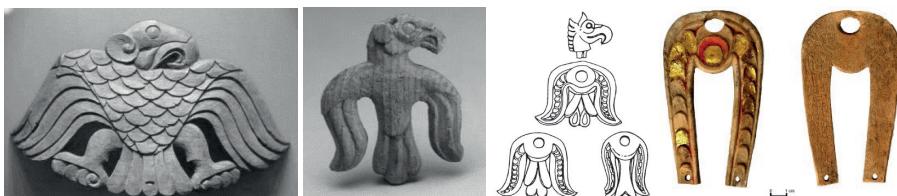


Figure 2: Bird-figured plaques found in the Bashadar and Tuyakta 1 kurgans. (Barkova, 1987, p. 7), Drawing 1. Bird-figured plaque in the Ak-Alaha I burial mound. (N. Polosmak, 1994, 50-51), Drawing 2. Horseshoe-shaped plaque (Samashev, 2008:118)

The horseshoe-shaped plaques from Kurgan 36 may be interpreted as stylized and simplified derivatives of the bird-figured plaques documented in Kurgans 2 and 1, as well as the legendary bird-shaped plaques associated with the horse harness from Kurgan 1 at the Ak-Alaha I burial site (Figure 2). In our view, the reconstruction of the horse harness from Kurgan 36 should be revised accordingly. Although the plaques are currently reconstructed with their open ends oriented upwards, the in situ documentation clearly indicates that they were suspended from the saddle with their open ends facing downwards.

The crupper ornament group includes elongated plaques with a distinctive “spoon-like” form, as well as narrow rectangular plaques depicting chain links or overlapping scale-like sequences. The surface decoration of these plaques employs the same ornamental principles observed on the breast and rein straps, particularly in the arrangement of bands encircling necklace-like motifs.

From a formal perspective, the ornaments can be classified as geometric or figural. The geometric category comprises the circular forehead disc, uniform small rectangular strap plaques, the inverted drop-shaped breast pendant, and

the elongated rectangular crupper plaques. Geometric motifs represented on the plaque surfaces include convex semicircles, concave-edged lozenges, drop-shaped reliefs, circles, triangles, plain border bands, and herringbone patterns (Figure 3).

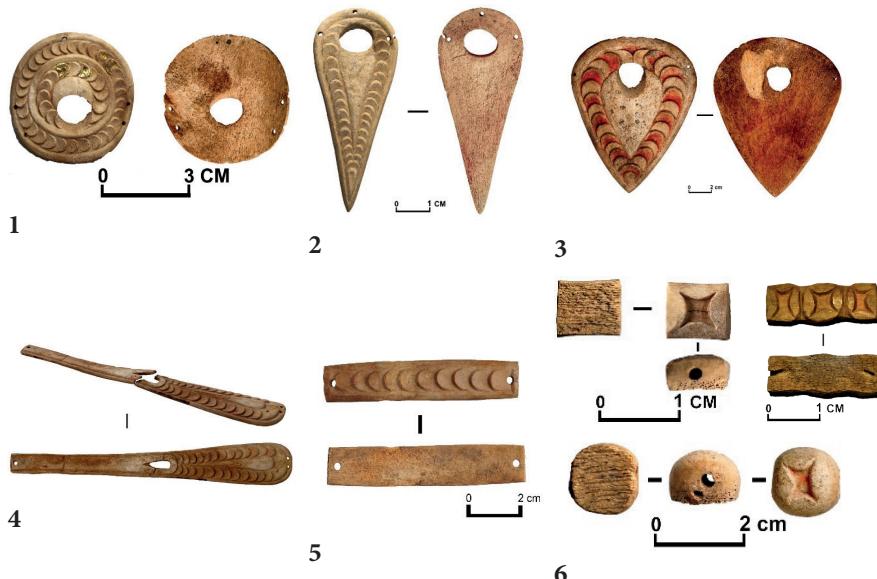


Figure 3. Plaques of geometric form and decorative ornamentation: 1) Forehead disk; 2) Noseband plaque; 3) Breast pendant, 4) Crupper plaque, 5) Rectangular crupper plaque, 6) Strap plaques (Samashev, 2018)

Notably, vegetal motifs are absent from the horse-harness ornaments of Kurgan 36. In contrast, palmette-motif plaques are present among the harness decorations from Kurgan 11. Closer examination suggests that these palmettes are not true vegetal motifs, but rather stylized compositions derived from the ears, beaks, or facial elements of animals or composite beasts, transformed through abstraction into palmette-like forms.

The figural plaques from Kurgan 36 represent variations on a remarkably consistent iconographic type, repeatedly reinterpreted rather than diversified into distinct subtypes. These ornaments may be classified into three principal categories:

1. Cheekpieces decorated at both terminals with a single composite fantastic beast;
2. A solitary plaque showing two antithetically arranged griffin-like composite beasts;
3. Plaques in the form of confronting protomes of composite fantastic beasts characterized by beaked muzzles, elk antlers, wolf-like ears, and either leonine manes or fish-scale-like surface treatment.

The hybrid creature depicted at the terminals of the cheekpieces corresponds iconographically to the figure shown on the confronting protome plaques, albeit rendered singly rather than as a paired composition (Figure 4).

The plaque bearing antithetically arranged griffin-like creatures differs from the other figural ornaments in several respects: the beings lack antlers, display a mane only along the dorsal line, have bodies filled with inverted drop-shaped motifs, and rest on a base featuring a near-triangular recessed area. Although this plaque was recovered from the region of the forehead strap—where bilateral symmetry would normally be expected—only a single example was documented, an observation of considerable interest (Figure 5).

The closest parallels, both in material and form, to the griffin-headed cheekpieces from Kurgan 36 are found among the Kizilyar-1 kurgans in the northwestern Altai. Comparable griffin-headed cheekpieces, carved in wood and closely related iconographically to the Berel examples, are known from Pazyryk Kurgan 1, the Tuyakta kurgans, Ak-Alakha I and III, and Berel Kurgan 11. In these assemblages, however, the depicted composite creatures lack elk antlers (Gryaznov, 1950; Barkova, 1987; Polosmak, 1994, 2001; Samashev, 2011).



Figure 4. A cheekpiece inserted into the bit ring

Figure 5. Antithetically arranged griffin-like creatures

By contrast, the dominant figural motif in the harness ornaments from Kurgan 36 is a beaked, elk-antlered griffin-like hybrid creature, consistently employed across multiple plaques.

Antithetically arranged figural plaques compositionally comparable to those from Kurgan 36 have also been identified in horse-harness assemblages from the Ak-Alakha I and Ust-Kaldzhin cemeteries on the Ukok Plateau. Unlike the Berel examples, however, the Ukok griffins are equipped with prominent, curved, near-triangular crests rather than elk antlers. Moreover,

while the Kurgan 36 griffins are depicted with joined beaks, the Ukok figures show joined foreheads or crests. The Ukok griffins further differ in possessing a single grooved mane along the back, whereas the Berel creatures display mane bands along both sides of the neck (Polosmak, 1994, 2001)

A horned griffin was also documented among the breast ornaments of Horse 5 in Kurgan 1 at Ak-Alakha III, although its antlers differ in orientation from those of the Kurgan 36 examples. The inward-curving forelimbs of the hooved griffin-like creatures depicted on the Berel harness ornaments constitute a hallmark of the Pazyryk animal style, closely comparable to the inward-curving-limbed deer figures found on the dagger sheath and belt buckles from the Issyk kurgan (Polosmak, 2001; M. Kutlu, 2020b)

Finally, beaked, elk-antlered composite creatures closely related to those from Kurgan 36 also appear in the tattoo designs on Pazyryk mummies, where they are frequently depicted in inverted position, further attesting to the wider symbolic and stylistic coherence of this motif within the Pazyryk cultural sphere.

The creature conventionally referred to in some literature as the “hooved griffin” appears to be a motif largely specific to the Altai Mountains and adjacent regions of Inner Mongolia, with no known close parallels in western Eurasia during the period in question. ATIF. The tattooed composite creatures on Pazyryk mummies, however, are iconographically more complex, being constructed through the combination of anatomical elements drawn from multiple animal species.

Comparison of figural plaques. In the plaques from Kurgan 36, the antlers are consistently oriented forward toward the creature’s face rather than backward. These curved antlers terminate in a horizontal, wave-like band and closely resemble simplified shovel-shaped moose antlers with pointed, crown-like tips. Shovel-shaped antlers—an anatomical feature characteristic of the moose and visually evocative of an open hand—constitute a recurrent motif in Pazyryk-period art of the Altai region. In early Scythian animal-style depictions of deer, which are predominantly rendered in profile, the forward tines typically curve inward toward the animal’s face while the rear tines curve outward along the back—a convention clearly echoed in the antler treatment of the Kurgan 36 creatures (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Figural plaques depicting composite elk-griffin (Z. Samashev archive)

The figures are executed as two-dimensional, low-relief plaques of near-rectangular outline. *Their antlers* are represented solely by the forward tines and remain contained within the plaque contours. While most antlers are carved independently, in some cases they are linked by a small spherical bridge. Deformation patterns indicate that the pointed antler tips frequently terminate along a relatively straight line, whereas antlers joined by a spherical bridge are carved at an oblique angle. Excavation records demonstrate that the figural plaques associated with the saddle group were suspended upside down from the straps. Nevertheless, perforations drilled at the junction of some antlers suggest that these plaques were designed to be suspended in multiple orientations, including from rein straps.

The ears are rendered as large, upright, and nearly triangular with slightly inward-turned pointed tips. While the outer contours of the ears are strongly curved, the inner edges adjacent to the antlers are more angular. During the Pazyryk period, the ears of hoofed animals (deer, mountain goats, argali), as well as griffins and certain predatory felines, were frequently rendered as volutes. Such volute forms are conspicuously absent in the horse-harness ornaments from Kurgan 36. Instead, the ears acquire volume through recessed triangular carving and semicircular ear flaps, resulting in a stylized yet zoologically non-specific morphology. Consequently, the precise zoological identification of the creature remains deliberately ambiguous and open to interpretation.

The eyes are depicted as convex circular pupils encircled by carved rings, with the upper eyelid accentuated by short but deep, near-triangular notches that impart an almond-like appearance. These ocular elements occupy a

substantial portion of the facial surface. In some examples the eyelid contours are more refined and flowing, while in others the pupils are outlined by a narrow incised band or, alternatively, by a deeper and wider recessed groove. In Pazyryk art, almond-shaped or rounded eyes are commonly preferred for depictions of predatory felines, griffins, and deer. By contrast, the extension of the eye corner toward the forehead—a frequent feature in profile representations—is not widespread, a pattern also observed in the figures from Kurgan 36.

The beaks constitute the most visually dominant and expressive feature of these creatures. Strongly curved, exaggerated beaks are a hallmark motif of the Pazyryk phase of the animal style, particularly in griffin representations. These large, highly curved beaks project forward and are articulated with a protruding nasal ridge and grooved, arched lines suggestive of an open mouth cavity. Although rendered in a markedly simplified manner, the beaks form the point of junction for confronting figures. In some examples the beaks are carved as complete units meeting along their outer contours; in others the beak surface of one creature merges into that of its counterpart, visually absorbing nearly half of the opposing beak. Variations in beak width are also observable. Such close-fitting outer contours, in which only the curved tips remain clearly differentiated, suggest that the artist executed the composition freehand, relying on visual memory rather than on a rigid template or pre-planned surface layout.

The necks are accentuated by overlapping, vertically descending relief bands composed of grooved, scale-like elements arranged along both sides, forming a characteristic U-shaped configuration. These bands vary in width, and differences are also evident in the number and orientation of the scale elements along the elongated necks. The scale-like forms, which evoke a mane-like appearance, are intermittently highlighted with mineral-based pigment.

The bases of the figures are rectangular in plan and are formed by carving concave-edged lozenge motifs into a slightly convex surface with rounded corners. With the exception of one example showing griffins mounted on a base with a near-triangular recessed area, all bases follow a consistent visual scheme. Comparable concave-edged lozenge motifs set within nearly circular fields are also attested in Early Scythian horse-harness ornaments, indicating a significant degree of continuity in ornamental vocabulary.

At the center of each base are large perforations bearing traces of the corners of a concave-edged lozenge, suggesting that the bases were originally conceived without perforations and were later modified. Variations are observable in the width of the recessed areas flanking these openings. The recessed surfaces retain traces of red pigment, indicating intentional chromatic

enhancement. Angled perforations opening toward the reverse side are also present on the lateral faces of the plaque bases.

These features indicate that some of the plaques were suspended in an inverted position. The large central perforations are generally interpreted as attachment points for tassels; however, their considerable size raises an alternative possibility. When suspended upside down, the confronting figures may have been conceived as subordinate elements within a heraldic composition analogous to the “Master of Animals” iconography, oriented toward a dominant central figure. This interpretation allows for the hypothesis that a third, centrally placed protome—possibly executed in high relief and made of wood—was originally mounted within the large central opening (Figure 7,8).

In the Pazyryk animal style, horse-harness ornaments frequently employ heraldic (bilaterally symmetrical) compositions in which animals appear in paired or subordinated arrangements. While such schemes recall the ancient Near Eastern “Master of Animals” motif, their conceptual meaning differs substantially. In Near Eastern art, this motif serves as a visual articulation of cosmic and political hierarchy: a central divine, royal, or heroic figure asserts dominance over wild beasts by physically restraining them, thereby symbolizing the triumph of order over chaos and legitimizing authority (Frankfort, 1939; Porada, 1948; Counts & Arnold, 2010).

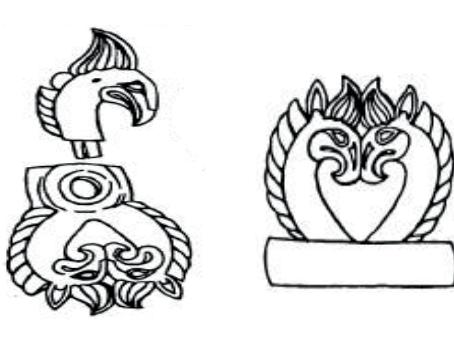


Figure 7. The figural plaque arranged in a heraldic composition and non-perforated griffin plaque indicating no third protome. (Polosmak 1994, p.50-51)

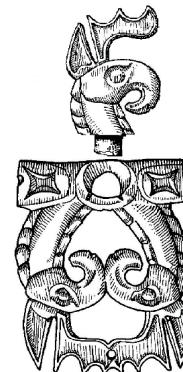


Figure 8. The restitution of the figural plaque from Kurgan 36 according to a heraldic composition.

In contrast, Pazyryk representations do not emphasize domination or hierarchical superiority, whether between predator and prey or between different species. Instead, compositions often feature paired animals of the same type or closely related hybrid forms arranged in strict symmetry

(Figure 9). This preference suggests a deliberate reinterpretation rather than a direct borrowing of the Near Eastern prototype. Balance, equivalence, and visual harmony appear to have been favored over narratives of control or subjugation, reflecting distinct cultural values and aesthetic priorities within the Pazyryk milieu.

A further characteristic of this iconographic tradition is the absence of human figures. The central role is instead assumed by predators, mythical creatures, or highly stylized animals. In this context, it is possible that an element originally attached to the perforated base of the plaque was made of perishable materials such as wood or felt and failed to survive due to the lack of permafrost in Kurgan 36. Comparative evidence from well-preserved Pazyryk harness assemblages demonstrates that figural ornaments were typically arranged according to strict principles of bilateral symmetry across the horse's body.

Seen against this background, the presence of a single plaque depicting confronting griffins on the horse's forehead strap in Kurgan 36 is particularly noteworthy. The absence of a symmetrical counterpart may indicate that a second ornament, possibly carved from wood, has not been preserved. Although the combined use of antler and wood might seem unusual, any material contrast would have been visually obscured if the ornaments were originally covered with gold leaf. Large perforations observed in the geometrically ornamented plaques on the horse's chest, forehead, and nose further support this interpretation, as they may have served to secure additional figural elements or tassel-like attachments intended to enhance visual volume and emphasis.

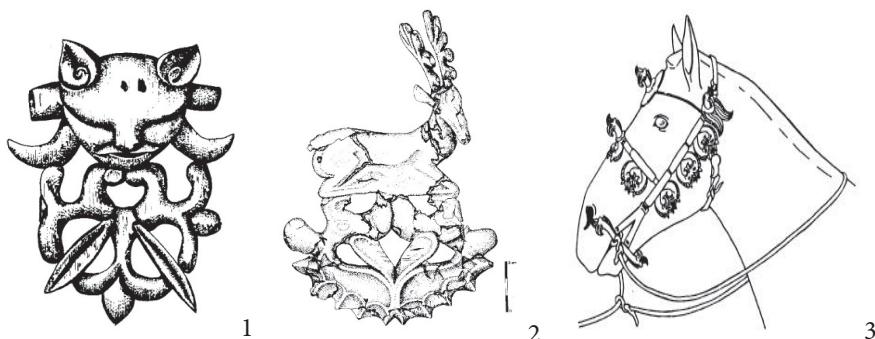


Figure 9: 1–2 — Plaques executed in a heraldic composition, Berel Kurgan 11 (Samashev 2011, p. 35); 3 — Nose and forehead plaques designe in a heraldic composition, Ak-Alakha 1 Kurgan (Polosmak 1994, p. 50).

The fact that the girth buckle, saddle cover buckle, and saddle arches (pommel, cantle) were all fashioned from antler further supports the interpretation of the harness ornaments as components of a coherent and deliberately unified assemblage. Ultimately, while the hypothesis that three-dimensional wooden figural elements were inserted into the base perforations

cannot be conclusively demonstrated due to the lack of direct evidence, the alternative interpretation—that tassel fringes were attached—also remains plausible. Nevertheless, it should be noted that no preserved examples of Pazyryk-period horse-harness ornaments from other kurgans (including Pazyryk Kurgans 1, 2, 3, and 5; Bashadar Kurgans 1 and 3; and the Ak-Alaha kurgans) feature textile tassels on perforated plaques designed in heraldic compositions (Gryaznov, 1950; Rudenko, 1953,1960; Barkova,1987; Polosmak, 1994, 2000, 2001,). For this reason, the proposed reconstruction of the plaques, as outlined here, appears to be the more convincing interpretation in light of the currently available evidence.

Deer antler, the principal material used in the manufacture of figural plaques, is particularly challenging to work due to its variable thickness, irregular curvature, and highly porous, spongy internal structure. Its processing requires a multi-stage chaîne opératoire, including softening and degreasing through immersion in hot water, controlled drying to reduce moisture content and prevent warping, cutting and sectioning according to the dimensions of the intended ornament, and finally the production of smooth surfaces by carving, scraping, peeling, and abrasive polishing. The survival of this assemblage as the largest and most complete group of fully preserved antler ornaments from Pazyryk-period burial mounds attests both to the technical sophistication involved in their manufacture and to the exceptional conditions of preservation.

Although some figural plaques are identical in iconography, others—such as those with antlers set at an angle—display closer formal affinities rather than strict replication. This variation may suggest the involvement of multiple craftsmen. At the same time, differences in the flatness or narrowness of certain plaques may equally reflect the inherent properties of the antler itself, such as whether a piece was carved from a particular surface or from branches of differing widths. Consequently, it is not possible to isolate a distinct “master’s hand” or workshop signature within the assemblage. The observed similarities may therefore be explained either by collaborative production or by the work of a single master adapting designs to the constraints of the raw material.

The overlapping, semi-circular motifs commonly described as “fish-scale” patterns—visible on the necklace element, rectangular plaque, elongated plaque, nose and forehead plaques, and on the manes of the figural representations—are here more convincingly interpreted as stylized “bird feathers.” This reinterpretation is supported by close parallels and thematic associations observed in other finds from Pazyryk culture burial mounds (Figure 10,11).



Figure 10. A griffin depicted in a heraldic composition, from the Ak-Alaha 1 kurgan. (Polosmak, 1994, p.50-51)

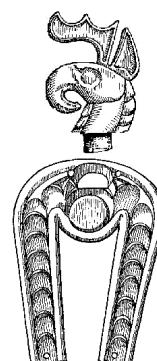


Figure 11. Restitution of the horseshoe-shaped plaque from Kurgan 36 according to heraldic composition

Textile remains interpreted as mane and tail covers, as well as a soft saddle and saddle cover—often described metaphorically as the “horseman’s throne”—were also identified among the assemblage. Such decorative textile elements are characteristic of Pazyryk culture and typically replicate or visually echo the motifs used in horse-harness ornamentation. The surfaces of saddles and covers are predominantly decorated with dynamic scenes of attack and animal combat. Accordingly, the reconstruction of the horse’s saddle, mane, and tail covers from Berel Kurgan 36 was guided by the figural repertoire documented within the burial mound itself.

An examination of the chromatic scheme employed in the decorations reveals the dominance of tin or silver, gold, and red as the primary accent colors. In the reconstruction of the tail cover, the use of madder and blue dyes—frequently attested in Pazyryk textile finds—is also evident. Given the abundance of close parallels, the color palette adopted for the reconstruction may be regarded as both appropriate and consistent with the visual traditions of Pazyryk material culture.

The technical characteristics of the figural plaques from Berel Kurgan 36 suggest production by a highly skilled artisan with substantial experience in working deer antler. Although antler and wood are both organic materials shaped through subtractive carving techniques, antler presents distinct challenges due to its variable density, porous internal structure, curved morphology, and susceptibility to fracture. The successful execution of thin, low-relief plaques, the controlled drilling of suspension holes in structurally vulnerable areas, and the consistent adaptation of figural designs to the natural form of the antler indicate a level of material-specific knowledge that

goes beyond general woodworking skills. These features point to a degree of specialization in antler carving, even if the artisan was not exclusively limited to this material.

At the same time, the strong iconographic coherence observed across the antler plaques, associated harness elements, and the presumed missing wooden components suggests the existence of a unified visual and conceptual program. This coherence implies that the same master craftsman may have been responsible for both antler and wooden elements, or at least that production was closely coordinated under a single artistic authority. Within the socio-economic framework of the Pazyryk culture—characterized by mobile elites rather than rigid workshop systems—it is plausible that such master artisans possessed versatile skills across multiple organic materials, while maintaining particular expertise in prestigious and technically demanding media such as antler. The formal variations among the plaques are therefore best understood not as evidence of multiple independent hands, but as the result of adaptive carving strategies responding to the natural properties of the material.

Conclusion

The horse harness assemblage from Berel Kurgan 36 represents a highly coherent and technically accomplished example of Pazyryk-period antler carving from the Altai region. The consistent use of deer antler, advanced carving and finishing techniques, and the presence of pigment and metal coverings demonstrate that the objects formed an integrated decorative and symbolic ensemble rooted in the animal-style tradition of Early Iron Age nomadic elites.

The repeated depiction of a beaked, antlered composite creature reflects a localized Pazyryk iconography. Although often identified as a griffin, its distinctive moose-like antlers, formal treatment, and integration into rectangular plaques support its interpretation as a polymorphic composite being rather than a classical griffin. Its recurrence across multiple harness elements indicates a central symbolic role within the burial assemblage.

Technologically, the plaques reveal specialized knowledge of antler as a material and a high degree of artistic control, likely reflecting centralized production. Minor formal variations are best explained by the natural morphology of the antler. The reconstruction of the harness underscores the ritualized status of the horse and highlights the careful visual planning embedded in elite Pazyryk funerary practices.

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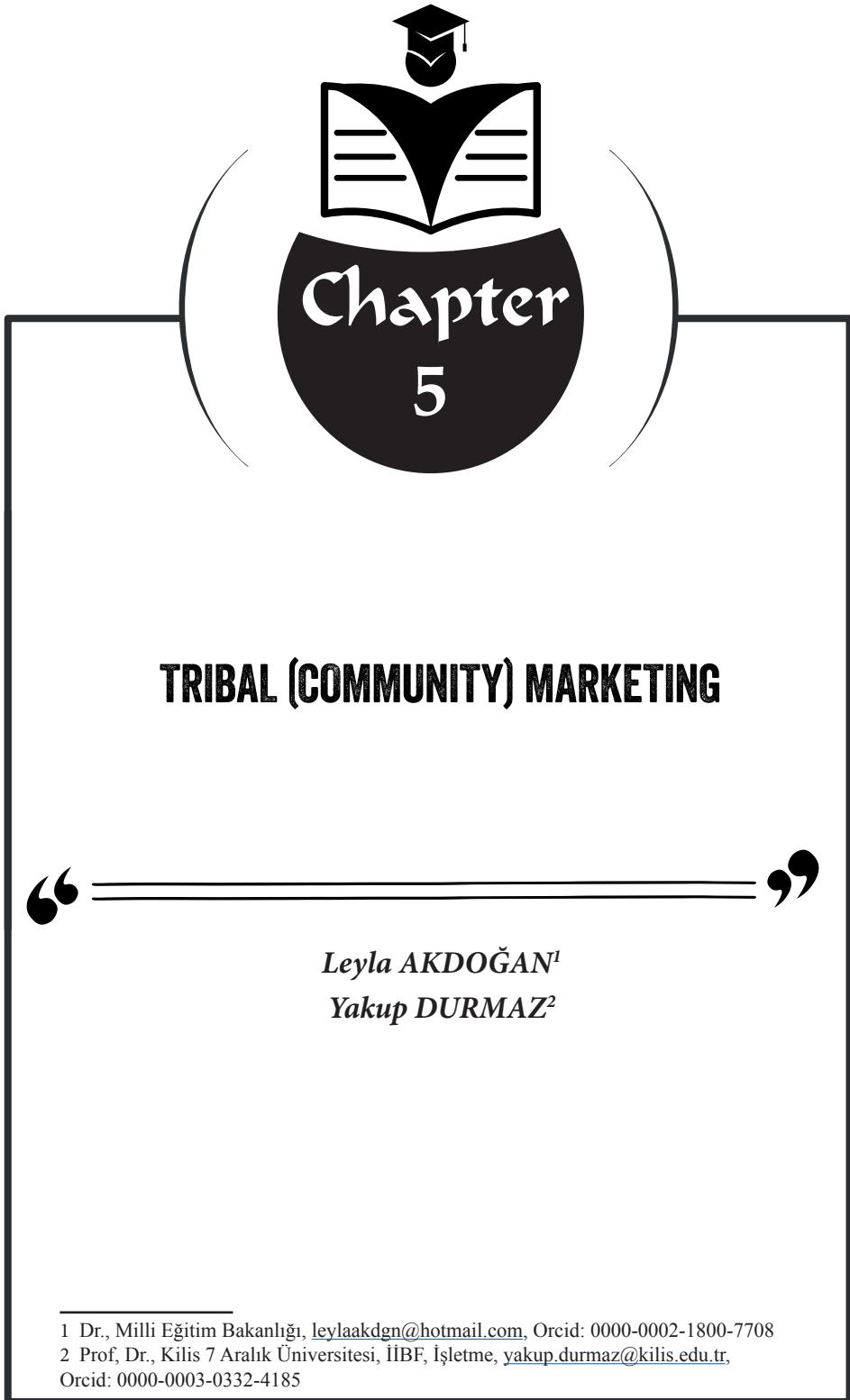
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Introduction

From the earliest stages of human existence, individuals have inevitably been part of the process of consumption in order to sustain life. At no point in history has it been possible to encounter a human being completely independent of consumption, as living, by its very nature, necessitates consumption. However, the manner in which humans consume differs fundamentally from that of other living beings. While other organisms consume solely to satisfy biological needs, humans also take psychological, social, and cultural needs into account (Bakır & Çelik, 2013, p. 47).

In pre-modern social structures, consumption behaviors varied significantly among individuals living in different geographical regions, shaped by cultural values, production conditions, and everyday life practices. In contrast, in the contemporary world, processes such as globalization, the acceleration of communication and media flows, and the increasing intensity of interactions among societies have gradually blurred cultural boundaries. In parallel with this development, consumption patterns across different societies have begun to converge toward increasingly similar and shared forms (Alp & Bayhan, 2023, p. 82).

In line with the transformations observed in consumption behavior, Cova (1997) argues that in order to enhance the understanding of consumer behavior, contemporary market research must move beyond the limits of individual-level analysis and extend the boundaries of marketing inquiry. Indeed, the most recent conference of the Association for Consumer Research drew attention to the phenomenon of community, which is generally considered to hold substantial social significance in the postmodern era but has, somewhat paradoxically, been neglected within the discipline (Cova, 1997, p. 297). According to Grönroos (2006), the traditional marketing perspective emphasizes segmenting individual consumers into market segments to ensure the efficient and effective use of marketing resources. However, widely used segmentation processes tend to give limited consideration to the existence of social connections and their potential influence on consumption behavior (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011, p. 39).

In this context, tribal marketing (community marketing) offers an alternative approach that conceptualizes consumption within a social framework. Tribal marketing highlights that consumers spontaneously form communities around specific products, brands, or lifestyles and sustain these communities through emotional bonds (Kozinets, 1999, p. 255; Mitchell & Imrie, 2011, p. 39). Emphasizing that products do not derive value solely from providing individual benefits, but rather gain value insofar as they facilitate the creation of connections among individuals, Cova (1997, p. 307) introduced

the concept of *linking value*. Furthermore, Cova and Cova (2002, p. 600) argue that contemporary postmodern tribes—based on emotional ties, shared experiences, and symbolic exchanges—have replaced pre-modern tribes.

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine the historical transformation of the concept of society and its relationship with consumption, to explore the theoretical foundations of tribal marketing, to explain how consumption behaviors are shaped through the phenomenon of tribes, and to elucidate *linking value* as a central concept within tribal marketing.

1. The Historical Transformation of Social Structure and Its Relationship with Consumption

Although consumption is generally perceived as a process through which individuals satisfy their needs, in essence it is not an activity with merely an economic dimension. Consumption is a multidimensional social practice shaped by the cultural values, social relations, lifestyles, and historical conditions of the society in which it takes place; therefore, it acquires different meanings across different periods and societies (İlter, 2019, p. 461).

Throughout human history, societies have undergone various forms of transformation depending on time and space. In line with these transformations, social structures are generally classified into three main categories: traditional society, modern society, and postmodern society (Bakırtaş & Demirhan, 2015, p. 72).

1.1. The Traditional Period

The traditional social structure encompasses a long historical period extending from the hunter-gatherer mode of life in early human history to the Renaissance and Reformation movements that laid the groundwork for the Enlightenment. Within this social structure, customs and traditions constitute the primary determinants of social life. Social relations are largely direct, face-to-face, and characterized by intimacy. It is not possible to speak of an institutionalized organizational structure based on specialization, nor of urbanization developed in the modern sense. Likewise, widespread literacy had not yet been achieved, and modern modes of thought such as individualism and rationalism had not yet fully emerged.

The social structure is built upon a pronounced hierarchy and displays strong resistance to change. Although spatial mobility (such as migration or conquest) may occasionally occur, continuity constitutes the core principle of social life, and a notion of linear temporal progress does not prevail. In such societies, individuals strive to set aside personal interests in order to act as members who contribute to the public good (Bakırtaş & Demirhan, 2015, p. 73).

Contrary to the dynamic and change-oriented character of modern society, traditional social structures are more static and stable in nature. In these societies, the maintenance of social order and the establishment of rules are governed not so much by formal legal systems as by entrenched customs and traditions. Families function simultaneously as producers and consumers, as they consume the goods they produce through their own labor (Coşkun, 1994, p. 45; Yavuz & Zavalsız, 2015, p. 128).

According to Bocock (2009), the satisfaction of needs constitutes the primary determinant of consumption in the traditional period. Consequently, the value of a good is predominantly defined in terms of its functionality and practical utility. Objects are produced not for symbolic or display purposes, but primarily for direct use in everyday life (Tunç, 2017, p. 415).

1. 2. The Modern Period

In the modern period, the intellectual awakening initiated by the Renaissance and Reformation movements, followed by the Enlightenment, triggered a profound transformation in social structures (Sayın & Terzi, 2023, p. 156). The defining characteristic of this period is the transition from an agrarian-based social structure to one grounded in industrial production. Modernization, which brought about pronounced differentiation and specialization within society, entailed the abstraction of society from its traditional values and its subsequent reconfiguration (Aslan & Yılmaz, 2001, p. 94). The primary objective of this process was to utilize the knowledge produced by free and creative individuals in ways that would contribute to human progress and enhance the quality of everyday life (Aslan & Yılmaz, 2001, p. 96).

Mass production, mass consumption, and mass culture constitute the fundamental characteristics of this era. Mass culture, emerging as a result of populations flooding into industrializing and increasingly crowded cities, left a decisive imprint on social life. The modernist perspective sought to achieve material development and social welfare through the establishment of a rational order and the dominance and advancement of reason and science (Yeygel, 2006, pp. 198–199).

Modernism attempted to embody its intellectual foundations through three core principles: enlightenment, rationalism, and positivism. At the same time, it endeavored to consign traditionalism and feudalism to history, as feudal relations gave way to capitalist ones, and it rapidly constructed an ideological superstructure compatible with this new economic base. Science, knowledge, values, and beliefs—along with notions of shared human values, absolute truths, and universality—became defining elements of modernism (Karaduman, 2010, p. 2889).

In the modern period, individuals are more prominently characterized by their identity as producers rather than consumers (Yavuz & Zavalsız, 2015, p. 134). The factors shaping individuals' consumption decisions are not limited solely to personal needs; rather, these choices are also guided by the social structure and cultural values of the society in which they live. This reveals that need is not inherently an individual construct, but a socially constructed one. Similarly, according to Baudrillard (2010), within the modern understanding of consumption, need is shaped not merely by objective necessity but by social meanings and symbolic signifiers (as cited in İlter, 2019, p. 461).

1. 3. The Postmodern Period

Transformations in social structure, modes of communication, and technology have brought about profound changes and new ways of thinking across all domains in which individuals interact, ranging from culture and politics to lifestyles, human relationships, and economic structures (Yeygel, 2006, p. 197; Divanoğlu Uslu, 2018, p. 439). The inability of modernism to fulfill its promise of providing definitive solutions to social problems, the growing dissonance between science and social reality, and the excessive concretization of knowledge at the expense of its emotional dimension are among the key factors that facilitated the emergence and consolidation of postmodern thought (Aslan & Yılmaz, 2001, p. 101).

According to Van Raaij (1993), the emergence of the postmodern period dates back to the 1960s and initially developed within the fields of architecture and art (Patterson, 1998, p. 68). However, the postmodernist approach is not confined to art and literature; rather, it exerts a guiding influence across a wide range of academic disciplines, including politics, systems of thought, human behavior, social structure, belief systems, spatial studies, historical analysis, economics, cultural studies, media research, and law (Yeygel, 2006, p. 198).

Postmodern communities are collectively described by the term *sociality*, which differs from the notion of the *social* in that it emphasizes not the mechanical and instrumental function of the individual member of a contract-based community, but rather the symbolic and emotional roles of individuals within temporary tribes. Each postmodern individual belongs to multiple tribes, within each of which they may assume different roles and wear different "masks"; this renders them resistant to classification by modern sociological analytical tools. Moreover, belonging to these tribes becomes more significant for individuals than membership in a modern social class, thereby rendering any attempt at rigid classification ineffective. Social status—that is, an individual's static position within the social classes of modernity—is increasingly replaced by social positioning, defined as the individual's dynamic and flexible placement within and across postmodern tribes (Cova, 1997, p. 301).

Unlike previous social phases, the postmodern period is characterized by an understanding that places consumption and the consumer—rather than production—at the center of economic and cultural structures. In this era, consumption practices, rather than productive activities, have become the primary determinants shaping social values, identities, and relationships (Sayın & Terzi, 2023, p. 159). Among the defining characteristics of the postmodern world are the expansion of individual tolerance, the increasing dominance of desires in social life, and the emergence of a broad, consumption-oriented mass. Consumption has thus transcended its economic boundaries to become a fundamental force shaping cultural and social structures. As a result, the world has taken on the character of a global marketplace shared by different societies, while individuals have increasingly come to construct their identities through consumption-based practices (Bakırtaş & Demirhan, 2015, p. 75).

Postmodern societies are further defined by the expansion of individual spheres of freedom and by profound processes of structural transformation within social systems (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995, p. 43; Karaboğa, 2024, p. 1). Under the discourse of postmodern pluralism, the lifestyles, consumption habits, and cultural practices of different societies have increasingly begun to resemble one another (Tekin, 2014, pp. 76–77). With the growing prevalence of postmodern tendencies, the meanings attributed to consumption have undergone significant change, and consumers' purchasing behaviors have started to take shape within this newly constructed symbolic universe. This broader process of social transformation has also necessitated the restructuring of marketing practices and strategies (Azizoğlu & Altunışık, 2012, p. 35).

Indeed, Fırat et al. (1995) argue that marketing reflects the core essence of the ongoing transition to postmodernity, suggesting that the postmodern period may, in fact, be regarded as a “marketing age,” characterized by a close affinity between marketing and postmodernity (Fırat et al., 1995, p. 48). Within this framework, tribal (community) marketing—an approach that places consumers' individual orientations and emotional expectations at its center—has gained increasing strategic importance in contemporary marketing thought.

Table 1. Historical Transformation of the Concept of Society and Its Relationship with Consumption (Summary Evaluation)

Period	Key Characteristics of Social Structure in the Literature	Dominant Understanding of Consumption	Position of the Individual in Society	Key Sources
Traditional Period	A static and hierarchical social structure dominated by customs and traditions, characterized by face-to-face and intimate social relations. Literacy levels are low, urbanization is limited, and the family functions simultaneously as both producer and consumer.	Consumption is oriented toward the satisfaction of basic needs. The value of goods is based on functional utility; symbolic, status-oriented, or conspicuous consumption is absent.	The individual is positioned as part of a collective structure; individuality is underdeveloped. Social conformity and commitment to the public good are emphasized.	Bakırtaş & Demirhan (2015); Coşkun (1994); Yavuz & Zavalsız (2015); Tunç (2017)
Modern Period	A dynamic and transformation-oriented social structure shaped by rationalism and science following the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, and by increased urbanization, industrialization, and specialization after the Industrial Revolution.	Consumption is not limited to basic needs; it is shaped by social structures and cultural values. Needs are socially constructed rather than purely individual.	The individual is primarily defined through a producer identity and is positioned as a rational, decision-making actor.	Sayın & Terzi (2023); Aslan & Yılmaz (2001); Yeygel (2006); Yavuz & Zavalsız (2015); İlter (2019)
Postmodern Period	A fragmented, pluralistic, and fluid social structure influenced by globalization, media, technology, and communication networks. Identities are fluid, and forms of belonging are temporary; individuals may belong to multiple tribes simultaneously.	Consumption is associated with identity construction, symbolic meaning-making, and the pursuit of pleasure. Image, signs, and consumption-based lifestyles dominate.	The individual is defined more by a consumer identity than a producer identity; the importance of individual choice and perceived freedom has increased.	Yeygel (2006); Divanoğlu Uslu (2018); Aslan & Yılmaz (2001); Patterson (1998); Cova (1997); Sayın & Terzi (2023); Bakırtaş & Demirhan (2015); Schouten & McAlexander (1995); Karaboga (2024); Tekin (2014); Fırat et al. (1995)

2. Tribal (Community) Marketing

Cova (1999) emphasizes that societies—particularly in the Western world—have been shaped along the axis of individualism, which is a consequence of modernity's quest to liberate individuals from social bonds. The gradual detachment of individuals from collective norms in areas such as education, family, and gender has led to the adoption of personalized lifestyles and to efforts to construct one's identity from among a wide range of choices. Technological developments, by enabling individuals to sustain their lives without the need for physical interaction, have intensified isolation and reinforced narcissistic tendencies. As a result, society has entered a period characterized by fragmented structures and excessive individualism. Nevertheless, parallel to this increase in individualism, a countervailing tendency toward the re-establishment of social bonds has also emerged. This tendency points to individuals' efforts to preserve and reconstruct a sense of community. Within this context, the concept of *tribalism* has gained prominence (Cova, 1999, pp. 3–4).

The concept of the tribe refers to a semi-archaic structure that signifies the renewed importance of a sense of community in postmodern society. Neo-tribes are small-scale, temporary communities based on emotional ties and independent of the class, status, or institutional structures of modern society. These formations hold their members together through shared emotions, similar lifestyles, new moral understandings, and consumption practices (Cova, 2001, p. 67). Within the tribal perspective, elements such as a sense of local belonging, religious orientations, the coexistence of diverse beliefs (syncretism), and a group-centered outlook come to the fore; the common denominator of all these features is collective consciousness. Although these tribal structures aim to revive the archetype of traditional, village- or region-based communities, they are often not tied to clearly defined physical spaces. Indeed, some tribes exist as virtual communities formed through the internet and new communication technologies, where face-to-face interaction is not required (Firat et al., 1995, p. 48; Cova, 1997, p. 300).

Consumer tribes emerge not primarily from individuals' loyalty to a single brand, but from the identification relationships they establish with one another, shared experiences, and common emotions. What is decisive in the formation of these communities is not a shared product or brand *per se*, but rather the collective experiences and social interactions that individuals engage in throughout the consumption process. When consumers share similar emotions, co-create meanings, and develop common practices, tribal-like structures spontaneously take shape. In this process, various brands, products, activities, and services function as facilitating instruments that support tribal formation. However, the emergence of tribes is not directly determined by

brands; rather, it is made possible through the strengthening of social bonds, the formation of shared rituals, and individuals' participation in collective actions. Consequently, consumer tribes emerge as flexible and dynamic social communities that encompass multiple brands and diverse consumption domains, rather than as structures characterized by loyalty to a single brand (Goulding et al., 2013, p. 815). The field of marketing does not ignore this transformation; on the contrary, it has increasingly adopted an approach that takes these emerging tribal formations into account (Gretzel et al., 2005, p. 2).

Tribal marketing is a contemporary marketing approach that conceptualizes consumers not through traditional demographic criteria, but through social groups formed around shared emotions, common interests, similar lifestyles, and passions. Within this approach, individuals come together not on the basis of classical variables such as age, gender, occupation, or income level, but through the meanings they attribute to a brand or product and the social bonds they establish around those meanings. With the intensification of user participation in social media environments, consumers have become active stakeholders who freely express their opinions about brands, share their experiences, and engage in mutual interaction. This shift has brought co-creation processes—through which brand value is jointly constructed with consumers—to the forefront, creating new opportunity spaces for brand management and tribal marketing activities (Pathak & Pathak-Shelat, 2017, p. 17).

Tribal marketing argues that consumers, in certain contexts, form communities organized around consumption, and that through these groups they both construct identities and develop social belonging. The value of products and services is not limited to their functional benefits; rather, the decisive element is *linking value*—the capacity to facilitate relationships among individuals. This indicates that consumption has moved beyond being merely a means of individual gratification and has become part of a broader process of community formation and social meaning-making (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011, pp. 39–40).

Rather than focusing on personalization aimed at the individual customer, tribal marketing represents an approach that places the phenomenon of community and the relationships among consumers at its center. From this perspective, the social relationships consumers establish with one another take precedence over the dyadic bond between the firm and the individual customer. Accordingly, tribal marketing strategies aim for firms to become embedded within tribal structures and to support their continuity. This support process includes facilitating the integration of new members into the tribe, strengthening intra-tribal interaction, and designing events and experiences that encourage shared activities. Because tribes, by their very nature, emerge as networks of relationships with no clear boundaries—fluid, heterogeneous,

and unstable—they are extremely difficult to define using traditional market segmentation methods. This creates significant challenges for marketers (Gretzel et al., 2005, p. 3).

Similarly, Cova and Pace (2005) note that one of the most critical issues for firms in tribal marketing is the risk of losing control over the brand. Tribes do not merely consume the brand; they imbue it with new meanings and incorporate it into their own cultural practices. In this process, the brand may shift from being an element managed by the firm to becoming, in effect, a “publicly appropriated” entity shaped by community members. While this often generates strong attachment, the fundamental concern emphasized by Cova and Pace is that tribes may develop an autonomous and critical stance toward the brand. To the extent that the community appropriates the brand, it may claim a voice over it, and may even become a source of opposition by advancing views that conflict with the firm’s strategic decisions. Consequently, in tribal marketing, the brand embodies a dual dynamic that simultaneously entails strong community support and the risk of loss of control (Divanoglu Uslu, 2018, p. 441).

At the same time, tribes also offer significant marketing opportunities due to their inherent potential. Tribal members are not merely users of a product or service; they may also become voluntary brand advocates who adopt, defend, and disseminate it within their social environments. In this sense, tribal members evolve into customer ambassadors who form deep emotional attachments to the product, recommend it to others, provide spontaneous feedback to the firm, and perceive themselves as part of a larger whole beyond their individual consumer identity. From a tribal marketing perspective, these ambassadors constitute some of the most effective carriers of marketing communication. Ultimately, tribal marketing necessitates the development of multidimensional approaches that take into account consumers’ bonds with the communities to which they belong and that address consumers within the framework of shared experiences and collectively constructed meanings inside tribes (Gretzel et al., 2005, p. 3).

Postmodern consumers use products for their own purposes; this involves not only the functional offerings of products but also efforts to define themselves and express their identities within society (Patterson, 1998, p. 71). Tribal marketing is therefore supported by social identity theory. According to this theory, individuals tend to categorize themselves into various social groups in order to define who they are within society. This sense of “togetherness” or group belonging can enhance social prestige, foster a positive social identity and self-esteem, and stimulate feelings of solidarity and friendship. Social identity theory further suggests that individuals tend to associate themselves with groups perceived to possess high social status. The degree of social

identity individuals derive from particular groups may be influenced by the perceived similarity between themselves and the public image of those groups. The outcomes of social identity processes give rise to tribes centered on shared interests, which may range from artistic inclinations to technical enthusiasms (Pathak & Pathak-Shelat, 2017, p. 18).

In contemporary marketing thought, the importance of products that can bring consumers together around a shared identity, nurture a sense of belonging, and convey the privilege of being part of a group has increased steadily. Uniform strategies targeting large and homogeneous consumer masses—long the foundation of classical marketing approaches—no longer yield effective results. This is because the modern consumer seeks to carve out a distinctive position within the crowd and to express individuality through products that reflect personal preferences. Consequently, products that enable personalization and respond to individuals' identity quests tend to achieve much higher success rates. Moreover, a product's longevity in the market and its competitive advantage depend not only on its functional attributes but also on the social bonds it creates among consumers. To the extent that a product provides a platform for interaction among users and supports the formation and strengthening of interpersonal relationships, it gains value. In other words, the greater the *linking value* embedded in products, the more secure their position becomes in the marketplace (Gümüş & Onurlubaş, 2020, p. 412). This linking value encourages consumers to perceive themselves as members of a community and to share their product-related experiences, thereby making a substantial contribution to brands' long-term success.

Table 2. Literature Review Summary on Tribal Marketing

Author(s) / Year	Purpose of the Study	Methodology	Key Findings	Contribution to the Literature
Cova (1997)	To explain tribal consumption within the context of postmodern consumption	Conceptual	The value of products derives not from their functional use but from their capacity to create and strengthen social bonds among individuals (linking value). Consumer tribes are loosely organized, temporary, yet emotionally intense social groupings.	Introduced the concepts of tribal marketing and linking value into the literature.
Cova (1999; 2001)	To analyze the structure and dynamics of consumer tribes	Conceptual	Brands can co-create value together with tribes; consumers are active participants rather than passive recipients.	Proposed a social and cultural alternative to modern market segmentation.
Cova & Cova (2002)	To examine the role of tribes in marketing strategies	Conceptual		Linked tribal marketing with the co-creation perspective.

Author(s) / Year	Purpose of the Study	Methodology	Key Findings	Contribution to the Literature
Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh (1995)	To conceptualize postmodern consumer culture	Conceptual	Consumption is a process of identity construction; individuals may simultaneously belong to multiple identities and groups.	Provided a foundational theoretical framework for postmodern consumption studies.
Schouten & McAlexander (1995)	To analyze the social structure of consumer communities	Qualitative (Ethnographic)	Strong social bonds emerge that are oriented more toward the community than toward the brand itself. Tribal membership enhances loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, and brand advocacy.	Served as a seminal contribution to the brand community literature.
Mitchell & Imrie (2011)	To investigate the behavioral outcomes of tribal membership	Qualitative	Rituals, shared symbols, and collective experiences strengthen tribal identity and cohesion.	Demonstrated the relationship between tribal affiliation and consumer behavioral outcomes.
Goulding, Shankar & Canniford (2013)	To explore the role of rituals and experiences in tribal identity formation	Qualitative		Integrated experiential consumption into tribal marketing research.
Kozinets (1999)	To examine online consumer communities	Netnography	Tribal-like consumer communities emerge in digital environments.	Introduced the concept of digital tribes and established netnography as a research method.
Gretzel et al. (2005)	To analyze the marketing impact of online communities	Mixed Methods	Digital tribes facilitate information sharing and generate brand advocacy.	Linked social media environments with tribal marketing dynamics.
Pathak & Pathak-Shelat (2017)	To connect tribal consumption with social identity theory	Conceptual	Tribes foster a strong sense of "we-ness," contributing to social prestige and self-esteem.	Theoretically grounded tribal marketing within social identity theory.
Tekin (2014)	To examine tribal marketing in the Turkish consumer context	Conceptual	Tribal marketing is based on belonging, community, and social interaction.	Provided an early conceptual foundation for Turkish tribal marketing literature.
Divanoğlu (2018)	To analyze the relationship between consumption and community	Conceptual	Consumption is fundamentally a social rather than an individual experience.	Contributed to the discussion of tribal consumption within the Turkish context.
Gümüş & Onurlubaş (2020)	To examine the strategic implications of tribal marketing	Conceptual	Brands co-create value together with consumer tribes.	Offered a contemporary tribal marketing perspective within Turkish literature.

Source: Compiled from the literature.

3. The Strategic Importance of Tribal Marketing for Firms

Tribal marketing offers strategically significant opportunities for firms operating in contemporary market conditions in which postmodern consumer behaviors have become increasingly dominant. In contrast to the rational structure of traditional marketing, which examines consumers as homogeneous groups, tribal marketing places at its center the loose, voluntary, and dynamic communities that individuals form around shared emotions, symbolic meanings, rituals, and lifestyles. By moving beyond the boundaries of modern segmentation, this approach situates consumers within networks of social relationships, thereby enabling firms to achieve both competitive advantage and the development of sustainable customer relationships.

Postmodern consumers do not establish relationships with brands solely on the basis of functional benefits; rather, they construct their identities through the emotional, cultural, and symbolic values represented by brands. For this reason, tribal members adopt brands not as rational choices, but as integral components of a collective identity. Cova (1997, p. 301) emphasizes that the attachment tribal members feel toward brands is far deeper than the brand loyalty observed among modern consumers, as it is formed through emotional togetherness. This dynamic enables firms to gain voluntary brand advocates and strengthens word-of-mouth communication.

Tribal members are not merely passive consumers of a brand; they are active partners who continually reproduce its meaning. Cova and Cova (2002, p. 600) note that tribes co-create meaning together with brands, and that this process provides firms with a valuable resource for innovation, content development, and experience design. Accordingly, tribal marketing constitutes one of the most effective means for firms to obtain market insights.

Within tribes, the value of products is determined not by use value, but by *linking value*. Linking value refers to the capacity of a product or service to establish or strengthen social bonds among individuals. Cova (1997, p. 307) highlights that linking value enables brands to avoid price competition, as tribal members prefer products because of their symbolic and emotional meanings. This allows firms to achieve stronger and more enduring market positioning.

Because tribal members are attached to brands through emotional belonging rather than purely economic evaluation, they exhibit a lower tendency to abandon brands during periods of crisis. Schouten and McAlexander (1995, p. 43) argue that this characteristic enables firms to build customer bases that are more resilient to external shocks.

Digitalization has removed the spatial boundaries of consumer tribes and has created opportunities for brands to form communities on a global scale.

Kozinets (1999, p. 255) notes that digital tribes function not only as spaces for interaction, but also as arenas for the production of cultural knowledge. Consequently, firms must understand the behavioral dynamics of digital tribes and develop digital strategies that are aligned with them. When managed effectively, digital tribes provide brands with high visibility and sustained engagement.

By transcending the limitations of modern segmentation, tribal marketing groups consumers not according to demographic characteristics, but according to emotional and cultural affinities. Firat, Dholakia, and Venkatesh (1995, p. 48) argue that in postmodern society, traditional segments have lost their explanatory power, and that tribes have become a more effective unit for understanding consumer behavior. Accordingly, tribalism offers firms a more realistic and dynamic targeting framework.

4. Linking Value

Cova (1997b) defines the golden rule of tribal marketing as evaluating products or services not in terms of their use value, but rather in terms of their *linking value*. Surprisingly, what matters more is not how a firm presents its product or service to consumers, but how it supports the very existence of the tribe. Tribal marketing has thus almost entirely rejected concepts such as *consumer segments*, *market niches*, and *lifestyles*—the foundational constructs of modern marketing management. Tribal marketers also attach little importance to coherent consumer groupings, as they believe that such classifications are imaginary and based on implausible consumer profiles. In tribal marketing, the unit of reference is a group composed of individuals who share similar experiences and emotions and who come together within loosely connected communities (Cova, 1999, p. 10).

Postmodern consumer research focuses on products and services that bring individuals together around a particular community and keep them attached to it. In other words, the core of marketing strategy shifts toward consumption elements that reinforce a sense of community and nurture tribal belonging and membership. In this context, the fundamental concept introduced by Cova (1997) is the *linking value* of a product or service. Linking value refers to the contribution a product or service makes to establishing or strengthening social bonds among individuals. In many cases, this characteristic is not deliberately embedded within the product's use value; nevertheless, it constitutes a critical dimension that must be carefully considered from a marketing perspective. The extent to which a product or service nurtures tribal bonds among consumers and enhances solidarity determines the level of its linking value. Consequently, within the postmodern marketing paradigm, success depends not only on developing products that offer functional benefits, but also on

creating consumption experiences that can build communities and support social connectedness (Cova, 2001, pp. 69–70).

Firms cannot generate linking value without the active participation and support of consumers. This is because consumer communities are not merely users of linking value; they are also its primary creators. Both in offline and online gatherings, the most critical element enabling the emergence of linking value is the crowd that constitutes the community itself. As the number of participants increases, so too does the likelihood of interaction, shared experiences, and the development of relationships; thus, the community is shaped through consumers' own participation. Throughout this process, consumers add new layers of meaning to the brand and to its products or services. This social and symbolic contribution, arising from consumers' collective interactions, enhances the brand's linking value and leads the associated products or services to be perceived as more valuable. Linking value is therefore not a quality that firms can produce on their own; rather, it is a dynamic value co-constructed through the interactions of consumer communities (Cova & White, 2010, p. 259).

Linking value constitutes a central and critical element of tribal marketing. The formation of tribes is fundamentally grounded in shared values, emotions, and worlds of meaning among individuals. People come together not merely out of a desire to belong to a social group, but because of a shared belief that a particular object, activity, or practice holds genuine meaning for them. If individuals do not perceive this object or experience as significant, or fail to establish an emotional connection with it, sustained membership within the same tribe and the maintenance of the community's emotional bond become impossible. Similarly, if a brand, activity, or individual does not generate excitement or nurture passion, people are unlikely to develop social relationships around it. However, when individuals feel strong passion toward a particular brand, event, or lifestyle; believe that the values it represents align with their own identities; and are willing to make this identity visible within a community, they become part of the same tribe together with others who share these emotions. Accordingly, tribal membership is not merely the outcome of a search for social belonging, but rather the natural convergence of shared passions, collective emotional bonds, and common meanings (Richardson, 2013, p. 4).

Conclusion

Throughout human history, consumption has emerged not merely as an activity aimed at satisfying biological needs, but also as a fundamental determinant of cultural production, social relationships, and processes of identity construction. The transformation of social structures across the

traditional, modern, and postmodern periods has profoundly shaped both the function and the meaning of consumption. In traditional societies, consumption was largely confined to essential needs oriented toward survival; in the modern period, however, the rationalization of production processes, together with urbanization and industrialization, gave rise to a more planned, systematic, and norm-driven structure of consumption. In the postmodern period, consumption has moved beyond the satisfaction of material needs and has become a symbolic practice through which individuals construct identities, develop a sense of belonging, and maintain social visibility. Consequently, consumption has assumed a central role as a domain in which cultural meanings are produced and individuals position themselves within the social world.

This transformation has also necessitated a profound paradigm shift within the marketing discipline. The modern marketing effort to classify consumers into homogeneous segments based on shared characteristics has proven insufficient for understanding the fragmented, pluralistic, and fluid structure of postmodern society. The postmodern consumer emerges as a subject who cannot be confined to a single social category, who possesses multiple identities, forms temporary affiliations, and produces different self-representations across diverse consumption practices. Accordingly, traditional segmentation approaches are inadequate for explaining this multidimensional reality. Tribal marketing intervenes precisely at this juncture, offering a new perspective that prioritizes the communities consumers spontaneously form around particular brands, products, lifestyles, or emotional experiences.

Tribal marketing has thus emerged as an alternative form of social integration in response to the feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and lack of belonging produced by modern society. Neo-tribes are flexible communities that operate not through fixed rules, hierarchical structures, or rigid membership boundaries, but rather through shared rituals, symbols, and emotional togetherness. Within these communities, brands function as symbolic mediators that facilitate connections among members, and the value of products and services is redefined through the relationships individuals develop with one another. In this context, the central concept of tribal marketing—*linking value*—is explained not by the functional utility a product provides, but by the social bonds it enables among consumers. The success of a product or service is no longer determined by how functional it is, but by the extent to which it facilitates community formation, shared experiences, and social solidarity.

Linking value is not an element that brands can generate unilaterally through their own efforts; rather, it is co-constructed through consumers' collective interactions, shared experiences, and the symbolic meanings they

produce together. For this reason, tribal marketing embodies a participatory structure that moves beyond the traditional producer-consumer hierarchy and places co-creation at its core. With the advent of digitalization, tribes have become independent of physical boundaries, offering brands opportunities to build communities on a global scale. Online platforms have emerged as new social spaces in which tribes communicate, develop rituals, and continually reproduce their identities.

At the same time, the flexible, heterogeneous, and unstable structures of tribes pose certain challenges for marketing strategies. The dynamic nature of tribes makes it difficult for firms to intervene from the outside, requiring marketing activities to proceed in harmony with the natural flow of these communities. Accordingly, what firms must do is to understand the language, culture, and rituals of tribes, and to contribute to value-creation processes without disrupting the organically formed structures of these communities.

In conclusion, the postmodern character of contemporary consumption culture has heightened the importance of community-based approaches within marketing. Tribal marketing and the concept of linking value provide a powerful theoretical framework for understanding not only the economic, but also the social and emotional expectations of today's consumers. Brands' ability to achieve sustainable competitive advantage now depends not solely on the functional attributes of their products, but also on their capacity to establish meaningful social bonds among consumers and to create community-based experiences. In this respect, it can be anticipated that the marketing paradigms of the future will be built upon experience-oriented, community-focused strategies that mediate emotional togetherness. Given the dynamic nature of consumption, it is evident that tribal marketing will continue to gain importance in both theoretical and applied research.

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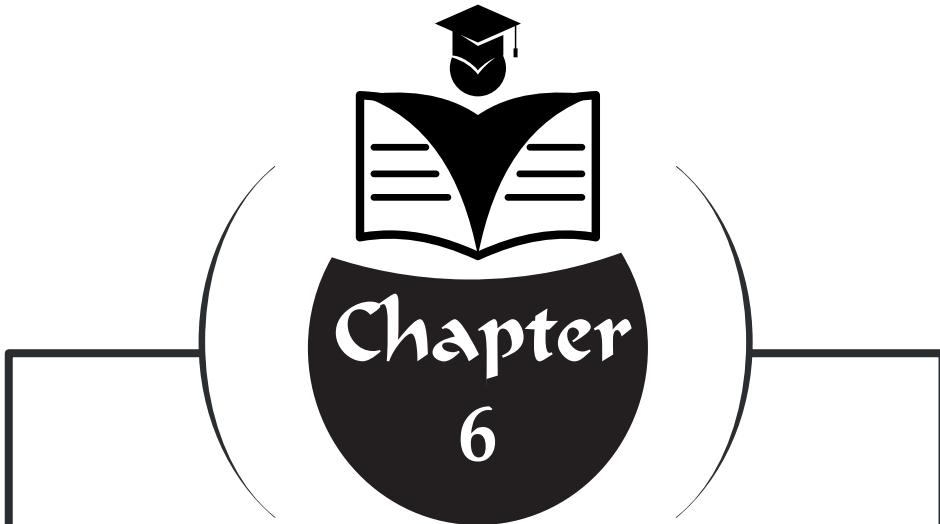
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**BETWEEN STAGE AND LIFE:
PERFORMATIVITY AND QUEER KINSHIP IN
*ALL ABOUT MY MOTHER***

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“You are more authentic the more you resemble what you have
dreamed of being.”
— Agrado

Introduction

Agrado’s statement frames the film’s aesthetic and political vision, which constructs identity, femininity, and motherhood not as fixed essences but as performative acts of repetition; *All About My Mother* continually reimagines this idea of “becoming what one dreams of being” both on stage and in life. Pedro Almodóvar’s *All About My Mother* is a film deeply embedded in questions of gender, kinship, performance, and transformation. Set against a backdrop of theatre, illness, loss, and queer community, the film foregrounds a set of characters whose identities do not fit neatly within Western heteronormative frameworks. Trans women, unconventional mothers, actresses, drag performers, and nuns form a narrative network that unsettles stable definitions of gender and family. Building upon the conceptual resonance of Agrado’s words, the film positions performance—both theatrical and everyday—as the mechanism through which identity and kinship are produced, negotiated, and rearticulated. In this sense, the interplay between stage and life becomes central to the film’s exploration of becoming, revealing gender and family not as predetermined categories but as fluid processes shaped through repeated acts of care, embodiment, and self-fashioning.

Judith Butler’s notion that gender is performatively constituted rather than naturally determined provides an essential theoretical entry point for understanding the film. By focusing on performative acts, repetition, and the subversion of normative gender expectations, this study explores how Almodóvar’s film destabilizes binary constructions of male and female identities. The film’s characters embody fluidity and transformation, illustrating Butler’s notion that gender is both enacted and redefined through performance. Simultaneously, Julia Kristeva’s theory of abjection helps illuminate the film’s focus on vulnerable, contaminated, or marginal bodies, while camp aesthetics offer a queer counter-narrative to realism, reimagining gender as theatrical, fluid, and excessive.

The aim of this article is to examine how Almodóvar’s film enacts, visualizes, and complicates theories of gender performativity, abjection, and queer aesthetics. Through detailed scene-based analysis, the study argues that *All About My Mother* constructs a cinematic world where identities are never fixed but always in motion — constantly being repeated, rewritten, and re-signified.

Theoretical Framework

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity forms the central conceptual foundation of this study. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler challenges essentialist and biologically determined notions of identity by asserting that gender is not a stable internal truth but a "stylized repetition of acts" that produce the appearance of coherence (p. 191). According to Butler, socially regulated acts—gestures, speech, bodily comportment—"congeal over time" to give the illusion of a natural and fixed identity (1990, p. 33). This means that gender is constituted through performance, not discovered as a pre-existing truth. She famously argues: "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (1990, p. 25). Thus, gender is not something one *is* but something one *does*—a series of performances that materialize through time.

A central aspect of Butlerian performativity is repetition with a difference, also known as iterability. Although gender performances reproduce existing norms, they are never perfect replicas. Every enactment contains a slippage, a variation, a deviation—however subtle—that reveals the instability of the norm itself. Butler notes that "every repetition is a rearticulation" (1993, p. 95), meaning that each performance both reiterates and reshapes the normative structures it seeks to cite. This opens space for subversion: gender performances can unintentionally disrupt the very norms they attempt to reproduce. This inherent instability enables resistance, as marginalized or alternative performances expose the constructed nature of gender and the fragility of the binary system that sustains it.

Butler also conceptualizes gender within what she terms the heterosexual matrix—"a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility" that links sex, gender, and desire into a seemingly natural alignment (1990, p. 23). Within this model, identity is legible/natural only if it conforms to a binary logic: male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual. Bodies and identities that fall outside this grid of intelligibility are rendered deviant, incoherent, or invisible become culturally unintelligible. The heterosexual matrix therefore regulates which performances are recognized as valid and which are dismissed, punished, or rendered invisible. Establishing and disrupting this matrix is crucial for interpreting narratives that represent trans women, queer identities, and non-normative embodiments.

In *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler extends her argument by analyzing the materialization of bodies under regulatory norms, where she emphasizes that identity is produced within constraints that "govern the intelligible appearance of sex" (p. 2). She argues that social norms produce

“zones of uninhabitability” where non-normative bodies become invisible, unintelligible, or socially excluded (1993, p. 3). This view aligns with Julia Kristeva’s concept of abjection, which describes the process by which subjects expel what threatens the coherence of identity and symbolic order. In *Powers of Horror* (1982), Kristeva defines the abject as “what disturbs identity, system, and order” (p. 4) that which must be expelled so the subject may stabilize itself. Abject bodies—such as trans bodies, queer bodies, ambiguous bodies or bodies that refuse normative classification—become excluded from the social symbolic yet remain hauntingly present. Their presence reveals the instability of normativity and the anxiety that accompanies the breakdown of binary structures. This concept is particularly relevant for analyzing cultural productions that portray trans women, queer identities, or bodies that exceed the boundaries of cis-heteronormativity. Their presence in a narrative can reveal the tension between normativity and lived experience, thereby demonstrating how cinematic representation can challenge hegemonic models of gender.

The concept of abjection deepens the Butlerian analysis by emphasizing how non-normative bodies provoke both social anxiety and moral panic, which can be seen vividly in representations of trans women in cinema. Kristeva’s theory also introduces the semiotic dimension. Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic further enriches this theoretical framework by highlighting a bodily, affective, pre-linguistic dimension of meaning that resists the rigid symbolic. In cinematic representation, semiotic elements—color, rhythm, sound, gesture—can disrupt normative visual codes. Almodóvar’s films, rich with emotional excess, vivid color palettes, and melodramatic intensity, often operate at the intersection of symbolic structures and semiotic eruptions.

Another crucial component for understanding Almodóvar’s cinematic world is camp aesthetics. As Susan Sontag describes in “Notes on ‘Camp’” (1964), camp celebrates artifice, exaggeration, and theatricality, a playful rejection of seriousness, authenticity, and normative taste. Camp functions as a queer strategy that exposes the performativity of gender and challenges heteronormative standards. Through heightened visuality, drag performances, dramatic gestures, and excessive emotionality, Almodóvar’s camp aesthetics foreground the constructedness of identity and resonate strongly with Butler’s performativity.

The intersection of performativity, iterability, abjection, and camp creates a multidimensional theoretical lens for analyzing *All About My Mother*. The film’s characters—trans women, actresses, unconventional mothers, and performers identities shift across personal and theatrical spaces —occupy liminal spaces that disrupt the heterosexual matrix. Their identities are not fixed essences but ongoing negotiations shaped by repetition, deviation, and

resignification. As Butler states, identity remains perpetually open to “new possibilities of rearticulation” (1993, p. 223). The film visualizes this fluidity through its narrative structure, aesthetic style, and embodied performances.

Applied to film studies, Butler’s theory offers a framework for examining how characters enact, repeat, or challenge dominant gender norms. Cinematic embodiment—through gesture, costume, lighting, framing, and narrative repetition—enacts gender not as essence but as “an ongoing practice” (Butler, 1990, p. 33). Performing gender on screen becomes an act that simultaneously reproduces and critiques societal expectations. Almodóvar’s characters demonstrate this process vividly: their identities are negotiated, undone, and reconstituted in ways that resonate with both Butlerian performativity and Kristevan abjection. Their presence on screen illustrates how gender is performed, troubled, and ultimately reimagined.

This expanded theoretical framework, therefore, situates *All About My Mother* within a complex network of gender theory, psychoanalytic thought, and queer aesthetics. Butler’s performativity, the heterosexual matrix, Kristeva’s abjection, and camp aesthetics collectively provide a multidimensional lens through which the film’s representations of gender, embodiment, and identity can be critically examined.

Analysis

1. Gender Performativity and Identity Construction in the Film

All About My Mother presents gender identity not as an internal truth but as a series of embodied performances enacted across social spaces. Agrado’s self-presentation is one of the clearest embodiments of Butlerian performativity. Her monologue before the theater audience — where she openly lists the prices of her silicone breasts, nose job, collagen lips, and other bodily modifications — lays bare the constructedness of her gender. She states, “You are more authentic the more you resemble what you’ve dreamed of being,” a line that collapses the distinction between authenticity and performance. Rather than hiding the mechanics of her identity, she reveals them, turning her body into a site where femininity is iteratively produced. As shown in figure 1, her monologue is a conscious revelation of the mechanics of performativity: by articulating the processes of alteration and repetition that shape her body, she undermines any illusion that gender is natural, fixed, or biologically determined. In Butlerian terms, Agrado’s performance exposes “the very mechanisms through which social norms produce the illusion of interior gender coherence” (Butler, 1990, p.85).



Figure 1. Agrado delivering her monologue on stage.

This moment foregrounds the performative construction of gender by making visible the labor, artifice, and repetition through which Agrado fashions her femininity. Her humorous yet direct account of the bodily and aesthetic choices involved in “being herself” exposes gender as a self-conscious act of citation, aligning precisely with Butler’s view that gender is produced through stylized, repeated performances rather than inherent identity.

The film further demonstrates that identity is relational, not isolated. Manuela’s gendered identity is similarly performative, though less explicitly tied to bodily alteration. Her motherhood unfolds as a series of acts: holding Rosa’s hand, carefully administering medical care, retrieving Lola to ensure the child has knowledge of both parents, and reenacting past maternal gestures with symbolic resonance.

When Manuela reenacts the scene of *A Streetcar Named Desire* with Huma Rojo, repeating the lines from her youth, the film juxtaposes theatrical performance with gender performance. This scene exemplifies Butler’s concept of iterability: the repetition is never perfect, but each iteration constructs identity anew. Manuela’s roles as actress, mother, and caregiver intersect, revealing how gendered positions are shaped through continuous enactment rather than biological essence.

Even Sister Rosa’s identity embodies performativity. Her contradiction—as both a nun representing institutional femininity and a pregnant woman representing bodily transgression—exposes the instability of normative female roles. Her body becomes a site where purity, desire, and vulnerability intersect, demonstrating that identity is never a singular or unified state but a convergence of competing performances. These characters illustrate what Butler calls the “ongoing social practice” of gender (1993): a continuous process of citation, negotiation, and re-signification. In this sense, the film’s narrative foregrounds gender not as an essence but as a lived, relational, and dynamic practice shaped by social interaction and embodied performance.

2. Trans Women and the Subversion of the Heterosexual Matrix

Trans women occupy a central and transformative position within Almodóvar's film. Especially Agrado and Lola, as trans women, radically challenge the heterosexual matrix by refusing to align their identities with conventional gender binaries. Agrado's daily life scenes — working as a sex worker, performing domestic tasks, caring for Manuela, or acting as a surrogate mother figure — reveal multiple gendered positions that resist reduction to biology. Butler's formulation of the heterosexual matrix relies on the alignment of sex, gender, and desire. As shown in figure 2, Agrado's life defies this alignment: her femininity is performed, desired, recognized, and socially negotiated, but not grounded in biological determinism.



Figure 2. Agrado delivering her affirmation of authenticity.

As a trans woman, Agrado's declaration—"you are more authentic the more you resemble what you have dreamed of being"—encapsulates the film's rejection of biological determinism. Her femininity is performed, desired, recognized, and continually negotiated within social contexts rather than rooted in any essential or anatomical truth. In Butlerian terms, Agrado embodies gender as a citational and aspirational practice, revealing authenticity not as a return to an inner essence but as the successful enactment of a self one actively constructs.

Lola's presence is even more subversive. Her identity as a trans woman and a father complicates the binary expectations of parenthood. Her role in the narrative challenges what Butler terms "the compulsory ordering of

gender, sex, and sexuality" (1990, p. 24). When Manuela tells her, "Your son wanted to meet you," Lola's shock and emotional turmoil demonstrate how normative structures deny certain identities access to familial recognition. The emotional exchange between Lola and Manuela at the cemetery—where Lola confesses regret and longing—exposes the violent exclusions of the heterosexual matrix. As shown in figure 3, masculinity, fatherhood, and femininity become intertwined in her body. The coexistence of femininity and fatherhood in one embodied subject destabilizes the ideological boundaries that the heterosexual matrix attempts to enforce. In doing so, the film presents trans femininity not as a deviation from the norm but as a site of counter-normative possibility that dismantles the alleged coherence of gender categories.



Figure 3. Lola holding baby Esteban in her arms.

In this moment, masculinity, fatherhood, and femininity become intertwined within a single embodied subject. As a trans woman who is also the child's father, Lola disrupts the ideological boundaries that separate gender roles into rigid binaries. The coexistence of femininity and fatherhood in her body exposes parenthood as a performative and relational practice rather than a biologically fixed position.

The film also highlights how society reacts to trans femininity. Rosa's family refuses to accept Lola as the father of her child, rendering her unintelligible within their normative worldview. Their refusal demonstrates Butler's claim that certain bodies are rendered culturally illegible within the matrix. By foregrounding Lola's emotional complexity, however, Almodóvar challenges this illegibility and humanizes trans femininity outside heteronormative constraints.

As shown in figure 4, the relationship between Manuela and Agrado further reveals the porous nature of gender boundaries. Their solidarity, mutual support, and shared experiences illustrate a queer kinship model

that operates outside normative familial structures. This model disrupts the heterosexual matrix by demonstrating that emotional bonds, familial roles, and kinship practices can emerge independent of biological or heteronormative frameworks.



Figure 4. Manuela and Agrado together.

Their bond exemplifies a queer kinship model in which family is constituted through chosen ties, mutual care, and shared vulnerability rather than biological connection.

3. Maternal Performativity and Alternative Forms of Kinship

The film's exploration of motherhood goes far beyond biological reproduction. The film frames motherhood as a performative practice shaped by care, responsibility, and affective labor. As shown in figures 5 and 6, Manuela's identity as a mother is constructed through relational acts—nurturing, grieving, protecting, and supporting others—rather than through biological determinism. In this sense, the film supports Butler's critique of essentialist notions of womanhood and motherhood by showing that these roles are enacted, sustained, and repeatedly reconfigured through social practice. The film also introduces alternative forms of kinship that challenge heteronormative definitions of family. Manuela's journey is structured around chosen kinship, a queer reconfiguration of familial ties.



Figure 5. Manuela preparing food in the kitchen.

This scene foregrounds maternal performativity by showing how Manuela's caregiving labor—cooking, feeding, and sustaining others—functions as a repeated act through which motherhood is constituted. In Butlerian terms, her maternal identity emerges not from biology but from iterative practices of care that forge and maintain queer forms of kinship.



Figure 6. Manuela watching over Rosa when she is ill.

This scene foregrounds motherhood as a performative practice: through attentive witnessing, bodily presence, and acts of care, Manuela enacts a maternal role that is not anchored in biology but in repeated gestures of nurturance. Her gaze functions as a performative citation of maternal responsibility, illustrating Butler's notion that motherhood is produced through relational acts rather than predetermined identity.

Manuela becomes a mother not only to her deceased son Esteban but also to Sister Rosa's child, and symbolically to Agrado and Huma Rojo. These chosen, affective bonds exemplify what Butler calls "non-normative kinship arrangements" that destabilize the traditional nuclear family model (Butler, 2002). As shown in figure 7, in *All About My Mother*, kinship emerges as a flexible, inclusive, and queer structure shaped by shared vulnerability and mutual care rather than biological ties.



Figure 7. Manuela tending Agrado's wounds.

This scene highlights maternal performativity: Manuela's act of caring for Agrado reiterates the nurturing gestures through which her maternal identity is constituted, showing how motherhood emerges through repeated acts of care rather than biological ties.

Furthermore, the film portrays motherhood as a performative identity deeply intertwined with loss. As shown in figure 8, Manuela's grief propels her into renewed forms of maternal attachment, emphasizing that motherhood is not a static state but a dynamic process shaped by past relationships, present commitments, and future possibilities. This portrayal challenges normative assumptions about motherhood, suggesting that maternal identity can expand, contract, and transform across time. Even the motif of adoption emerges as an alternative kinship practice. The final scene, where Manuela tells Rosa's mother about raising her grandson, echoes Butler's claim that kinship is "a social practice constituted through acts of recognition, care, and interdependency," rather than a biological mandate.



Figure 8. Manuela holding Rosa's newborn baby.

The scene captures motherhood as a performative practice: through acts of holding and caring, Manuela reconstitutes maternal identity not through biology but through iterative gestures of nurturance. In Butlerian terms, this moment illustrates how motherhood emerges as a repeated citation of care, producing kinship through performance rather than essence.

This caregiving network—Manuela, Agrado, Huma, and Rosa—forms a queer family structure where identity is relational, interconnected, and fluid. The film thus reframes motherhood as performative, affective labor rather than biological inevitability.

4. Camp Aesthetics and Queer Embodiment in Almodóvar's Cinematic Language

Almodóvar's camp aesthetic is one of the film's most powerful tools for deconstructing gender norms. Camp does not simply decorate the film—it is integral to the film's politics of representation. Drawing on Susan Sontag's characterization of camp as an aesthetic mode rooted in exaggeration, theatricality, and artifice (1964), the film deploys vibrant colors, dramatic performances, and stylized compositions that highlight the performative nature of gender and identity. As shown in figures 9 and 10, camp functions here as a cinematic extension of Butlerian performativity: by emphasizing surface, gesture, and exaggeration, the film reveals gender as an aesthetic project rather than a biological reality. Several scenes illustrate this:



Figure 9. Backstage dressing room with mirrors and lights.

Costumes, wigs, and makeup underscore the film's exploration of gender as artifice. The multiplicity of mirrors fragments and multiplies the body, revealing femininity as something assembled, reflected, and rehearsed rather than naturally possessed. In this backstage space—where identities are tried on, adjusted, and perfected—Almodóvar exposes the labor and theatricality that underlie gender presentation. The scene visually enacts Butler's notion of performativity by making visible the iterative, material practices through which gender is crafted into legible form.



Figure 10. Agrado in close-up with makeup.

The colors and textures, and stylized femininity foreground the film's camp aesthetic, transforming Agrado's face into a site where gender is visibly crafted rather than naturally possessed. Her carefully constructed appearance embodies Butler's notion of gender as performative—a repeated, theatrical labor of self-presentation. Through this hyper-feminized close-up, the film highlights femininity as an aesthetic practice, revealing the artifice, pleasure, and self-authorship involved in its performance.

Camp aesthetic brings the viewer into a world where gender is intentionally theatrical. Dramatic gestures, humorous exaggeration, and flamboyant costuming become modes of queer embodiment. Characters such as Agrado and Huma Rojo embody camp in their gestures, costumes, and vocal inflections. As shown in figure 11, their performances expose the theatricality of gender, suggesting that identity is something staged rather than innate. Costume and makeup become tools of self-fashioning, echoing Butler's argument that gender is produced through stylized bodily acts. Even Huma Rojo's cigarette-smoking, melancholic diva persona functions as a campy commentary on feminine performance. Her stage presence and off-stage vulnerability contrast sharply, illustrating the slippage between performed identity and lived experience.



Figure 11. Huma Rojo in her red shawl on stage.

This image exemplifies camp aesthetics through theatricality, exaggeration, and diva performance. The vivid red shawl functions as an emblem of heightened femininity, foregrounding artifice and emotional excess as central aesthetic strategies. In this stylized pose, Huma embodies a femininity that is knowingly performed—a citational gesture that exposes gender itself as theatrical display. The scene also reflects Almodóvar's broader use of melodramatic excess to destabilize naturalized gender norms, transforming the stage into a space where identity is amplified, parodied, and reimagined.

Through camp, Almodóvar destabilizes the notion that gender has an authentic core. The film's aesthetic excess becomes a visual critique of the normativity that Butler critiques in performativity theory. Camp, in Almodóvar's hands, becomes not merely a stylistic choice but a political gesture—a mode of representing bodies and identities that refuse conformity. In this way, the film transforms queer aesthetics into a form of resistance that destabilizes the authority of normative gender scripts.

5. Abjection, Vulnerability, and the Fragile Body

The film also engages deeply with Kristeva's concept of abjection, which describes the psychic and social process through which bodies deemed disruptive to order and identity are expelled from the symbolic realm. Lola, Rosa, and even Manuela at moments embody forms of vulnerability that position them at the edges of social acceptance. As shown in figure 12, Lola's body—marked by illness, instability, and non-normative gender—becomes abject not because it is monstrous but because it defies the categories necessary for the heterosexual matrix to maintain coherence. As shown in figure 13, Rosa's pregnancy functions similarly. As a nun carrying the child of a trans

woman, her body destabilizes categories of purity, femininity, and religious discipline. Her position “disturbs identity, system, and order,” echoing Kristeva’s definition of the abject (1982, p. 4). In addition to Rosa’s illness and Lola’s HIV-marked body, Agrado’s wounded face further exemplifies the dynamics of abjection in the film. As shown in figure 14 her injury renders visible the rupture of bodily integrity that Kristeva identifies as provoking both fascination and repulsion, exposing the fragile surface where identity, gender performance, and social legibility are negotiated. Agrado’s damaged skin momentarily disrupts the hyper-aestheticized femininity she performs, revealing the vulnerability that underlies even the most stylized embodiments and positioning her alongside Rosa and Lola as subjects whose bodies unsettle normative boundaries. Yet *All About My Mother* resists casting these bodies as shameful or contaminating. Instead, the film humanizes, dignifies, and centers them, challenging abjection by reclaiming the fragile body as a site of empathy and relationality.



Figure 12. Lola in the funeral scene.

Lola’s solitary presence at the funeral underscores the instability of trans femininity within what Butler terms the heterosexual matrix, where HIV-positive bodies and non-normative genders become culturally unintelligible. Her isolation in a space structured by kinship and ritual reveals how public mourning is regulated by norms that exclude those positioned outside heteronormative legitimacy. Lola’s HIV-positive status further intensifies this exclusion, aligning her with what Kristeva describes as the abject—bodies marked by illness, vulnerability, and perceived threat to social order.



Figure 13. Rosa's deteriorating health.

This scene is marked by her pale complexion and the clinical coldness of hospital spaces. This scene foregrounds the abject body, as Rosa's illness exposes the fragility and permeability of bodily boundaries. Her vulnerable state disrupts idealized images of motherhood (the nun's role) and purity, illustrating how abjection intersects with care, illness, and the reconfiguration of family ties within the film's queer kinship network.



Figure 14. Agrado with a wounded face.

This image exemplifies Kristeva's concept of abjection: Agrado's injured skin disrupts the illusion of a coherent, "proper" body, exposing the fragile boundary between the socially acceptable self and the marginalized, out-of-place body. The wound renders visible the violence and exclusion imposed on trans women, revealing how femininity is both embodied and vulnerable within a society that rejects what it cannot assimilate.

These moments highlight bodies that fall outside symbolic order and thus provoke anxiety or rejection. Yet Almodóvar refuses to render them

monstrous. The film reframes abjection not as exclusion but as an opening to solidarity. Vulnerability becomes a point of connection between characters, allowing them to form bonds because they have all experienced loss, pain, or marginalization. The fragile body, far from being expelled, becomes the very ground on which alternative forms of kinship and community are built.

6. Repetition, Transformation, and the Possibility of Rearticulation

One of the central mechanisms through which *All About My Mother* constructs identity is the dynamic interplay between repetition and transformation — exactly the relationship Judith Butler identifies as iterability. For Butler, repetition is not mere duplication. It always contains the possibility of deviation, slippage, and re-signification. In her words, “every repetition is a rearticulation” (Butler, 1993, p. 95), meaning that identity emerges not through sameness but through subtle yet meaningful variations across time. Almodóvar’s film visualizes this logic through narrative cycles, mirrored scenes, and characters who reenact past performances in new contexts, thus transforming their identities.

The most striking example of iterability occurs in the way Manuela’s maternal identity is staged through repeated actions. Early in the film, when Esteban follows Huma Rojo to request an autograph, Manuela watches him from a distance with a mixture of pride and anxiety — a gesture that echoes the later scene in which she follows Rosa to ensure her safety while pregnant. These parallel scenes demonstrate how maternal behavior is repeated under different circumstances, allowing Manuela’s identity to be reconstituted. The tenderness with which she supports Rosa mirrors the tenderness once shown toward Esteban, yet the emotional weight and context shift, producing a new articulation of motherhood. This repetition with difference shows how maternal identity is not static but continually rewritten.

As shown in figures 15 and 16, the reenactment of *A Streetcar Named Desire* functions as another key site of iterability. Manuela previously performed the role of Stella professionally, and she now performs it again years later opposite Huma — but with a radically altered emotional meaning after losing her son. The lines she speaks remain the same, yet the affective resonance changes because of the lived experience that has reshaped her identity. This layered theatrical repetition perfectly embodies Butler’s notion that citation always risks resignification: the same words spoken under new conditions produce new meanings. The film uses theatrical performance to reveal how gendered and emotional identities are themselves theatrical, citational, and perpetually open to transformation.



Figure 15. Manuela acting in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

This reenactment scene exemplifies Butler's concept of iterability—repetition that transforms previous meaning. By stepping into the role of Stella, Manuela re-performs lines and gestures that once belonged to another narrative, rearticulating them through the weight of her own grief and lived experience. The theatrical repetition becomes a site of emotional and symbolic rewriting, showing how performances acquire new meanings when enacted in different contexts. In this moment, the stage becomes a space where identity, memory, and motherhood are reproduced through citation, demonstrating Butler's argument that repeated acts are never mere reproductions but openings for transformation.



Figure 16. Manuela appearing both as a spectator and as a performer in the theatre.

This dual positioning visualizes Butler's notion of iterability: Manuela constantly reenacts and rearticulates her identity by shifting between observing and enacting roles. Her presence on both sides of the stage dissolves the boundary between audience and actor, revealing gender and motherhood as performances that are simultaneously embodied, witnessed, and rewritten.

Agrado's monologue on stage also exemplifies rearticulation. She recounts the surgeries she has undergone "to become more like herself," repeating autobiographical elements she has likely told many times in her life. Yet, as she delivers them to a new audience, in a moment of vulnerability after the canceled play, the narrative acquires a renewed political agency. Her self-description is not merely comedic; it becomes a form of reclaiming her place in a world that often renders trans women illegible. The repeated telling becomes a tool of empowerment — a rearticulation that transforms her identity in the eyes of the audience. Each retelling enacts Butler's idea that identity is sustained not by a single act but by a continuous, iterative process.

Even Lola's character embodies repetition as transformation. Her return to Barcelona at the end of her life mirrors her earlier abandonment of Manuela. But this time, the return is framed through regret, illness, and the desire for reconciliation. The repetition of leaving and returning — first as an act of desertion, later as an act of seeking forgiveness — reveals how identity is rearticulated across time through the possibilities opened by emotional change. The same relational structure (Manuela and Lola) becomes re-signified: once a story of abandonment, it becomes one of closure and acknowledgment. Lola's identity is not redeemed through biological fatherhood but through a transformed emotional performance at the threshold of death.

The structure of the film itself is cyclical. It begins with a mother and son watching the theater and ends with another mother and son (Manuela and Rosa's baby) re-entering the same emotional landscape. The repetition does not restore the past but rearticulates it. Esteban dies, Rosa dies, but new forms of kinship emerge — demonstrating the queer possibility of identity and family being continually rewritten. As shown in figure 17, the final image of Manuela holding Rosa's baby echoes the earlier image of her holding Esteban, yet the new context transforms the meaning entirely. It is both repetition and renewal, grief and rebirth — a deeply Butlerian vision of how identities survive through re-signification.



Figure 17. Manuela leaving the city with newborn Esteban and later returning with him as a two-year-old child.

This mirrored journey encapsulates the film's structure of repetition and rearticulation: the departure and return replay Manuela's earlier quest after her son's death, echoing the cyclical movement that first sent her to Barcelona. In Butlerian terms, these journeys perform motherhood as an iterative act—each passage, each carrying of Esteban (first the lost Esteban, then the newborn Esteban, and finally the two-year-old Esteban) reconstitutes her maternal identity through repetition. The shifting direction of the trains marks not a restoration of what was lost, but the continual rewriting of kinship, grief, and becoming across time.

Thus, *All About My Mother* visualizes Butler's theory of iterability by showing that identity is always in the process of becoming. Through repeated gestures, reenacted roles, mirrored scenes, and emotional transformations, the film asserts that identity is never finalized. The characters' experiences

demonstrate that every repetition is an opportunity for rearticulation — a possibility for transforming oneself, reshaping relationships, and envisioning new modes of living beyond normative constraints. Almodóvar uses repetition not as a narrative device of closure but as an aesthetic and political tool that opens pathways for fluidity, change, and renewed meaning.

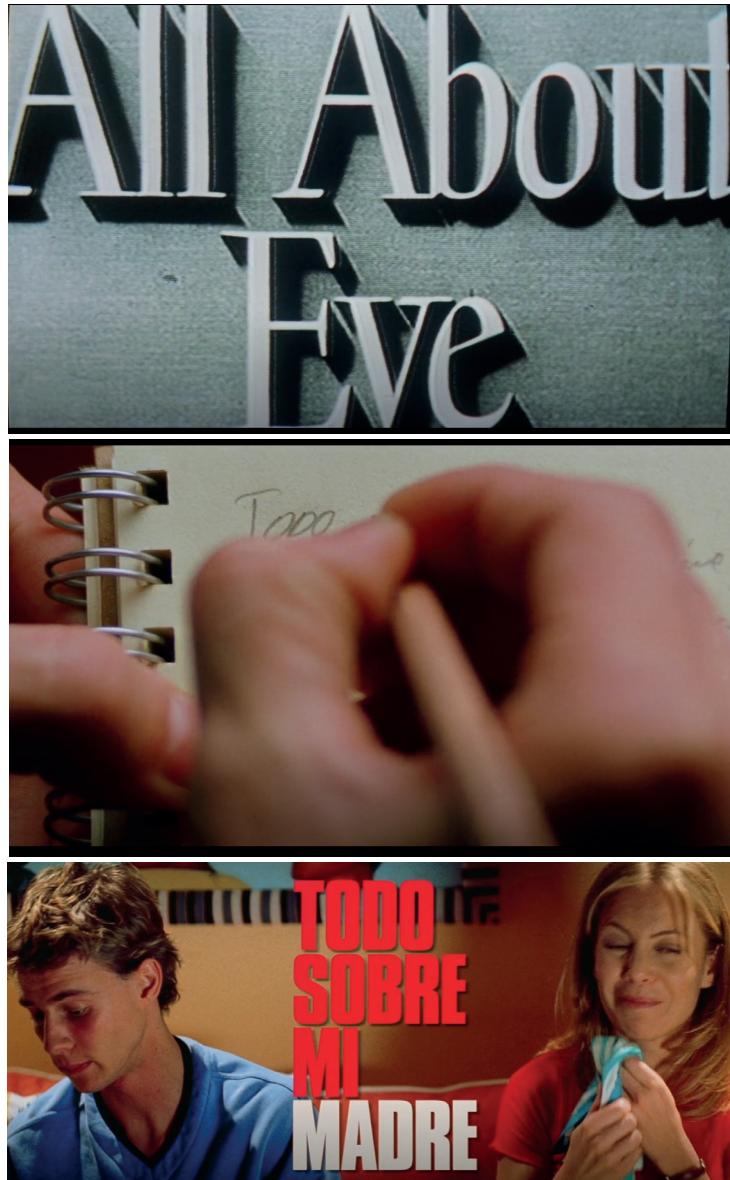


Figure 18. Esteban writing in his notebook during the screening of *All About Eve*. As Esteban begins to write “Todo...,” the film overlays its own title, “Todo sobre mi madre,” onto the screen.

This intertextual moment reveals the film's self-reflexive structure: Almodóvar stages his narrative as a rewritten citation of *All About Eve*, just as Esteban's gesture of writing mirrors the film's act of naming itself. In Butlerian terms, the scene visualizes identity as an iterative process—titles, roles, and selves are not fixed but continually rewritten through repetition and rearticulation. Esteban's inscription becomes the first performative act through which the film constructs its own lineage, linking authorship, motherhood, and storytelling as interconnected performances.

As shown in figure 19, the film's final dedication transforms the closing curtain into a meta-theatrical manifesto that encapsulates Almodóvar's vision of gender, performance, and kinship. By invoking actresses, women who act, men who act and become women, and those who yearn for motherhood, the inscription stages identity as fundamentally citational—assembled through repetition, imitation, and rearticulation. This gesture echoes Butler's argument that gender is not an interior truth but a role enacted across different contexts, continually shaped through performance. The dedication also extends this logic to kinship, suggesting that motherhood itself is a performative horizon rather than a biological destiny. In blurring the boundaries between actor and role, life and performance, the real and the performed body, the final frame situates identity within a collective genealogy of becoming—a lineage composed of those who have lived, embodied, or aspired to identities beyond normative scripts. Thus, the closing image does not simply end the narrative; it reframes the film as part of an ongoing cultural performance in which gender and kinship remain fluid, creative, and open to reimagining.

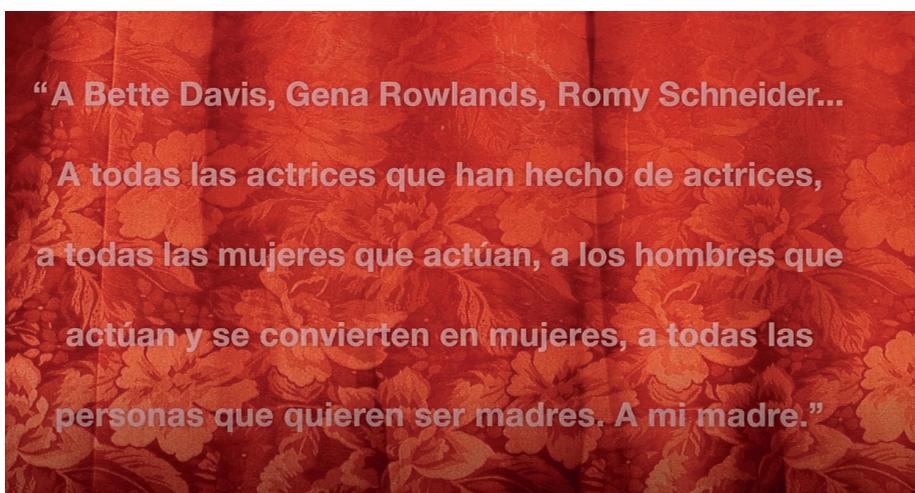


Figure 19. Closing dedication on the theatre curtain.

In its final gesture, the film inscribes a tribute “to Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider; to all actresses who have played actresses; to all

women who act; to men who act and become women, and to all who long for motherhood”—a litany that transforms the curtain into a surface of collective becoming. This meta-theatrical dedication poetically affirms Butler’s notion that identity is a citational practice: a role inhabited, repeated, and continuously reimagined. By addressing performers and would-be mothers alike, the inscription blurs the boundary between life and performance, honoring gender and kinship as fluid acts of self-creation.

Conclusion

All About My Mother ultimately demonstrates that gender, identity, and kinship are not fixed but continually produced through performance, relationality, and embodied experience. Through Butler’s framework of performativity and the heterosexual matrix, the film reveals the instability of the gender binary by foregrounding characters who embody gender through repeated acts rather than biological determinism. Agrado’s theatrical monologue, for instance, not only exposes the constructed nature of femininity but also affirms that authenticity emerges through performance rather than essence. Her line, “You are more authentic the more you resemble what you’ve dreamed of being,” becomes a manifesto for Butlerian performativity, illustrating how identity is shaped through reiterative acts that simultaneously cite and subvert normative expectations.

The film’s representation of trans women, particularly Lola and Agrado, further challenges the coherence of heteronormative frameworks. Lola’s role as both a trans woman and a father destabilizes normative configurations of sex, gender, and kinship. In the hospital scene where Manuela informs Lola about Esteban’s desire to meet her, the camera lingers on Lola’s emotional breakdown, capturing the complexity of an identity that the heterosexual matrix cannot contain. These scenes illustrate Butler’s claim that identities outside normative structures expose the limits of cultural intelligibility and open new possibilities for rearticulation.

Kristeva’s concept of abjection is equally crucial to understanding how the film frames bodies marked by vulnerability. Rosa’s pregnancy and illness, Lola’s declining health, and the traumatic death of Esteban all highlight bodies that disrupt the stability of symbolic order. Yet Almodóvar refuses to cast these bodies as polluted or monstrous. Instead, he transforms abjection into a space of empathy and connection. For example, the scene in which Manuela bathes Rosa’s newborn child while mourning Rosa’s death encapsulates this transformation: the abject body becomes the origin of new kinship, new forms of care, and new relational meaning. Vulnerability becomes not a point of exclusion but a catalyst for solidarity among characters whose identities fall outside normative spaces.

Camp aesthetics further reinforce the film's critique of gender norms. Almodóvar's heightened visual style—seen in the vibrant reds of the theater curtains, Huma Rojo's dramatic makeup, and Agrado's flamboyant costuming—creates a world where theatricality itself becomes a mode of truth. The dressing-room scenes, for example, stage femininity as performance through mirrors, wigs, and makeup, illustrating the porous boundary between theatrical and gendered identity. Camp's playful exaggeration exposes the constructedness of gender, aligning with Butler's argument that gender is always already a performance. By embedding queer embodiment within the film's aesthetic language, Almodóvar reclaims excess, melodrama, and theatricality as political tools that challenge heteronormative realism.

Finally, the film constructs a vision of alternative, queer kinship grounded in care rather than biology. The household formed by Manuela, Agrado, and Huma—symbolized through scenes of shared meals, caregiving, and intimate conversation—emerges as a chosen family structure that resists the nuclear family model. The last scene, in which Manuela returns to Barcelona with Rosa's baby, encapsulates this vision: motherhood is not a biological destiny but a performative commitment enacted through repeated acts of love, responsibility, and presence. This reiteration of maternal identity reflects Butler's idea that kinship can be reimagined beyond heteronormative constraints.

In sum, *All About My Mother* exemplifies how cinema can serve as a site for challenging normative gender categories, exposing the constructedness of identity, and envisioning alternative forms of belonging. Through its complex characters, embodied performances, camp aesthetics, and affective emotional landscape, the film not only illustrates Butlerian performativity and Kristevan abjection but also expands these theories into a cinematic language of fluidity, resistance, and relational transformation. Almodóvar's film ultimately affirms that identity is an ongoing practice—one that is continually reshaped through repetition, deviation, and the imaginative possibilities of human connection.

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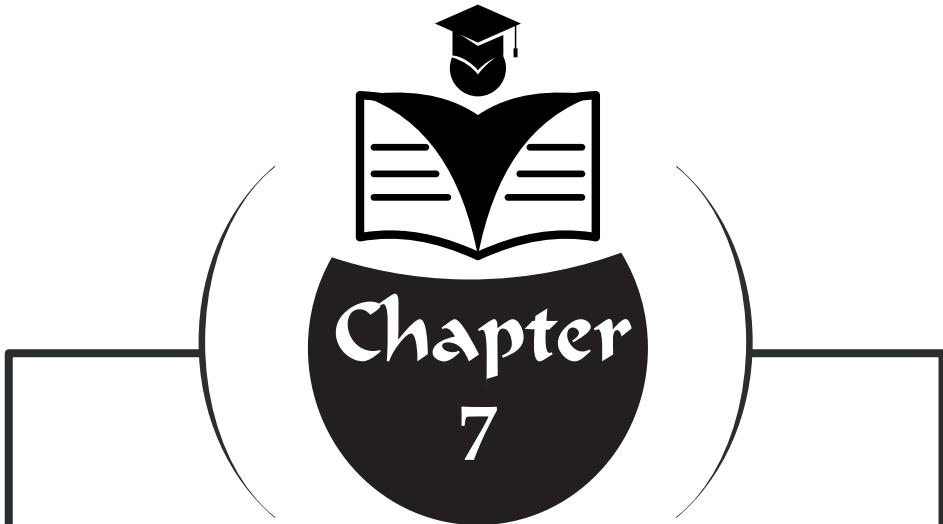
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WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT CARBON FOOTPRINT IN THE AVIATION SECTOR?

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1. Introduction

The industrial activities carried out by today's business world, integrated with certain new technological developments, are causing environmental damage to nature. It is acknowledged that the damage caused by industry to the environment has reached a global scale. Various policies are being developed to address this global issue and mitigate its negative effects. Global aviation activities are also required to operate in a manner that causes minimal harm to the environment, in accordance with decisions made by international organizations.

When evaluated in an environmental context, airport operations cause noise, air and water pollution, and solid and liquid waste. The noise generated by aircraft and ground service vehicles at airports, along with emissions such as nitrogen oxides, unburned hydrocarbons, and carbon monoxide, contribute to poor air quality and may contribute to climate change (Canöz & Ertek, 2020). In addition, de/anti-icing fluids used to prevent icing, fuel leaks during refueling, oils released into the environment during maintenance and repair, fire extinguishing fluids mixing with nature, materials used in aircraft hangar workshops, electrical energy suppliers, and substances used in airport activities, including food, sewage waste contribute to environmental pollution, thereby causing changes in the climate and disrupting natural life (SHGM, 2010).

In 2024, the busiest airports in Europe were London Heathrow (83.9 million passengers) in the United Kingdom, Istanbul IGA (80.1 million passengers) in Türkiye, and Paris Charles de Gaulle (70.3 million passengers) in France (Airline101, 2025). Türkiye is the second-largest HUB country within the European mainland. Therefore, the presence of zero-carbon emission airports in Türkiye is of critical importance for a sustainable future.

The purpose of this study is to assess the carbon footprint within a conceptual framework, identify the environmental impacts of aviation activities on the carbon footprint, and reveal the activities carried out in Turkey and European Union countries to eliminate carbon footprints. In this context, the studies, projects, and current progress reports of national and international institutions and organizations responsible for the implementation and supervision of aviation activities will be carefully examined to contribute to the literature. Additionally, recommendations will be made to reduce carbon emissions. Another reason contributing to the value of this study is the limited number of research studies conducted on aviation, which has a high environmental impact.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Carbon Footprint

The concept of carbon footprint was introduced into the literature by Wackernagel and Rees (1998) as one of the factors contributing to the ecological footprint (Wackernagel & Rees, 1998). The ecological footprint consists of the carbon footprint, agricultural land footprint, forest footprint, built-up area footprint, fishing footprint, and grazing footprint (WWF, 2012). The carbon footprint is the amount of carbon dioxide or carbon equivalent emitted by the products and services produced by businesses throughout their life cycle (Goodier, 2011). In other words, the carbon footprint is a measure of a business's contribution to global warming and is referred to as GWP. The heat retention coefficients and atmospheric lifetimes of greenhouse gases are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Greenhouse Gases and Their Global Warming Potential

Greenhouse Gas	Global Warming Potential (GWP)	CO ₂ Equivalent	Atmospheric Lifetime	Main Source
Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	1	1	Can last for Centuries	Burning fossil fuels, forest fires, cement production.
Methane (CH ₄)	28	21	12.4 Years	Landfill sites, production and distribution of oil and natural gas, fermentation in the digestive systems of farm animals
Nitroxide (N ₂ O)	265	310	121 Years	N ₂ O Combustion of fossil fuels, fertilizers, nylon production.
Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)	1.760	140~11.700	Up to 242 Years	Refrigerator gases, aluminum smelting, semiconductor production.
Perfluorocarbons (PFCs)	6500~9200	6.500~9.200	Up to 50.000 Years	Aluminum production, semiconductor production.
Hexafluoride Sulfur	23.500	23.900	3.200 Years	Electricity generation and transmission systems, magnesium production.

Sources: Gielens & Kram, 1998 and Durak, 2025.

As can be seen in Table 1, the damage caused by greenhouse gas emissions to the environment is enormous. The first international step taken in this area was the Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHG Protocol), which was established in 1998 by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). According to research conducted by the Climate Science Meteorology Office at the University of East Anglia in the UK, the increase in air temperature in the first century ending in 2000 was

$0.6 \pm 0.2^{\circ}\text{C}$, while this increase reached $0.74 \pm 0.18^{\circ}\text{C}$ in 2005. It is projected that this value will rise by an additional $1.1\text{--}6.4^{\circ}\text{C}$ in the 21st century (Sağlam et al., 2008).

If we cannot eliminate our carbon footprint and prevent global warming, the main problems facing our world will be (Bekiroğlu, 2011):

- i. Agricultural land productivity will decline in Europe and Russia,
- ii. As a result of rising sea levels, some cities and islands in coastal areas of countries with coastlines will be submerged,
- iii. Forest fires will increase day by day,
- iv. Erosion, desertification, and drought will increase,
- v. Some species within natural habitats will become extinct, and the habitats of remaining species will shrink,
- vi. Deaths caused by rising temperatures will occur,
- vii. The northern part of Africa will become completely desertified, and large-scale migrations will begin,
- viii. Available water resources will decrease.
- ix. ii. The Arctic Ocean will completely melt.
- x. Infectious diseases, especially malaria, will emerge and spread throughout the world, particularly in North America and Africa.

In his study, Bekiroğlu (2011) summarized carbon footprints under two main headings: (1) personal carbon footprint, which is the emissions released into nature by a person throughout their lifetime, and (2) corporate carbon footprint, which is the emissions generated by businesses as a result of their annual activities.

2.2. The Aviation Sector and Carbon Footprint Impacts

As Turkey's motto of preparing for the new centuries continues rapidly in terms of technology, industry, and economy, integration with the decisions taken by international institutions and organizations in the field of aviation is also continuing at the same pace. Global warming and climate change are caused by consistent changes in global temperatures and weather patterns resulting from human-induced emissions, primarily from gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) and greenhouse gases (GHG) (Rising et al., 2022).

Gases causing the greenhouse effect in the world are 35-70% water vapor, 9-26% carbon dioxide, 4-9% methane, and 3-7% ozone. While some of these gases are produced within the natural cycle, a large portion is caused by

human activities. One of the most important human sources is airports. The primary sources of carbon emissions that could occur at a minimal airport, as shown in Figure 1 (ACA, 2019):



Figure 1: Emissions Sources at Airports

Sources:ACA, 2019.

- (1) **Scope 1/Controlled Source Emissions:** Ground support vehicles on the apron, on-site waste, on-site wastewater, on-site energy production, firefighting activities, boilers, and furnaces.
- (2) **Scope 2/Purchased Electricity Source Emissions:** Off-site electricity use (heating, cooling, and lighting activities).
- (3) **Scope 3/Emissions from Other Sources:** Runway (aircraft takeoffs and landings), aircraft ground operations emissions, auxiliary power units, transportation of passengers/personnel to the airport.

Airports contribute to greenhouse gas emissions not only during takeoff and landing but also due to the energy consumption and waste generated during passenger services. The five greatest threats over the next decade are the intensification of extreme weather events, ecosystem collapse, depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation caused by human activities, and climate change (Shivanna, 2022). For this reason, international aviation authorities are developing emergency plans and making calls to ensure the future is safeguarded (Atwoli, 2021).

2.3. Activities of National and International Institutions/ Organizations in the Aviation Sector

To reduce the environmental impact of aviation activities, international and national aviation organizations have established standards and are taking measures to encourage aviation operators to comply with these decisions. In the international context, the United Nations (UN), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Air Transport Association

(IATA), the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation (EUROCONTROL), the International Airports Council (ACI), and at the national level, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the General Directorate of Civil Aviation (SHGM), and the State Airports Authority (DHMI) are conducting various studies to minimize the environmental impacts of aviation on a global scale (Table 2).

Table 2: Environmental Projects of Institutions and Organizations Operating in the Aviation Sector

INSTITUTION	WORK IN PROGRESS	WORK AREA
ICAO- International Civil Aviation Organization	-Annex-16 (2016) -CAEP- Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection	- Provides recommendations on aircraft noise, emissions, and land use - Assessment of future environmental trends in aviation related to aircraft engine greenhouse gas emissions affecting the global climate, aircraft noise, and aircraft engine emissions affecting local air quality.
IATA- International Air Transport Association	-Airport Environmental Trend Report	- It provides recommendations on topics such as developing sustainable aviation fuel, enabling voluntary carbon offsetting, reducing cabin waste, taxing air quality, and developing carbon emission strategies.
EASA- European Union Aviation Safety Agency	-European Plan for Aviation Safety (EPAS)	- It establishes standards related to noise, air quality, and climate change.
EUROCONTROL- Supporting European Aviation	-Netzero - Fuelling Decarb - ClimAdapt - DecarbFin	- Reduction of aircraft emissions. - Transition to sustainable fuels. - Building resilience to climate change to ensure efficient and safe operations. - Accelerating access to green finance for aviation.
Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change	Publishing Laws, Regulations, and Legislation	- 1983 Environmental Law - 2005 Regulation on the Control of Air Pollution Caused by Heating - 2006 Regulation on the Control of Air Pollution Caused by Heating - 2008 Air Quality Assessment and Management Regulation - 2009 Regulation on the Control of Industrial Air Pollution - 2010 Regulation on the Regular Storage of Waste - 2010 Regulation on the Incineration of Waste - 2018 Periods When Weather Conditions Are Unsuitable for Work - 2020 Regulation Amending the Regulation on the Control of Industrial Air Pollution - 2020 Applications for Air Pollution Control

- 2021 General Directive on the Prevention of Air Pollution
- 2013 Climate Change and Air Management Coordination Board Circular

SHGM- Directorate General of Civil Aviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SHGM is responsible for determining the criteria for the location of civil airports. SHGM is responsible for determining the criteria for the location of civil airports. 	To determine the principles of the Green Airport Project within the scope of ACA and to ensure its widespread adoption.
DHMİ- General Directorate Of State Airports Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a public institution responsible for the operation of airports within Turkey's borders and the regulation and control of traffic in Turkish airspace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitoring work on Quality, Environment, and Safety Management System issues and engaging in activities related to the establishment, development, and maintenance of the system. - Use of electric vehicles in airport ground operations. - Implementing ACI's ACA Project (3rd country with the most ACA accreditation in the world) - De-icing Chemical Recovery and Treatment Project - Encouraging aviation companies to obtain Zero Waste Certificates issued under the "Zero Waste Regulation" published by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. - Preparation and Publication of Environmental Noise Maps for Airports under the Environmental Noise Control Regulation - Environmental Noise Maps for Airports - Encourage aviation companies to obtain TS EN ISO 14001 Environmental Management System Certification.

Source: *Produced by the author (compiled from the websites of institutions/ organizations)*

The first international step taken to address the climate crisis on a global scale was the Kyoto Protocol, which was adopted on December 11, 1997, and entered into force on February 16, 2005. The Kyoto Protocol obliges the economies of industrialized countries and those in the process of industrialization to limit and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in accordance with the targets set forth in the protocol (UN, 2020).

The second international step was taken by the United Nations, in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, when 191 member states signed the Paris Agreement in 2016, with the aim of reducing climate change, minimizing carbon emissions in nature, and ensuring financing and international adaptation. The main objective of the agreement is to limit global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as it is recognized that this would significantly reduce the impacts and risks of climate change (UN, 2015). The most important feature that distinguishes the Paris Agreement from the Kyoto Protocol is that it requires countries to plan and regularly report on their contributions to reducing global warming. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) In accordance with the decision taken at the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP 24), it was decided that countries that are parties to the agreement should update their national climate commitments, which will come into effect in 2020, and set more ambitious targets to prevent climate change from reaching dangerous levels (350.org., 2018). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) special report states that if global CO₂ emissions are not reduced by half by 2030 and to zero by 2050, a global catastrophe is imminent (IPCC, 2001). Additionally, it is projected that global warming will exceed 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if urgent action is not taken.

2.3.1. ACA and Green Airport Projects

Launched in 2009 by the Airports Council International (ACI), which manages more than 90% of air traffic in Europe and includes 558 airports, the Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) program aims to reduce carbon emissions at participating airports to zero by 2050.

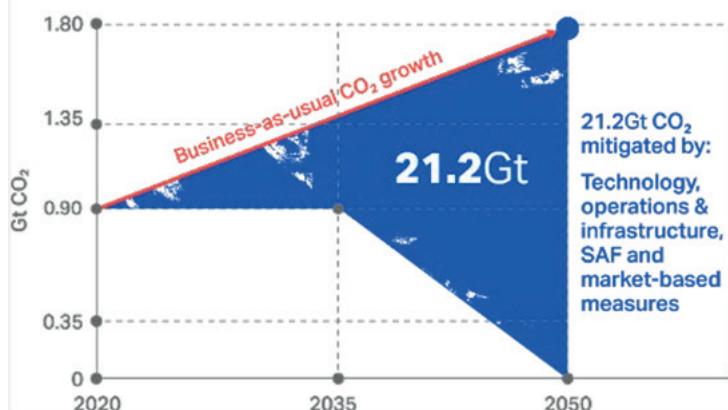


Figure 2: Net Zero Aviation Carbon Emission to be Achieved by 2050

Sources: <https://airportco2.org/>

Airport Carbon Accreditation is the only corporate and global certification program that recognizes airports' efforts to manage and reduce

their carbon emissions through seven levels of certification. The details of the program, which has achieved Level 5 of the zero emissions target, are as follows (ACA, 2015):

- **Level 1:** Identify the operational boundary (scope 1 and scope 2) defined in the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and the emission sources within this boundary,
- **Level 2:** Have fulfilled all the requirements of Level 1, demonstrate effective carbon management and target setting procedures, and prove that the carbon footprint of the airport has decreased compared to previous years' emissions.
- **Level 3:** Meet the requirements of Levels 1 and 2, expand the scope of the carbon footprint in accordance with the GHG Protocol. (Scope 3 emissions: emissions from the takeoff and landing cycle, airport access for passengers and staff, and staff business travel emissions),
- **+ Level 3:** To reach this level, you must have certificates for all other levels. In addition, you must offset the carbon emissions from Scope 1 and 2 and the emissions from employee business travel using international offset methods.
- **Level 4:** Possess all other certifications, develop a Carbon Management Plan and report in detail, create a Stakeholder Partnership Plan with stakeholders, and take measures. (Measures taken must be supported by action plans, and stakeholders and third parties must be actively involved in emission reduction).
- **+ Level 4:** If the carbon footprint persists despite meeting all level requirements, fund projects developed to reduce unavoidable emissions.
- **Level 5:** The airport must enhance its ability to facilitate and guide the achievement of its Net Zero CO₂ Emissions Target. At Level 5, the airport confirms that it has achieved net zero carbon balance in Scope 1 and 2, is stable at a certain level, and has addressed emissions sources in Scope 3.

This project, which is being carried out with great care by international aviation authorities, is continuing its accreditation processes with the aim of reducing carbon emissions to zero at airports around the world.

Türkiyerkey submitted its national contribution intention (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions-INDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat on September 30, 2015,

in line with the Paris Agreement (UAB, 2015). In its national contribution, Turkey has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 21% by 2030. The aviation sector's share of this commitment is to reduce carbon emissions in the aviation sector to zero by 2050. To this end, the Carbon-Neutral Airport Project and Green Airport Projects have been implemented by DHMİ under the ACA-Airport Carbon Accreditation program of the UN and ACI. The primary objective of both programs is to take measures against global warming and climate change, leaving a livable world for future generations and ensuring sustainable airport operations (DHMİ, 2015).

Havacılık alanında Türkiye'nin taraf olduğu uluslararası kurum ve kuruluşlarının almış olduğu, "havacılıkta sıfır karbon emisyonu" amacıyla alınan kararlar sırasıyla Çevre ve Şehircilik ve İklim Değişikliği ve Ulaştırma Alt ve Altyapı Bakanlıklar, SHGM ve DHMİ tarafından uygulanmaktadır. Bu amaçla SHGM, havalimanlarında faaliyet gösteren havacılık işletmelerinin çevreye duyarlı olabilmeleri, verilen zararın sıfıra indirebilmesi için Yeşil Havalimanı Projesi başlatmıştır. Bu proje ile belirlenen kritelere uyan işletmelere bazı ayrıcalıklar sağlanmakta ve Yeşil Kuruluş sertifikası verilmektedir.

The "Green Organization" certification program, established in accordance with the Paris Agreement following the expiration of the Kyoto Protocol in 2020, includes emergency plans and measures to address climate change.

While the integration of Türkiye's airports into ACI's ACA program is progressing at full speed, the Climate Change Law was passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly on July 3, 2025. The Climate Law establishes the procedures and principles for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, planning and implementing climate change adaptation activities, and determining the legal framework related to these measures (BBC, 2025).

The relevant section of the law, specifically Section 3, Paragraph c, has established the green aviation target as a legal requirement. According to the law provision, the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure is responsible for conducting studies to decarbonize all elements of the aviation sector and the aviation value chain, developing zero-emission fuel supply and charging capabilities, promoting the use of low- or zero-emission aircraft, and establishing green aviation corridors." (IDB, 2025).

Despite being the busiest country in Europe and the sixth busiest in the world in terms of daily flight numbers, aviation accounts for only 2% of Türkiye's emissions (IDB, 2022). Although aviation's share of Türkiye's greenhouse gas emissions may seem small, the IGA Airport, which is expected to be completed by 2028 and has a capacity of 200 million passengers, is set

to become Europe's busiest hub. Once construction is finished and it operates at full capacity, this percentage is expected to increase further. Additionally, passenger traffic at Istanbul's Sabiha Gökçen, Ankara-Esenboğa, İzmir-Adnan Menderes, and Antalya's Antalya and Gazipaşa airports is also quite high.

2.3.1.1. ACA Project Progress Report in European Union Countries and Türkiye

When reviewing the latest lists published by the ACA, it is observed that accreditation processes are ongoing at most airports in European Union (EU) countries, with Finland being the only country where the accreditation process has been completed at all airports (Table 3). France leads the EU countries with 54 airports undergoing accreditation, followed by Italy with 18 airports.

Table 3: Table of ACA Accreditation Processes in European Union Member States

Country	Levels & Airport Codes	Country	Levels & Airport Codes
Austria	Level 3: VIE	Luxembourg	Level 4+: LUX
Belgium	Level 2: ANR, OST Level 4: CRL, LGG Level 4+: BRU	Lithuania	Level 2: KUN, ALQ Level 3: NVO, RIX
Bulgaria	Level 2: BOJ, VAR Level 4: SOF	Netherlands	Level 3: MLA Level 5: AMS, EIN, RTM
Croatia	Level 1: ZAD Level 2: DBV Level 3: ZAG	Portugal	Level 4+: FAO, FLW, HOR, LIS, OPO Level 5: BYJ, FNC, PDL
Czechia	Level 3: PRG	Poland	Level 1: GDN, WAW
Denmark	Level 2: BLL Level 3: AAL Level 3+: CPH	Romania	Level 1: SBZ Level 2: BBU, CIJ Level 3: OTP
Estonia	Level 3: TLL	Slovenia	Level 2: LJU
Finland	Level 5: HEL, IVI, KTT, KAO, RVN	Spain	Level 2: ACE, LEU, ILD, CDT Level 3: ALC, IBZ, AGP, PMI Level 4: MAD, BCN, PMS
Germany	Level 1: LEJ, DRS Level 2: CGN, FMM Level 3: BER, DUS, MUC, STR, FRA Level 3+: HAM	Sweden	Level 2: LYC Level 3: KLR Level 3+: AGH, SDL Level 4+: LLA, BMA, UME Level 5: OSD, GOT, KRN, MMX, RNB, ARN, VBY
Greece	Level 1: PVK, CHQ, CFU, KVA, EFL, KGS, MJT, JMK, RHO, SMI, JTR, ISI, SKG, ZTH Level 4+: ATH	Ireland	Level 2: SNN Level 3: NOC Level 3+: DUB, ORK
S.Cyprus	Level 4+: LCA, PFO	Hungary	Level 4+: BUD

France	Level 1: DNR Level 2: AJA, ANG, AVN, AUR, BES, BVE, BYF, BZR, CFR, CVF, DOL, LFFI, LFDH, LIG, LIL, LME, LRT, NCY, ORE, PIS, RDZ Level 3: SXB, EGC, XCD, QXB, DLE, ANE, AUF, BOU, CER, DIJ, FNI, LFBF, TUF, QYR, PUF, MPL, CCF, PGF, LDE, CMF, GNB, RNS, SNR Level 4: NTE, BVA, BSL, CDG, LBG, ORY, MRS Level 4+: LYS, LYN, TLS, CEQ, NCE, LTT Level 5: TLN
Italy	Level 2: CAG, AHO, FLR, PSA Level 3: BGY, CTA, OLB Level 3+: VRN, PMO, TRN, TRS Level 4+: FCO, CFA, BLQ, LIN, MXP, VCE Level 5: NAP

Source: ACA, compiled from the 2025 Reports on July 7, 2005.

Following Finland, which has completed accreditation at all airports within the EU member states, Sweden, Portugal, France, and Italy are the countries with airports that have completed accreditation. In the non-EU member states of the UK, Switzerland, Georgia, Macedonia, and Norway, accreditation processes are ongoing at many airports.

Türkiye, which is not a member of the EU, is a member of international aviation organizations and institutions operating in European airspace. As shown in Table 4, Türkiye's ACA-accredited operations are ongoing at 47 airports. Although no airport has yet completed accreditation, Türkiye is the country with the second-highest number of accredited airports after France when compared to EU member states.

Table 4: ACA Accreditation Process Table for Airports in Türkiye

Türkiye	Level 1: BJV Level 2: ADA, ADE, AJI, ASR, BAL, BGG, BZI, CKZ, DIY, DNZ, EDO, ERC, EZS, GKD, GNY, GZT, HTY, IGD, ISE, KCM, KCO, KFS, KSY, KYA, MLX, MSR, MQM, MZH, NAV, NKT, NOP, OGU, SZF, SXZ, TEQ, TJK, TZK, USQ, VAN, VAS, YEI, YKO Level 3: ERZ, DLM Level 4: IGA Level 4+: ESB Level 5:
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Source: ACA, compiled from the 2025 Reports on July 7, 2005.

When evaluating carbon footprint reduction efforts in Türkiye, it is evident that the situation is being taken seriously through published laws, regulations, and circulars.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The growth of the aviation industry and the resulting increase in traffic are causing carbon footprints in the air to grow at the same rate. Steps taken by

many international organizations to reduce carbon emissions are pushing the aviation industry to take urgent action on this issue. The intense pressure on the aviation industry is also bringing about a costly and challenging process for aviation stakeholders (Chiambaretto et al., 2021).

Although the ACA project, which is being implemented at the international level, aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050, a comprehensive assessment shows that this will not be an easy process, given that fossil fuels are currently used in aircraft and airports.

Türkiye's efforts under the ACA program demonstrate significant progress within the sector. However, much more effort, investment, and innovative solutions are needed to achieve a sustainable aviation industry. Based on our research, our recommendations for eliminating the carbon footprint in nature and leaving a more livable world for future generations are as follows:

- i. Our first recommendation is to immediately launch a tree planting campaign.
- ii. Encourage the establishment of wind and solar energy farms around areas with high electricity consumption, such as airports and industrial zones.
- iii. Ensure that transportation vehicles or roads at airports do not use fossil fuels.
- iv. Use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF).

It is believed that Turkey can turn this situation into an opportunity in terms of SAF. With its rapidly growing population and traditional cuisine that uses large amounts of liquid oil and biological materials, our country can produce SAF at a price 3-4 times higher than fossil fuels. Lufthansa, an airline that uses SAF, has stated that despite facing supply issues due to the limited number of SAF producers, it requests passengers who wish to support SAF fuel to pay a destination-based fee and that it cannot meet this demand for the same reason (Lufthansa, 2025). Currently, some municipalities have established waste oil collection centers and are collecting waste oil. However, this is insufficient to meet such demand. It is considered important to establish fee-based collection bins based on the amount of oil collected, to expand this nationwide, and to establish SAF production centers. The use of SAF in the aviation sector does not eliminate the carbon footprint by 100%, but it reduces it by 80% (Lufthansa, 2025).

There are some limitations to this study. The most important limitation is that the data obtained was provided by the official websites of aviation

institutions/organizations. Future studies should investigate the installation and operating costs of SAF production facilities, their market share in Europe and worldwide, and whether waste management in Turkey can meet this demand.

Declaration of Research and Publication Ethics

This study which does not require ethics committee approval and/or legal/specific permission complies with the research and publication ethics

Researcher's Contribution Rate Statement

I am a single author of this paper. My contribution is 100%.

Declaration of Researcher's Conflict of Interest

There is no potential conflicts of interest in this study.

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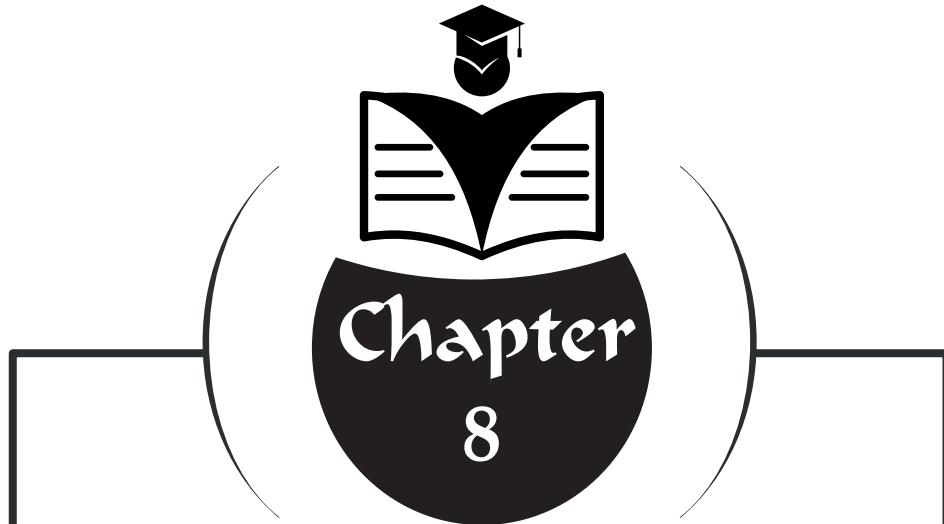
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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN LIGHT OF INDICATORS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES

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INTRODUCTION

From a global point of view, the digital transformation process makes it easier to change the way economies work, how things are made, and, as a result, how competition works. Countries' growth strategies, ability to innovate, and institutional structures are all affected by the rapid growth of information and communication technologies (Harkut & Kasat, 2019). During this transformation, artificial intelligence—one of the main enabling technologies—has changed from being just a technical field of innovation to something that has a strategic impact on public policy, social welfare, and economic performance. The rapid growth of AI technologies' opportunities makes the differences in technology between countries even more obvious. It also brings the issue of the digital divide back into focus.

As artificial intelligence becomes more important in business and government, it is important to have a clear understanding of its theoretical framework and how it is developing. The literature presents various definitions of artificial intelligence, primarily focusing on machines' ability to replicate cognitive functions typically linked to human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, perception, and problem-solving (Eren et al., 2024; Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019). In this case, what makes artificial intelligence different from other technologies is that it can not only follow commands that have been set up for it, but it can also interact with its surroundings, learn from data, and use what it learns to make decisions (Alkaddour, 2022).

The first research in artificial intelligence was done in the 1950s. The idea that machines could think came from Alan Turing's theoretical work (Turing, 1950; Güneş & Akdoğan Gedik, 2024). The Dartmouth Summer Research Project that followed was a big step forward in making artificial intelligence a real scientific field of study (McCarthy, 2007). The following Dartmouth Summer Research Project was a big step toward making artificial intelligence a scientific field of study (McCarthy, 2007). As time went on, people started to understand and talk about artificial intelligence as a group of mechanical systems that could mimic human-like thinking and behavior, make rational decisions, and solve problems (Russell & Norvig, 2003). There was a time when AI didn't grow much, called the "AI winter," from 1970 to 1990. But in recent years, it has come back strong thanks to improvements in computing power, big data analytics, and machine learning methods (Zambak, 2014; Garip & İnceli, 2021; Coşkun & Gülleroglu, 2021).

In modern definitions, artificial intelligence refers to systems that interact with their surroundings using data, analyze that data, learn from it, and act on their own to reach set goals (Wirtz et al., 2019). These traits make artificial intelligence a strategic technology for both the public and private sectors. It

has a wide range of effects, from how decisions are made to how services are delivered, from production to governance. Many scholars see the fast progress in artificial intelligence as the start of a new era in human history (Köroğlu, 2017; Vardarlier & Zafer, 2019).

In this situation, adding AI technologies to a country's economic and technological systems makes things like national-level preparedness capacity, digital infrastructure, and innovation performance even more important. The ability of a country to create, use, and effectively use artificial intelligence technologies is closely tied to its technological infrastructure, level of digital connectivity, human capital, and high-tech production structure. The Artificial Intelligence Preparedness Index (AIPI), the Global Innovation Index (GII), and the Network Readiness Index (NRI) are just a few of the many indicators that show how ready countries are for AI-driven digital transformation. High-tech exports and fixed broadband subscriptions also show the structural and infrastructural conditions that are needed for AI-based technologies to last.

European countries have similar institutional frameworks and ways to integrate their economies, but they are very different when it comes to how ready they are for artificial intelligence, how innovative they are, and how good their digital infrastructure is. Some countries are at the top of the list when it comes to artificial intelligence technologies because they have strong digital networks and advanced research ecosystems. Other countries, on the other hand, are not making much progress in this change process. Because of this variety, Europe is a good place to do comparative research using technological and digital indicators related to artificial intelligence.

These differences go beyond just technology and innovation; they also have a lot to do with how countries' economies are set up, how they make things, and where they fit into global value chains. The European Union's industrial policy goals include supporting high-value-added production, improving productivity, and making the EU more competitive on a global scale. One way to do this is by developing and spreading artificial intelligence technologies. In this context, the proportion of knowledge-intensive sectors within the economy, the magnitude of research and development and innovation expenditures, the size of the digitally proficient workforce, and the efficacy of public-private collaboration mechanisms are critical economic determinants influencing countries' artificial intelligence performance. Furthermore, in accordance with the goal of enhancing the European Digital Single Market, the incorporation of AI-driven applications into the economy signifies both a technology-driven and a structural transformation that necessitates the efficient utilization of cross-border data flows, digital services, and economies of scale. This process has different effects on the industrial structures, employment compositions, and skill sets of different countries. As a result, differences in

AI readiness and implementation levels between European countries become a multidimensional issue that is directly related to long-term development strategies and the ability to change the economy.

In this case, it is very important to systematically look at these differences between countries in order to get a better picture of the current state of AI-driven digital transformation in Europe. Specifically, using multidimensional indicators to group countries by their similarities and differences shows not only how advanced their technology is, but also how their policy priorities and structural capacities differ. This kind of study adds to the academic literature on comparative country studies and gives policymakers useful advice on how to make AI-focused plans.

In light of this context, this study seeks to categorize specific European nations according to essential indicators that demonstrate their artificial intelligence capabilities and digital preparedness. The study's analysis section uses both hierarchical and non-hierarchical clustering methods to find similarities and differences between countries based on their AI readiness, innovation performance, digital infrastructure, and ability to make high-tech products. The study is expected to add to the relevant literature by giving a more complete picture of how European countries are changing and transforming their digital systems with AI.

There are four parts to the study. The first section is the introduction, which explains the study's goal and conceptual framework. The second section is a literature review that briefly summarizes related studies. The third section, called "Data, Methods, and Findings," describes the dataset, research methodology, and empirical findings. Finally, the "Conclusion and Recommendations" section summarizes the main findings and includes discussion and recommendations.

LITERATURE

The idea of artificial intelligence has been around since the 1950s, but studying it in a systematic way in terms of economics, institutions, and policy is a relatively new thing. Since the late 2010s, there have been more empirical studies looking at how artificial intelligence affects the economy as a whole and how it affects jobs, innovation, and the process of digital transformation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017; Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020). The recent availability of comparable datasets at the national level has resulted in a constrained and relatively brief history of empirical literature in this domain. Although recent studies have advanced considerably, there remains a necessity for analyses that thoroughly and comparatively elucidate inter-country heterogeneity (Wirtz et al., 2019; Zarova et al., 2023).

Recent studies indicate that nations excelling in artificial intelligence development and research capabilities have secured substantial competitive advantages in technology and economics. Özka and Demirhan (2023) looked at the artificial intelligence capabilities of 62 countries using data from the Global Artificial Intelligence Index 2021 and the PROMETHEE and GAIA methods. They found that the United States was still the leader in the world, but China was quickly catching up. The study also found that Turkey was behind the top-ranked countries in all but the “State Strategy” dimension and needed a more comprehensive national artificial intelligence strategy. Empirical studies examining inter-country disparities indicate a growing utilization of multivariate and comparative methodologies within the artificial intelligence literature. Using the Global Artificial Intelligence Index, Zarova et al. (2023) divided 62 countries into three groups through cluster analysis. They found that the development of artificial intelligence in most countries had a structure that was mostly supported by the government. The study’s results show that the main difference between clusters was in the availability of qualified workers and the ability to do scientific research. It also found that the link between the level of artificial intelligence and employment was weak and different in different countries. Khan et al. (2025) also used Random Forest and K-Means analyses on 62 countries, looking at research, development, talent, and infrastructure indicators. They found that the development and research dimensions had the biggest impact on AI development, and that countries grouped together based on how well they did with AI.

In the literature, it is widely accepted that artificial intelligence performance is not limited to technological capabilities but is influenced by a broader digital and innovation ecosystem. Baş (2025) emphasizes the importance of the IMF’s Artificial Intelligence Readiness Index (AIPI) in determining how ready countries are for artificial intelligence. Furthermore, she shows that the level of digitalization, the structure of institutions, and labor market policies work together to determine a country’s AI capacity. Şen (2025), using IMF AI Readiness Index data, compared Türkiye with EU member states and showed that regulatory frameworks, ethical considerations, and human capital factors significantly affect index performance.

Key elements of artificial intelligence development include knowledge generation and innovation capacity. According to Al-Marzouqi and Arabi’s (2024) analysis of global AI research productivity using Scopus data from 1998-2022, China leads in total publication volume, but Singapore, Switzerland, and Hong Kong stand out in terms of publication quality and economic impact. Measuring these aspects using indicators such as the Global Innovation Index (GII) is important, as these findings demonstrate that robust research ecosystems, talent pools, and long-term innovation strategies are essential

for the sustainability of AI development (OECD, 2019; Al-Marzouqi & Arabi, 2024).

Digital infrastructure and network readiness play a critical role in the diffusion and economic impact of artificial intelligence technologies. The literature emphasizes that fixed broadband subscriptions and network capacity have a direct influence on the adoption of digital technologies and productivity growth (ITU, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2023). In this regard, Fixed Broadband Subscriptions (FBS) and the Network Readiness Index (NRI) are widely regarded as key indicators reflecting countries' capacity to integrate artificial intelligence technologies into economic and social systems. From an economic perspective, the development of artificial intelligence is closely associated with countries' high-technology production and export capacities. The literature frequently highlights that high-tech exports serve as an indicator of an economy's knowledge-intensive production structure and global competitiveness; this share tends to be higher in countries with advanced artificial intelligence and innovation ecosystems (Lall, 2000; UNCTAD, 2021). Accordingly, high-tech exports (HTE) can be considered a reflection of the AI-driven digital transformation of industry.

DATA, METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The AI Preparedness Index (AIFI), High-technology exports (HTE), Fixed broadband subscriptions (FBS), global innovation index (GII), and network readiness index (NRI) are the variables thought to be related to artificial intelligence technologies. In this study, cluster analysis is used to illustrate the similarities and differences between a subset of European countries. Since the common and final year for the data related to the variables is 2023, data from 2023 has been used, and the relevant values have been obtained from the World Bank (<https://databank.worldbank.org/>). Accordingly, Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, North Macedonia, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkiye and Ukraine, the European countries for which data was released, are the countries analyzed in the study. Analyses are performed using the SPSS software package.

Grouping data is the art of cluster analysis. In a study that employs this approach, the units under investigation are categorized by putting them into particular groups according to how similar they are. As a result, the units' shared traits can be recognized (Kaufman & Rousseeuw, 1990). In the literature, this method is also referred to as Q analysis, typological structure, classification analysis, and numerical taxonomy (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010).

In cluster analysis, there is no distinction between dependent and independent variables. All variables are examined simultaneously (Akin, 2008). The primary goal of this analysis is to minimize within-group diversity while maximizing between-group diversity. This allows for the identification of homogeneous subgroups within a population (Dolnicar & Grün, 2022).

In cluster analysis, determining similarities and differences requires calculating the distances between clusters. Several distance measurements are used for this purpose. The Euclidean distance, known as the most common measure of similarity between two points, is one of these measurement methods. Similarly, the squared Euclidean distance is also calculated, the difference being that the square root is not used in the Euclidean distance calculation. The Manhattan distance is found by summing the absolute differences of the object coordinates. Finally, the Mahalanobis distance, calculated using correlations between variables, is another type of measurement (Hair et al., 2010).

Cluster analysis is fundamentally divided into two types: hierarchical clustering and non-hierarchical clustering. Since the most commonly used method in non-hierarchical clustering is the k-means clustering method, it is also known as the k-means clustering method. The hierarchical clustering method is also called Ward's method. In this method, it is not necessary to know the number of clusters before the analysis. The number of clusters is determined by the dendrogram. However, in the non-hierarchical clustering method, the number of clusters must be known before the analysis (Kalayci, 2009).

As can be understood from the descriptions of these analysis types, hierarchical clustering analysis was first used in this study to determine the number of clusters. After determining the number of clusters, cluster memberships were determined using the non-hierarchical clustering method. Using both methods together yields more reliable results.

Firstly, a dendrogram was obtained using hierarchical cluster analysis to determine the number of clusters, and the resulting shape is presented in Figure 1.

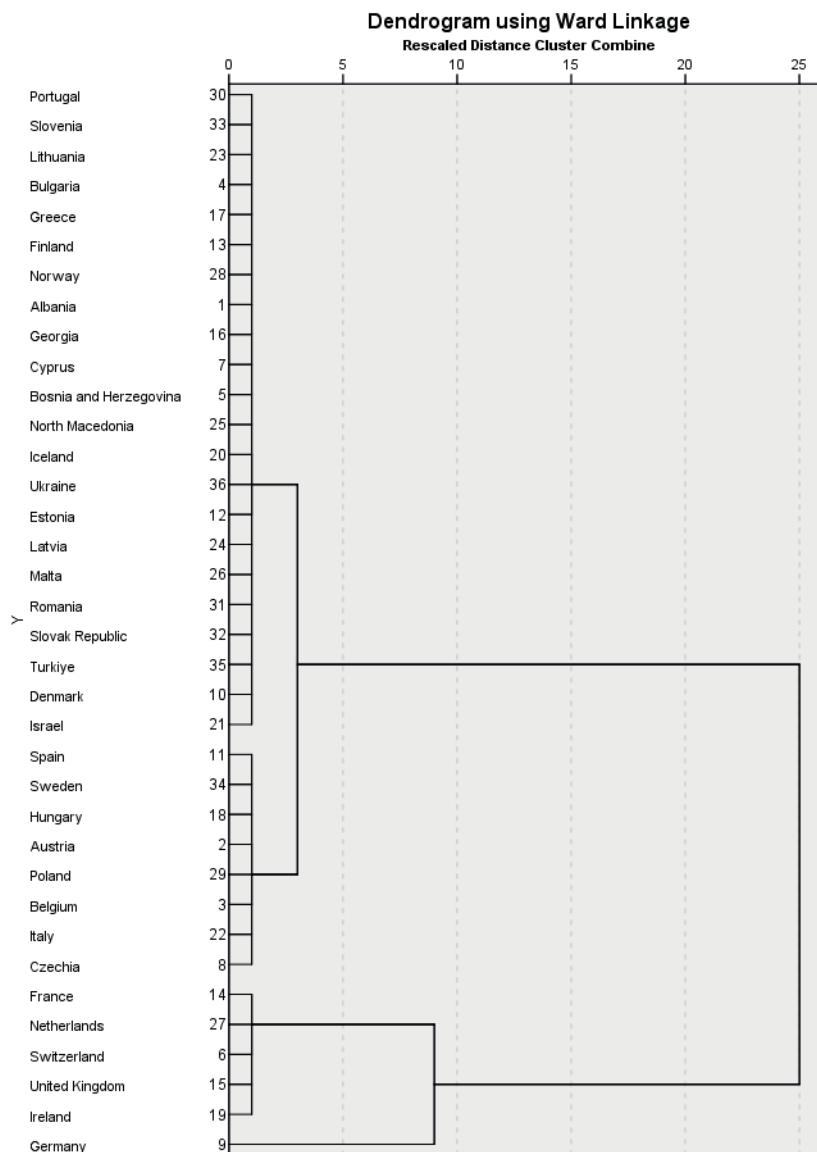


Figure 1. Dendrogram using hierarchical cluster (ward's method)

When Figure 1 is examined, it is seen that the countries considered are grouped into 3 different clusters based on a scale ranging from 0 to 5. Therefore, the number of clusters was determined as 3, and then the non-hierarchical clustering method, namely the K-means technique, was applied to determine the cluster memberships. The findings obtained are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Cluster Membership

Cluster	Cluster Member (Country)	Number of Cases in each Cluster
Cluster 1	Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, North Macedonia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkiye, Ukraine	30
Cluster 2	Switzerland, France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands	5
Cluster 3	Germany	1

According to Table 1, the cluster with the most countries, including our country, is cluster number 1 with 30 countries, followed by cluster number 2 with 5 countries, and finally cluster number 3 with only 1 country. The table showing the centers of the last clusters is called Table 2 and is presented below.

Table 2 Final Cluster Centers

Variables	Cluster	1	2	3
AIPI	0.6292	0.7290	0.7533	
HTE	12700418361	96877521914	255687000000	
FBS	34.1305	42.5915	45.3805	
GII	43.8	59.4	58.8	
NRI	59.48	72.25	74	

When examining the final cluster centers obtained using Table 2, it is observed that countries with the highest values for AIPI, HTE, FBS, and NRI variables are in cluster 3, while those with the lowest values are in cluster 1. Similarly, countries with the highest scores are in cluster 1, while those with lower scores are in cluster 3. For the GII variable, countries with the highest values are in cluster 2, and those with the lowest values are in cluster 1. Table 3, showing the distances between the final cluster centers, is given below.

Table 3 Distances between Final Cluster Centers

Cluster	1	2	3
1		84177103553.033	242986581639.033
2	84177103553.033		158809478086
3	242986581639.033	158809478086	

When examining Table 3, which shows the distances between the final cluster centers, it is understood that Cluster 1 and Cluster 3 are the furthest apart, while Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 are the closest to each other.

The ANOVA results are given in Table 4.

Table 4 ANOVA

Variables	F	Sig.
AIPI	3.943	0.029*
HTE	168.770	0.000*
FBS	3.938	0.029*
GII	6.737	0.004*
NRI	5.329	0.010*

Table 4 shows that the analysis performed at the 5% significance level is significant. Therefore, it is clearly understood that all variables are significant in determining the clusters.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It's clear from the theoretical framework and empirical data examined in the literature that no single technological indicator can adequately explain artificial intelligence performance at the national level. Instead, the emergence of AI is a multifaceted phenomenon that is shaped by the interplay of high-technology production structures, institutional preparedness, innovation capability, and digital infrastructure. Indicators such as the Artificial Intelligence Preparedness Index (AIPI), Global Innovation Index (GII), Network Readiness Index (NRI), fixed broadband subscriptions, and high-technology exports collectively reflect countries' capacity to develop, adopt, and diffuse artificial intelligence technologies within their economic and social systems. Accordingly, evaluating these indicators together provides a more comprehensive perspective on national AI readiness and digital transformation dynamics.

In Europe, even though there are common policy frameworks and a lot of economic integration, countries are very different when it comes to being ready for artificial intelligence and the structural conditions that go along with it. Differences in innovation ecosystems, digital connectivity, research intensity, and high-tech production capacity lead to divergent trajectories in AI-driven transformation processes. This heterogeneity suggests that European countries do not follow a uniform path toward artificial intelligence adoption; instead, they cluster around distinct profiles shaped by their economic structures, institutional capacities, and strategic priorities. Identifying these similarities and divergences is therefore crucial for understanding the current landscape of AI-driven digital transformation in Europe.

Within this framework, clustering analysis offers a suitable methodological approach for revealing patterns of convergence and divergence among countries based on multiple AI-related indicators. By grouping countries

according to shared characteristics rather than individual rankings, cluster analysis enables a more nuanced interpretation of relative positions and structural differences in artificial intelligence readiness. This approach not only complements existing index-based evaluations in the literature but also contributes to a deeper understanding of how combinations of digital readiness, innovation performance, and high-tech capacity shape countries' positions within the evolving European artificial intelligence ecosystem. On this basis, the following section presents the empirical findings derived from hierarchical and non-hierarchical clustering analyses.

The study first employed cluster analysis. Hierarchical clustering analysis determined that there should be three clusters. Then, non-hierarchical clustering analysis was applied to obtain cluster memberships. In terms of the artificial intelligence variables considered, the first group of countries similar to each other included Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Spain, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, North Macedonia, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, and Ukraine. Turkey is present in this first cluster, which contains 30 out of 36 countries. The second cluster included countries similar to each other such as Switzerland, France, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Germany is the sole occupant of the last cluster. Looking at the clusters within the first cluster and the findings, it is clearly seen that this cluster has the lowest average values for all variables. Excluding the GII variable, the variables with the highest averages are found in cluster 3, which corresponds to Germany. This result is not surprising. Germany is a European country that invests heavily in artificial intelligence and places great importance on technology. Our country and most European countries have recently begun to gain momentum in artificial intelligence technologies. The distances between the clusters also clearly support these ideas.

Based on the findings of the study, Germany appears to be the leading European country in artificial intelligence technologies. However, the countries in the most populous group, including our own, are not yet as advanced in this area as the other European countries considered. It is likely that European countries in the first cluster will soon develop themselves by focusing on AI-based innovations, such as increasing their AI technology exports and improving their innovation skills, similar to countries in the second and third clusters.

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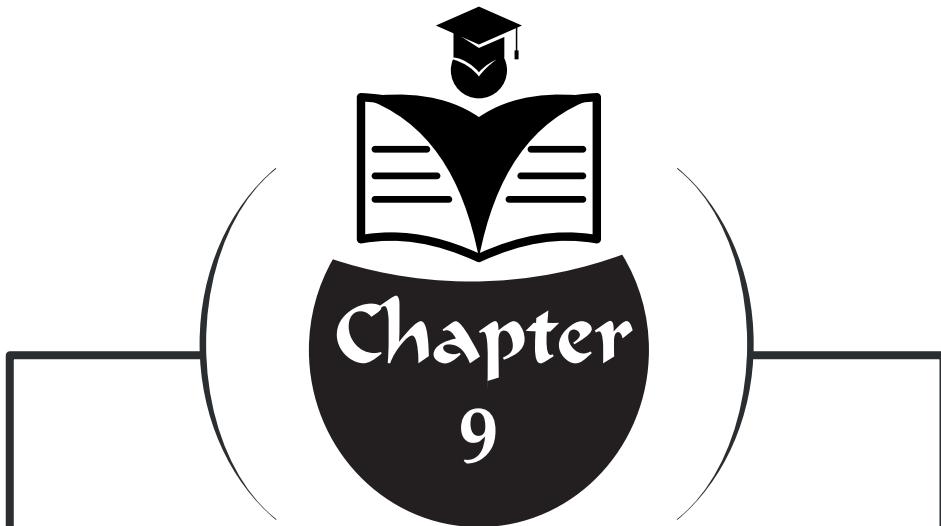
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ANALYSIS OF TOURISTS' AND LOCAL PEOPLE'S OPINIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A CULTURAL ROUTE IN SAMANDAĞ'S HISTORICAL-CULTURAL TOURISM¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

Travel is not only about seeing new places, but also about resting and discovering different cultures and environments during the journey. The places where people stay during these journeys are considered part of touristic activities. Tourism can be defined as the promotion and use of historical and cultural heritage, passed down through generations, in areas with suitable geographical conditions. These elements are brought together and presented as resources for mass tourism.

Today, tourism has emerged as a geographical reality shaped by individuals' desire to move from the local to the global by sharing concrete experiences of different places. It creates distinctive relationships between tourists and the host destinations they visit. In recent years, the tourism sector, often described as the largest and fastest-growing "smokeless industry", has made it possible to shape both tourism professionals and tourism spaces (Sezgin & Karaman, 2008). As tourism activity becomes more evenly distributed throughout the year, and as revenue from tourism and foreign exchange increases, the importance of using tourism investments effectively has brought alternative forms of tourism to the forefront (Oktayer et al., 2007: 129; Ulusan & Batman, 2010). Due to recent developments, tourists are showing growing interest in alternative tourism, with a particular focus on historical and cultural tourism destinations. In recent years, cultural tourism has been growing and developing rapidly in line with changing travel trends and tourists' evolving expectations. As visitors increasingly seek cultural discovery during their journeys, the growth of cultural tourism continues to accelerate (Wang et al., 2006: 49–50; Baykan & Uygur, 2007). Cultural tourism includes not only the lifestyles of individuals from diverse cultures but also the heritage that reflects the traces of history in the places they visit. Today, such heritage enriches the cultural identity of a location and helps bring it into the spotlight. People who plan their travels often show a strong interest in history. When they encounter historical and cultural heritage at the places they visit, they tend to engage more deeply or show more interest in these places (Majdoub, 2010). Newly discovered cultural and historical sites are being reinterpreted with various key themes. In an effort to attract those who are especially interested in ancient artifacts, these sites are often nominated for inclusion in the World Heritage List, aiming to prove their uniqueness to the global community (Goral, 2016). To ensure the sustainable management of such heritage, it is necessary to consider the assumptions behind it, recognize the existing values of the local community, and take on organizational responsibilities (Terzic et al., 2014; Makuc, 2015). Therefore, heritage management depends not only on the stages of managing a site but also on the cultural diversity of the place and the number of stakeholders involved. Moreover, the various needs and values that arise from what others say and think about heritage reflect a human-centered approach (Holden,

2015; Bogacz-Wojtanowska & Góral, 2018). Heritage is closely linked to the social and cultural characteristics of the community in which it exists, often reflecting the community's own values and identity.

Cultural heritage is considered a highly important area for meeting the social, political, and economic needs of the local community (Pekham, 2003; Ashworth et al., 2007; Goral, 2016). When recreational areas include cultural and natural heritage sites, they gain a competitive advantage. This also allows them to become strong destination sites. The perceived value of a destination's landscape; its realism, attractiveness, and unique features can positively influence tourists' behavior and preferences (Yükselen & Güler, 2009: 23; Kara, 2017). The sustainability of this advantage is closely tied to globalization, which has been driven by technological advancement. Through the support of UNESCO, globalization has helped increase the recognition of historical and cultural heritage worldwide. At the same time, technological progress has made these heritage sites more accessible to interested tourists. As a result, both the number of cultural tourists and the cultural heritage sites available to them have increased.

According to research on the profile of cultural tourists, they tend to have higher incomes than other types of tourists, which means they also spend more during their holidays. Compared to the local population, they are generally more educated, and their average age is typically over 50. Unlike mass tourists, cultural tourists often travel alone or in small groups. They also tend to begin their trips as early as April and continue through September, spending more time at the destination itself (Aksu, 2004: 36). Turkey is home to numerous historical and cultural heritage sites that attract cultural tourists, with many such areas spread across different regions and cities. The Hatay Province and in particular the district of Samandağ is rich in historical and cultural heritage, making it an appealing destination for cultural tourists conducting research or exploration. However, Samandağ has not yet been able to effectively present its historical and cultural assets to cultural tourists, and thus it does not benefit significantly from cultural tourism revenues. Despite the district's wide variety of cultural and historical resources, it struggles to attract these tourists to its sites. For this reason, this study focuses on how to attract both national and international cultural tourists to Samandağ and how the local community can economically benefit from the area's historical and cultural heritage.

Hatay is a border province in southern Türkiye, located in the Adana subregion of the Mediterranean Region. One of its districts, Samandağ, lies along the Eastern Mediterranean coast. The area examined in this study, Samandağ District, is situated on the delta of the Asi River and is administratively part of Hatay. It shares borders with Antakya to the east, Defne to the southeast, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Yayladağı to the south, and Arsuz to the north (Figure 1).

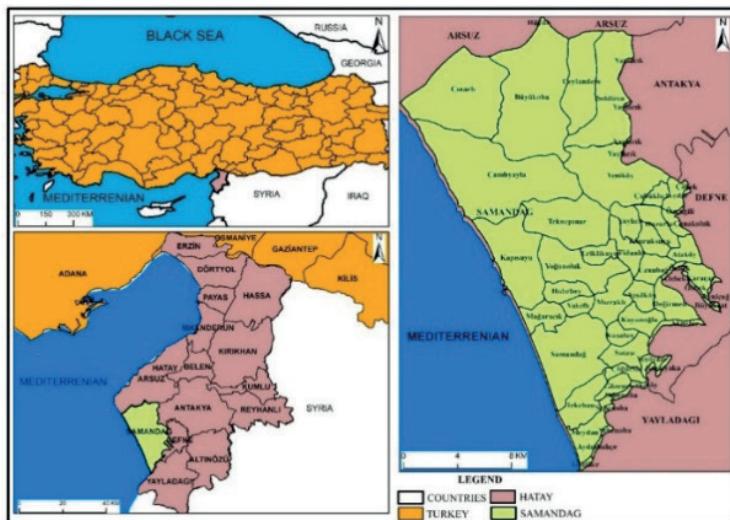


Figure 1. Location map of Samandağ

1.1. Aim and Method

This study aims to contribute to the local economy in the aftermath of the earthquake by promoting the historical and cultural assets of Samandağ through tourism. It seeks to support efforts to properly design and promote the district's historical and cultural sites. Another goal is to identify the existing visitor potential in order to develop a cultural route through the district's historical landmarks, helping cultural tourism become a more effective and sustainable economic resource.

This study was designed as a case study within the framework of qualitative research. A case study is a methodological approach that involves an in-depth investigation of a bounded system by collecting systematic information through multiple sources of data (Chmilar, 2010). Merriam (2013) defines a case study as the detailed description and analysis of a limited system. Similarly, Creswell (2007) describes it as a qualitative research approach in which the researcher explores one or more bounded cases over time, using various data collection tools - such as observations, interviews, visual and audio materials, documents, and reports - to identify themes related to the case. A case study involves a longitudinal and detailed examination of a single situation or event, with data gathered in a systematic way to observe what occurs in its real-life context. The results help explain why the situation occurred as it did and offer insight into where future research should focus (Davey, 2009; Subaşı & Okumuş, 2017). In this research, both printed and digital sources relevant to the site and topic were analyzed through document and content analysis methods. Qualitative research is defined as "an investigative process that uses techniques such as field observation, interviews, and document analysis to realistically and holistically

reveal perceptions and events within their natural setting" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 39). To identify the existing historical and cultural assets in the area, field observations were carried out on-site. These qualitative methods allowed for an abstract analysis of the socio-spatial characteristics and contrasts within human experiences. In this context, the observations focused on the intangible dimensions of the historical and cultural heritage present in the study area.

In this study, the semi-structured interview technique which is one of the commonly used methods in qualitative research was applied. As Yıldırım and Şimşek describe, qualitative research involves a process aimed at realistically and holistically presenting phenomena and events within their natural environment, using tools such as unstructured observation and interviews (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2005: 39). While preparing the semi-structured interview questions, input was gathered from two subject-matter experts, and a Turkish language specialist reviewed the wording for clarity and correctness. To test the validity and reliability of the questions, a pilot study was conducted with eight individuals in the field. The responses were analyzed to ensure the consistency and credibility of the data. Based on this, both local residents of Samandağ and visiting tourists were asked about their views on potential route suggestions to help develop the district's existing tourism potential. Locals were also asked how they believe they could benefit economically from tourism. With ethical approval obtained, the interviews were carried out with a total of 42 participants: 4 international tourists, 7 domestic tourists, and 31 local residents. The collected data were classified from a geographical perspective and analyzed thematically.

2. FINDINGS

2.1. Samandağ Cultural Route

The historical and cultural sites and assets of the study area, which has a very old settlement history and rich cultural diversity, have been identified and evaluated. The historical and cultural sites in the Samandağ district include: Batiyaz Bridge, Tekenpınar Church, Moses Tree, Vakıfköy Museum, Virgin Mary Church, Bahçeli House Structure, Temple of Dor, Vespasian-Titus Tunnel, Beşikli Cave, Prophet Khidr's Tomb, St. Simon Monastery, Yeşilyazı Suspension Bridge, Al Mina Mound, Sabuniye Mound, Üçağızlı Cave, Merdivenli Cave, Aşık and Maşuk Cave, Seldiren Bridge, Hamire (Marilyas) Monastery, and the Gari-gori Church-Mosque in Yoğunoluk Neighborhood (Photo 1). A cultural route has been developed to enhance these historical and cultural sites (Figure 2). Within the scope of the cultural route, the route was proposed by taking into account historical and cultural assets, and interviews were conducted on what can be done to develop tourism in this context.

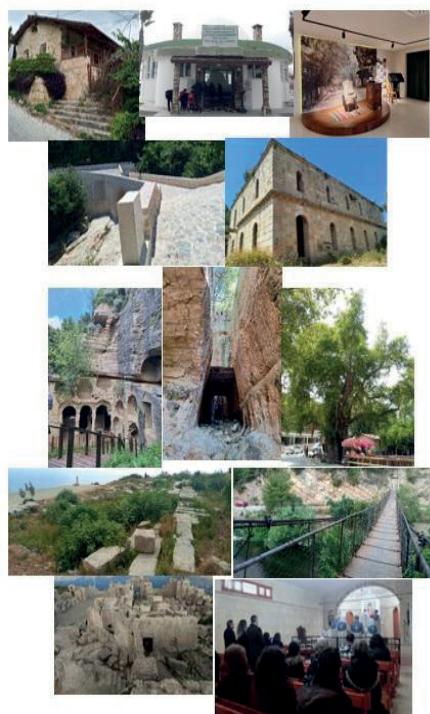


Photo 1. Historical and cultural assets within the scope of the cultural route.



Figure 2. Proposed cultural route for Samandağ

1.1. Cultural Route Interview Analysis

In order for tourists to fully comprehend and analyze the fundamental features and culture of historical-cultural heritage sites, it is necessary to observe history and archaeology, people and lifestyles, cultural values, art and architectural structures, local production, social, economic, and political structures, as well as geographic factors such as the region's morphology (Choi and Sirakaya, 2006; Bortas, 2019). Based on the interviews conducted in Samandağ, opinions regarding the historical-cultural sites in the area were examined and analyzed. Furthermore, the tourism potential of Samandağ was observed, and semi-structured interview questions regarding tourism-related deficiencies were asked to the local population and tourists from domestic and international origins, then analyzed and recommendations were provided.

After the demographic questions in the study, 15 interview questions were applied to 4 tourists one American, one Brazilian, and two Chinese. Among domestic tourists, 7 people participated in the interviews: 2 from Adana, 1 from İzmir, 2 from Ankara, and 2 from İskenderun. While 31 locals in the district were asked questions, a total of 42 people took part in the interviews. Due to the earthquake, participation was limited and interviews were conducted under difficult conditions. To keep personal information confidential, the 42 participants were assigned code letters. These codes are included in direct quotes in the article. The interviews lasted between 1 and 4 minutes. Since the interviews were audio recorded, preliminary readings were made for data analysis purposes. The answers to the study's questions were subjected to thematic analysis. The table created for the interviews records the dates, locations, and durations of the interviews (Table 1).

Table 1. Interview Schedule

No	Code	Interview Date	Interview Duration	Interview Location
1	K1	11.04.2024	4 min 28 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
2	K2	11.04.2024	3 min 22 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
3	K3	11.04.2024	2 min 48 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
4	K4	11.04.2024	4 min 17 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
5	L1	11.04.2024	2 min 46 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
6	L2	11.04.2024	3 min 10 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
7	L3	11.04.2024	2 min 45 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
8	L4	11.04.2024	2 min 13 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
9	L5	11.04.2024	1 min 59 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
10	L6	11.04.2024	2 min 50 sec	Moses Tree
11	L7	11.04.2024	1 min 19 sec	Moses Tree
12	M1	11.04.2024	2 min 03 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
13	M2	11.04.2024	2 min 22 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
14	M3	11.04.2024	5 min 28 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel

15	M4	11.04.2024	2 min 40 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
16	M5	11.04.2024	1 min 11 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
17	M6	11.04.2024	2 min 38 sec	Koyunoğlu Neighborhood
18	M7	11.04.2024	2 min 30 sec	Moses Tree
19	M8	11.04.2024	2 min 07 sec	Moses Tree
20	M9	11.04.2024	2 min 20 sec	Moses Tree
20	M10	11.04.2024	2 min 36 sec	Moses Tree
21	M11	11.04.2024	2 min 40 sec	Moses Tree
22	M12	11.04.2024	3 min 09 sec	Musadağ Museum
23	M13	11.04.2024	1 min 56 sec	Musadağ Museum
25	M14	13.04.2024	2 min 32 sec	Deniz Neighborhood
25	M15	13.04.2024	3 min 05 sec	Deniz Neighborhood
26	M16	13.04.2024	2 min 17 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
27	M17	13.04.2024	2 min 39 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
28	M18	13.04.2024	3 min 18 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
29	M19	13.04.2024	3 min 12 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
30	M20	13.04.2024	1 min 45 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
31	K1	11.04.2024	4 min 28 sec	Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel
32	M21	13.04.2024	2 min 42 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
33	M22	13.04.2024	2 min 31 sec	Samandağ Çevlik Beach
34	M23	13.04.2024	2 min 24 sec	Avcılar Neighborhood
35	M24	13.04.2024	1 min 57 sec	Avcılar Neighborhood
36	M25	14.04.2024	2 min 16 sec	Avcılar Neighborhood
37	M26	14.04.2024	2 min 27 sec	Avcılar Neighborhood
38	M27	14.04.2024	2 min 37 sec	Avcılar Neighborhood
39	M28	14.04.2024	3 min 23 sec	Karaçay Neighborhood
40	M29	14.04.2024	3 min 11 sec	Karaçay Neighborhood
41	M30	14.04.2024	2 min 14 sec	Karaçay Neighborhood
42	M31	14.04.2024	2 min 24 sec	Karaçay Neighborhood

Question 1. “In your opinion, is the transportation to the locations of historical and cultural heritage in Samandağ sufficient?”

K1 “Transportation? We came with our own cars, and the road conditions could have been better.”

L6 “We reached the site through narrow streets within the city with great difficulty; transportation was hard for us.”

M23 “There should be an airport and a train station for the tourists coming here, and the roads should be organized. There should also be a hotel. It’s not just transportation - there is also an infrastructure problem.”

M2 “Transportation in the district is fairly sufficient, but this is as much as it can be.”

The responses given by the participants support our observations. Both domestic and international tourists, as well as the local population, stated that transportation is insufficient and needs improvement. The transportation problem constitutes a significant obstacle in the district's tourism sector.

Question 2. “Do you experience difficulties in accessing cultural heritage sites in the region as a result of war and earthquakes?”

K3 “*Yes, but the road inside Titus is very good, whereas the one outside is not.*”

L3 “*In my opinion, there is not much difference before and after the earthquake; in general, transportation is a major problem.*”

L7 “*We came to this place via the Arsuz road, and there were collapses on the roads.*”

M23 “*Of course, it is experienced; the war did not affect much, but the earthquake affected very badly. Transportation was already a big problem before the earthquake, but after the earthquake, interest decreased a lot because many roads are closed to traffic.*”

The second question was determined based on the problems that occurred after the Syrian wars and the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. In the answers given to the question, emphasis was placed on the disaster experienced, and it was stated that it negatively affected the district's transportation.

Question 3. “Do the historical and cultural heritages in Samandağ contribute to the development of social activities?”

K1 “*Of course, they exist abundantly; moreover, your heritage is very beautiful and needs to be valued.*”

L4 “*Definitely.*”

L7 “*The social activities in the district, in my opinion, are not sufficient, but if developed, it would be much better.*”

M4 “*Yes, it contributes a lot.*”

M28 “*I think social activities in the district do not have much impact because there is already little participation.*”

M23 “*I think if social activities increase locally, it will contribute; as it is now, it does not.*”

This question, asked considering social activities like local festivals, received positive responses from participants. It was determined that improving, increasing, and promoting social activities would contribute to the district's tourism.

Question 4. “Does the preservation of historical-cultural assets in the district contribute to the district’s economy?”

K4 “*If preserved, it will last longer and have positive benefits for the economy.*”

L4 “*Undoubtedly, it does, after all, there are touristic sites that even attract tourists from abroad.*”

L6 “*Definitely, Americans have visited, we often see Chinese visitors, yes, but there are also sites that attract tourists even from America.*”

M12 “*Undoubtedly there is a lot, but even our tunnel, which attracts the most tourists from abroad, is not adequately preserved.*”

M31 “*Of course it does, but leaving preservation aside, it hasn’t been repaired since the earthquake, of course.*”

The answers given to the fourth survey question show that if the preservation of historical-cultural assets is done well, even the economic situation will improve. Foreign tourists who answered the question stated that if preservation is carried out, it will be possible to transfer the historical-cultural heritage to future generations. In the answers given by domestic tourists, they expressed that due to the interest in our historical-cultural sites, foreign exchange income will increase, and more attention should be paid to the heritage. Restoring and providing more protection to cultural assets will ensure the transfer of heritage to future generations and create continuity in economic growth.

Question 5. “Does offering the district’s historical-cultural assets for tourism contribute to the economy?”

K1 “*If it is offered for tourism, it will attract more attention and become more well-known.*”

L3 “*Undoubtedly, it does, and moreover, it has the potential to increase the district’s economy even further.*”

M2 “*There are quite a few historical sites in our district, and when they are utilized for tourism, they contribute significantly to the district’s economy.*”

The responses to the interview question predominantly indicate that if the district’s tourism assets are made available to tourists, the tourism potential would be high. It has been observed that some historical-cultural heritage sites in the district have not yet been incorporated into tourism. Moreover, it was determined that even some members of the local population are unaware of the locations of certain historical-cultural heritage sites. Based on the responses, it is recommended that markers be placed along the designated route to indicate

the identified historical-cultural assets. Bringing all historical sites into the service of tourism would contribute significantly to the local economy.

Question 6. “Is the local population of the district sufficiently knowledgeable about the preservation of its historical-cultural heritage?”

K3 “Definitely not possible, the local population never pays attention to these sites.”

L4 “In my opinion, it is not.”

L8 “Unfortunately, I regret to say that in my opinion, it is not. Moreover, the surroundings are full of waste, and this negatively affects the appearance.”

M23 “No, unfortunately they do not provide information about this and do not give sufficient warnings.”

M28 “I am a local of Samandağ, but until now I have not come across any information indicating that official institutions have provided information.”

M15 “In my opinion, we are not, at least informational signs about protection should be placed at the entrances of our historical sites.”

The responses to this interview question revealed that the protection of historical and cultural heritage during fieldwork was found to be insufficient. Both local and foreign tourists emphasized the lack of information provided. Additionally, the local community highlighted that informational measures had not been implemented and offered suggestions. Based on the participants' answers, it can be concluded that due to insufficient protection of historical heritage, there is also a lack of adequate information about historical sites. Considering the opinions expressed by tourists and locals in the interviews, it can be inferred that increasing informational efforts could attract more tourists.

Question 7. “Do cultural activities such as exhibitions, sports, and festivals held in Samandağ contribute to the development of tourism?”

K1 “Of course, it does; it contributes to the sustainability of historical assets.”

K3 “I think it would be good; moreover, we would spend more time at the site.”

L7 “Such cultural activities benefit the promotion of Samandağ and thus reflect on the cultural sites as well.”

M3 “Yes, it is beneficial; more tourists participate in such activities.”

M26 “If these activities are increased, tourists coming from outside will spend more time in our district.”

Since all the responses given in the interviews were positive, both local and foreign tourists expressed the same opinion. They emphasized that cultural activities organized in the district would contribute to tourism. During the fieldwork, it was noted that one of the cultural events, the Evvel Temmuz festival, was held by the seaside. Some guests attending the festival stated that they visited historical-cultural sites such as the Titus Tunnel and Beşikli Cave because they were located near the festival.

Question 8. “Do you have sufficient knowledge about the historical-cultural assets in the district?”

K4 “*No, not enough. We weren’t even aware that there was a city called Hatay. We learned about it only after hearing about the February 6 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. After doing some research, we found information only about this place (the Titus Tunnel) related to Samandağ, and we wanted to visit because we were curious.*”

L4 “*I have knowledge about the historical site, but I can’t say I know all of them.*”

L6 “*I can say that I have sufficient knowledge because I have personally done research due to my special interest.*”

M9 “*Of course, I have general knowledge.*”

In response to the question posed regarding the district’s historical-cultural sites, the majority of the local population answered “yes” while foreign tourists responded with “not sufficiently.” The responses of the Brazilian and American participants among the foreign tourists were particularly noteworthy. Two of the tourist participants stated that they had not heard of Hatay before, but became aware of the city due to the February 6, 2023, Kahramanmaraş earthquakes and afterward, and that upon researching, they came across the Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel in Samandağ, which led them to visit out of curiosity. From this, it can be understood that if Samandağ’s historical-cultural heritage potential is adequately promoted, the number of visitors will increase.

Question 9. “What has been the interest of local and foreign tourists in these historical-cultural assets before and after the earthquake?”

K1 “*When we visited before, it was not there, but we visited recently out of season. Honestly, not much, the place is very beautiful, everyone should come and see it.*”

L6 “*I think the tourists’ interest is not sufficient, and I believe the low interest is not related to the earthquake, but due to the promotion’s planning and implementation not being done properly.*”

M8 “Unfortunately, it is not at a sufficient level, only Titus Tunnel and Vakıflı receive many visitors, but they do not go to or see all the other places.”

M26 “I think more tourists came before the earthquake.”

M28 “People do not know the place, that's why they don't come, it's not related to the earthquake.”

The answers given to the interview question indicate that, except for the local people, Titus Tunnel, and the historical-cultural heritage in the Vakıflı neighborhood, the interest is not sufficient. They stated that the earthquake did not affect this and that it is due to insufficient promotion. Foreign tourists emphasized that the sites deserve more interest and expressed their appreciation. Among the participants, local tourists stressed that the insufficient interest was not due to the earthquake but to the lack of necessary planning for tourism sites. From what the participants said, it can be inferred that promotion is insufficient and that if it were sufficient, the number of both local and foreign tourists would increase.

Question 10. “Do you think the promotion of Samandağ’s historical-cultural heritage sites is done sufficiently?”

K3 “Definitely no, before the earthquake we had never heard of this place. The promotion of the sites needs to be done worldwide.”

L3 “I definitely think it is not sufficient.”

L2 “Of course it is not sufficient, for example, I live here but I have never heard of the bridge (Seldiren Bridge) and the mosque (Gari-gori Church-Mosque) you mentioned earlier. If I haven't heard of them, foreigners surely haven't either.”

Both local and foreign tourists who participated in the interviews emphasized that the promotion of historical-cultural heritage in Samandağ is completely insufficient. Notably, some local participants highlighted that they were unaware of certain cultural sites in the area. For example, one local participant stated they had never seen the Seldiren Bridge and the Gari-gori Church-Mosque before. Almost all foreign tourists mentioned that, aside from the Titus Tunnel and the historical sites in Vakıflı neighborhood, they were unfamiliar with other heritage sites and therefore did not visit them. From these responses, it can be inferred that the promotion of Samandağ’s historical-cultural heritage has not been carried out on a global scale. The answers clearly indicate that a well-planned and extensive promotional effort is needed both within Turkey and internationally.

Question 11. “Do you think the existing historical-cultural assets in Samandağ receive sufficient attention?”

K1 “No, of course not. I don't know exactly about that.”

L6 "I think it is not sufficient because there is no proper planning on site."

M4 "Of course not, because many people don't even know these places."

M29 "Many visitors who come from other provinces to see the sites come back to see them again. As far as I know, many of my friends came back with different people, but unfortunately, the historical area does not get the value it deserves because it is not well known."

The answers given by the participants converge on a common point: with promotion, restoration, and planning in the historical-cultural site area, more domestic and foreign tourists will visit. The observations in the field and the participants' responses support each other. Except for the two historical sites in the area, other places do not receive much attention due to lack of local promotion.

Question 12. "Do you think Samandağ's historical-cultural sites were adequately protected before and after the earthquakes, and have restoration processes been sufficiently carried out on these places?"

K4 "In some places, it might be very good. But there are many sites in Turkey that need a lot of work. Overall, I think it's not good in many parts of the country."

L1 "When the buildings are restored, the historical structure of the heritage is damaged and it loses its touristic value."

M3 "The restoration and maintenance of the artifacts are good, but their infrastructure is not."

M22 "In my opinion, this issue is not related to the earthquake, because even before the earthquake, the restorations didn't preserve the original appearance."

M27 "I think experts should be involved in restoration because specialists can do it without damaging the historical structure."

The field observations support the participants' responses. The common opinion is that restorations have not been done properly or appropriately. The historical texture is damaged and deteriorated during the restoration process.

Question 13. "Do the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes on February 6, 2023, have an impact on cultural heritage and tourism?"

K3 "We heard about the city and district because of the earthquake and came here; we think it has had a positive effect."

L6 "Its negative effect is significant; tourism, like other businesses, came to a standstill."

M9 “Of course, it affected negatively; historical sites remained closed for a long time, and no tourists came.”

M12 “Certainly, like other sectors, historical sites were also affected because entry to them was banned for a long time.”

The participants' answers to question 13 vary. However, while the negative effects of the earthquake are more frequently emphasized, foreign tourists stated that they learned about Samandağ's historical-cultural assets thanks to the earthquake and came to visit. In particular, a tourist from İzmir emphasized that the earthquake had a significant impact on bringing Samandağ's historical-cultural structures to global attention.

Question 14. “Do you think the proposed cultural route in the study can contribute to the district's tourism and rural development?”

K1 “Of course, it would be highly beneficial, but only if it's well promoted.”

L3 “It would certainly contribute, but proper on-site planning is essential.”

M24 “If this route is implemented, there would be less outward migration from Samandağ and more job opportunities for the youth.”

M28 “The route is a good idea, and more tourists could come because of it.”

M29 “Proper implementation of the route is very important; if applied, it could lead to more economic development in Samandağ.”

Participants from İskenderun and İzmir expressed similar opinions, stating that the cultural route would be beneficial if properly planned. One participant from the local community emphasized that, if implemented, the route could help prevent labor migration. Both domestic and foreign tourists, as well as the local population, responded positively to the proposed cultural route in the study. However, it was highlighted that only a well-planned route implemented on-site can achieve its intended purpose and potentially halt emigration from the district to abroad. All participants supported the idea of the proposed cultural route, and their views aligned with our own.

Question 15. “What would you suggest to better highlight the historical and cultural assets of Samandağ?”

K2 “We think the site needs more promotion, and there should be more work done on these places.”

L2 “Everything comes down to planning. This place has a lot of tourism potential, but there is no proper and well-targeted planning.”

L6 "First and foremost, transportation needs to be improved. For example, we came here, or rather, tried to come from the direction of Arsuz. The road was in terrible condition as we ascended toward Samandağ. Even though we had the advantage of coming with our own vehicle, it still wasn't easy. Landslides had completely blocked the roads and no one was clearing them. This could be resolved by installing wire mesh or blasting those areas with dynamite. As someone who cares about the environment, I found the litter very disturbing. Since the local people are not adequately informed, trash is everywhere. For instance, we stopped at the Samandağ lookout point to enjoy the view. The scenery was amazing, but the cliff below us was filled with garbage, and that's a terrible situation. In fact, I plan to share my concerns online to try to draw the attention of the relevant authorities to this issue."

M2 "In my opinion, if a design is created using scrap vehicles about 100 meters out into the sea, it would be both eye-catching and serve as a fish shelter. Moreover, since it would be a unique type of planning, it could attract a lot of interest."

M30 "First, they need to solve the transportation problem. Additionally, the municipality should pay more attention to the site."

Participants generally suggested improvements to the infrastructure. They emphasized that it would be better if these improvements were planned and implemented as soon as possible. Tourists highlighted the importance of promotion, especially stressing that it should be carried out on a global scale. The responses given by the participants are in line with the recommendations we have planned within the scope of the cultural route. If the proposed arrangements within the cultural route are implemented, the tourism potential of Samandağ District will come to the forefront, and the number of tourists will increase. As a result, the economic well-being of the local population in Samandağ will improve in line with the increase in tourist visits.

1. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the scope of cultural routes, which have gained importance worldwide, a route has been determined by taking into account the historical and cultural heritage of Samandağ. This is because the district of Samandağ hosts 21 historical and cultural sites that carry significant potential for tourism. In this context, the study was designed as a qualitative research using a case study approach. One of the interview techniques, the semi-structured interview method, was employed.

The responses given by the participants to the first question support our field observations. Both local and foreign tourists, as well as the local population, stated that transportation is insufficient and needs to be improved.

The second interview question was based on the issues that emerged following the Syrian wars and the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. In the responses, emphasis was placed on the disaster, and it was highlighted that there were significant difficulties in accessing the district's historical and cultural resources after the February 6, 2023 earthquakes.

In the third interview question, which considered community activities such as local festivals, participants responded positively. As field observations also revealed that improving, increasing, and promoting community activities would contribute to the district's tourism, this aligns with the findings from the interviews.

The answers given to the fourth survey question indicate that if the protection of historical and cultural assets is carried out properly, the economic situation will also improve. Foreign tourists who responded to the question stated that if protection is ensured, it will be possible to transfer historical and cultural heritage to future generations. Meanwhile, local tourists expressed in their responses that due to the interest in our historical and cultural sites, foreign currency income would increase, and they emphasized the need for more careful attention to heritage preservation.

The responses to the fifth interview question mostly show that if our tourism assets are made available to tourists, the tourism potential will be high.

Based on the responses to the sixth interview question, it was determined during the fieldwork that the protection of historical and cultural heritage is insufficient. Both local and foreign tourists emphasized the lack of adequate information. From the answers given by the participants, it can be concluded that due to the insufficient protection of historical and cultural heritage, there is also a lack of sufficient information about the historical sites. Considering the remarks made by tourists and local people during the interview, it can be inferred that more tourists would come if these issues were addressed.

Since all the responses to the seventh question were positive, both local and foreign tourists expressed the same opinion. They emphasized that cultural activities organized in the district would contribute to tourism. Cultural activities in Samandağ have increased in recent years.

In response to the eighth question, while the majority of the local population answered "yes," foreign tourists replied "not enough." The answers from a group of tourists, including Brazilian and American participants, were particularly notable. Two of these tourists stated that they had not known about the existence of Hatay before but became aware of the city due to the February 6, 2023, and subsequent Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. Upon researching, they encountered the Vespasianus-Titus Tunnel in Samandağ and came here out of curiosity.

From the answers given by the participants to the ninth question, it can be concluded that the promotion is insufficient, and if it were adequate, the number of domestic and foreign tourists would increase.

Both tourist profiles participating in the interview emphasized in their answers to the tenth question that the promotion is by no means sufficient.

The answers given by the participants to the eleventh question converge on the point that with promotion, along with restoration and planning in the historical-cultural sites, more domestic and foreign tourists will visit. The observations in the field support the responses given by the participants.

The field trip and observation results support the answers given by the participants to the twelfth question.

The participants' answers to the thirteenth question vary. However, while the negative effects of the earthquake are more prominent, foreign tourists stated that they learned about Samandağ's historical and cultural assets thanks to the earthquake and came to visit.

Participants from İskenderun and İzmir gave similar answers to the fourteenth question. They expressed the opinion that the cultural route would be beneficial if properly planned. The proposed cultural route in the study was positively received by both domestic and foreign tourists as well as the local population. All participants support the suggested cultural route, which aligns with our observations.

The participants generally identified infrastructure issues in response to the fifteenth question. They emphasized that these problems should be planned and implemented as soon as possible for better results.

Based on these results, the following recommendations have been proposed within the scope of the cultural route study:

Although there are hotels and guesthouses in the coastal area of the district, they are not sufficient in terms of tourism. These facilities should be improved, and new hotels and guesthouses that meet tourism standards should be built. The cafes and restaurants in the district are not at a level to adequately serve tourism. New restaurants and cafes should be established.

It should be encouraged that women collect spices and spice-based foods derived from the plants used in gastronomy. The use of these products in the culinary culture at local restaurants can be increased.

There are few souvenir and jewelry shops for both national and international tourists. These businesses should be improved, and local people,

especially women, should be encouraged to open new ones in this field.

Since St. Simon Monastery is located at a high vantage point, it attracts a lot of attention. A tourist commercial facility, such as a restaurant or park designed as a viewpoint, should be established nearby.

Due to the heavy damage caused by the earthquakes on February 6, 2023, and afterward, restoration works on the Garigori Church-Mosque and Seldiren Bridge, as well as the Virgin Mary Church and Bahçeli House structures in the Vakifli neighborhood, should be carried out or accelerated.

The potholes and landslides that have occurred on the transportation networks in the rural areas of Samandağ as a result of the earthquake should be repaired as soon as possible and reopened for traffic.

Local media should be utilized alongside awareness-raising trainings to help develop consciousness among the local community.

Since we are in the age of technology, for domestic tourists, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism should promote these sites more extensively on its social media platforms. The Samandağ Directorate of Culture and Tourism and private enterprises should establish contact with both domestic and international tourism companies to include Samandağ in tourism routes. Brochures and videos introducing the district's historical and cultural heritage should be sent to these tourism companies. Cultural activities should be increased and promoted within the scope of festivals.

To ensure the route lasts longer, plans should be made and regular inspections conducted to maintain sustainability. The responses from participants align with the proposed recommendations planned within the scope of the cultural route. If the suggested arrangements for the cultural route are implemented, the tourism potential of Samandağ district will be highlighted, and the number of incoming tourists will increase. Consequently, the economic welfare of the local community will improve due to the rise in tourism.

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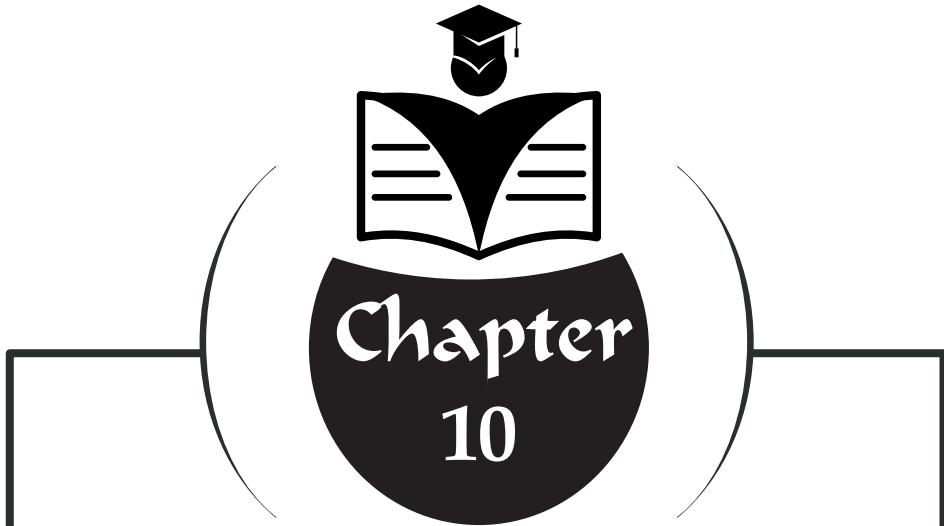
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THE EFFECTS OF INNOVATIVE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization, intensifying competition, and the acceleration of technology present businesses in the 21st-century business world with a dilemma: Innovate or perish. This dilemma parallels the fundamental assumption of organizational environmental theory, which states that businesses that adapt to changing environmental conditions will thrive and prosper, while those that cannot adapt will perish. Adopting an innovative character by adapting to change and making it sustainable requires not only the awareness and commitment of management but also the internalization of innovative practices, approaches, and norms within the organization, making them a part of daily life—in a sense, adopting a culture that emphasizes innovative values. This essentially means a “collective change in mindset” at both the management and employee levels.

This contemporary perspective, which emphasizes the social aspect of innovation alongside the concept of sustainability, differs from the classical approach that focuses on the physical or technical aspects of innovation. According to Schumpeter, who first used the term “innovation” in economics, innovation is the replacement of old products and processes with new ones. In this sense, it refers to the transformation of an idea, discovery, or invention into a new product or service, a new or improved production or distribution method, or a new social service. According to this classical perspective, innovation is defined only as a one-off or infrequent activity undertaken to overcome a market problem or economic bottleneck, or to gain an advantage over a competitor. However, in a market environment where product lifecycles are shortening and customer expectations and needs are constantly changing, this understanding is insufficient; innovation represents a cultural development and change rather than an activity carried out by the business. In this case, innovation can only become a response to changes in the external environment and a competitive advantage that can prevent potential threats from the environment when it is adopted (internalized) by management and organizational employees. Therefore, businesses need to perceive innovation as a way of life and create an organizational culture based on it, rather than simply being a competitive advantage.

A review of the relevant literature reveals that innovative businesses incorporate innovative practices and elements; in other words, they exhibit the characteristics of an innovative culture. Organizational culture plays a decisive role in enabling a business to gain a sustainable competitive advantage through innovation. Defined as the set of norms, assumptions, and beliefs that shape members’ perceptions of processes and operations, organizational culture has been a popular topic since the early 1980s. Considering its powerful role, it’s possible to say that culture is a fundamental element determining how

an organization is managed. A culture reflecting innovative values is referred to in organizational behavior literature as “innovation culture,” “innovation-oriented culture,” or “innovation-supported culture.” By emphasizing values and practices such as tolerance for error and uncertainty, risk-taking, information sharing, participation, creativity, and open communication channels, an innovation culture, with the support of management, provides employees with opportunities for continuous learning and development.

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1-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Austrian economist Joseph A. Schumpeter, who first addressed the concept of innovation, innovation is: “The introduction of a new product or a new version of a product to the market.” According to the Oslo Manual (2005), one of the leading internationally accepted sources, innovation is: “The implementation of a new or significantly improved product or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in internal business practices, workplace organization, or external relations.” Therefore, innovation, as a whole of technical/economic/social processes, provides businesses with the opportunity to seize sector opportunities and increase their market share (Focus, 2014).

According to Drucker, unexpected successes and failures are primary sources of innovation. Through this source, businesses that encourage and manage innovation have the chance to develop, produce, and market their products and services with superior features (Focus, 2014). For example, in 1957, Ford Motor developed a car model called the “Edsel.” The design and appearance of this car were based on extensive research into customer preferences. However, it was a complete failure upon its release. In response,

Ford Motor conducted new research measuring customer expectations and produced the “Thunderbird” model. This model went down in American automotive history as a great success.

Views on the origin of the word “culture” agree that the concept has roots related to agriculture. According to linguists, the word “culture” comes from the Latin word *edere-cultura*, which was mostly used to mean “land culture” (Mejuyev, 1987). The term “*cultura*,” derived from this root, was first used in agricultural activities. The Romans used this term to name plants grown by sowing in the fields. The term *crop*, suggested as an equivalent for the term “culture,” is also derived from the verb “*colere*” (Ozlem, 2000).

According to Güvenç (2002), the characteristics of culture are as follows:

1. Culture is knowledge, behavior, and habits that can be learned.
2. Culture has the characteristic of being transmitted through generations via language.
3. The teachings of culture vary from society to society.
4. While culture is an element formed in social life, individual attitudes and behaviors also hold an important place within the cultural fabric.
5. Culture is a functional element that meets vital and social needs.
6. Culture has both integrative and divisive power. Cultures that are in harmony at the social level tend to integrate.
7. The concept of culture is an abstract concept related to life.

In a market environment where product lifecycles are shortening and customer expectations and needs are constantly changing, innovation represents more than just an activity carried out by the business; it signifies a cultural development and change (BTSO, 2014). Innovation, which is the process of transforming creative ideas, discoveries, and inventions into new products (Sucu, 2000), only becomes a response to changes in the external environment and a competitive tool that can prevent threats from the environment when it is adopted by the business (Damanpour, 1991). Therefore, businesses need to perceive innovation as a way of life and create an organizational culture around it (Tidd et al., 2001; Van der Panne et al., 2003).

The ability of businesses to innovate depends on whether their organizational culture is innovative. Sustainable innovations are determined by organizational cultures, and an innovation culture is a structure that ensures the ability and sustainability of innovation (Urper, 2008). At this

point, an innovative business should possess the characteristics of an innovation culture (Özgenç, 2007). In other words, it refers to an environment where creativity and innovation are valued, and continuous learning and knowledge acquisition are widespread (Brettel and Cleven, 2011). From another perspective, an innovation culture also affects creativity, continuous learning, autonomy, collectivism, flexibility, and informal communication because it tolerates errors and is open to new ideas (Amabile, 1988).

In innovative businesses, HR supports an innovative culture (Gundling, 2002). In this regard, professional development, written policies, documentation, cross-functional training, performance evaluation, and feedback variables positively influence the innovation culture (Peçen& Kaya, 2013). Of these, performance evaluation is more often related to managerial innovation (Ling & Nasurdin, 2010). At this point, employees' attitudes towards innovation can be influenced by the business culture. This reveals the degree to which businesses innovate (Saatçioğlu & Özmen, 2010). From this perspective, the qualities that should be present in an innovative culture are as follows (Barker, 2002):

1. Stored information,
2. Interpersonal information,
3. Competence in meeting the needs of the external environment,
4. Creativity arising from these three activities.

McLean (2005) conducted several important studies on business culture, innovation, and cultural factors supporting innovation. According to these studies, he categorized the cultural factors supporting innovation into six groups:

1. Organizational incentives should be provided for risk-taking, generating and developing new ideas, and making and managing partial decisions.
2. Management support should be provided for team goals, teamwork, and ideas, and for open communication.
3. Work groups should be supported, and focus should be placed on diverse work groups.
4. An environment of freedom and autonomy should be created for individuals, allowing them to think about how to achieve goals.
5. Time and financial resources are required.
6. Situations that hinder innovation should be controlled.

Innovation culture is embedded within organizational and societal culture (Ürper, 2005); it is shaped according to the beliefs and values of employees. Employees integrate with symbols and expressions and renew them over time. Therefore, the resulting culture is formed and developed as a result of the behaviors, reactions, and learning that each person acquires in their life. The resulting culture is passed on to new generations (Hofstede, 1984). In a sense, this culture is a structure of shared values and beliefs that enables employees to understand organizational behavioral norms and the organizational functions that provide them (Akkoç et al., 2011).

In organizations, innovative HR practices are used to create an environment where employees can develop their ideas and express themselves. In other words, in innovative businesses, HR always supports an innovative culture. Recruiting innovators, identifying/developing high-potential employees, utilizing change management skills, creating expertise or strategies in performance management, etc., are considered guarantees of sustainable innovation.

At this point, HR practices are defined as “all the work an employee does from the moment they join the company until they leave.” Studies explaining how HR practices are structured are categorized in terms of “best practices” (Pfeffer, 1994; Guest, 1997) and “best fit” (Delery & Doty, 1996).

Human Resources Management (HRM) practices include: Planning, recruitment, training and development, performance-compensation-career management, labor relations, occupational safety, and personnel affairs (Tonus et al., 2014). According to Granet-G’s international strategic Human Resources Management research, these practices have been examined in five dimensions: Human Resources function, recruitment practices, training-development-performance evaluation, compensation-benefits, and communication (Ardiç & Döven, 2004: 3).

In an innovative business, both top management and employees play important roles in generating and implementing new ideas. Employees, sometimes acting as inventors and entrepreneurs and sometimes as managers, form the fundamental building blocks of the process (Trott, 2008). At this point, the necessary support for employees is provided by ensuring that HR practices are innovation-oriented (Arthur, 1994).

Although the relevant literature emphasizes that these types of practices are related to environmental dynamism (fierce competition and technological advancements), a common definition is not yet available (Towers, 1992). Generally, HR functions are expressed as ideas, programs, applications, and systems (Rogers, 1983). At this point, since individual creativity is necessary

for innovation, skilled employees are needed (Amabile, 1988). In a sense, HR practices are a managerial tool designed to contribute to innovation (Kossek, 1990). Accordingly, the top management's perspective on innovative practices will directly affect the innovative work of HR. Furthermore, the HR manager is also responsible for monitoring relevant innovations and providing warnings when necessary (Sadullah, 2013).

The macro-level approach to HR practices is based on factors such as globalization, the European Union process, technological developments, strategic perspective, and legal regulations (Bayraktaroglu & Ozdemir, 2007), while the micro-level approach is based on individual and organizational factors. Organizational factors include structural (industry, size, etc.) and cultural (employee orientation, innovative methods and training, etc.) elements, while individual factors include career and income group (Wise, 1999). Innovation requires employees with high tolerance for uncertainty and flexibility. In a sense, individuals who take risks, assume responsibility, and can work collaboratively and independently in the long term should be hired and developed (Saatçioğlu & Özmen, 2010). However, these risk-taking employees must be supported by top management (Madsen, 2005). At this point, HR practices must provide the desired workforce (Conway & Mc Mackin, 1997). Therefore, this innovative perspective adds a new dimension to HR (Looise & Van Riemsdijk, 2004).

The quality of human resources, which is the subject of empirical research, depends on continuous learning and innovative achievements (Dobson & Safarian, 2008). For an innovative business, the selection, empowerment, and reward of a creative workforce, as well as project-based groups and a flexible physical environment, are becoming increasingly important (Looise et al., 2004). Standard tests and competencies measuring analytical skills are now insufficient for recruitment; instead, tests measuring creativity are being used. The Torrance Creative Thinking Test is just one example of innovative measurement methods. At this point, existing cultural values and beliefs act as a bridge in positioning innovation as a culture within the business. Therefore, since an innovation culture requires appropriate behaviors and attitudes to seize changing industry opportunities, employees need to develop the ability to cope with change. In this regard, innovative HR practices are influenced by both top management and the social system (Agarwala, 2003).

Training, perhaps considered the most innovative among HR practices (Laursen & Foss, 2003), provides employees with greater adaptability, flexibility, and opportunities for continuous development (Zhao, 2008). The general difference of training as an innovative HR practice is that it is future-oriented, adaptable to changing conditions, less structured and individualized, systematic, planned, continuous, encourages employee participation, is group-

focused, and has a long-term perspective. This demonstrates the necessity of training for the effective use of employee skills. Because training increases the potential for acquiring and using new knowledge and skills. Therefore, the innovative nature of training activities positively influences both radical and incremental innovations and ensures the adoption of a culture of innovation.

An innovation-focused recruitment and selection method reveals and develops an individual's innovative and creative potential. In this case, the company needs to align its Human Resources pool with its changing innovation needs (Miles & Snow, 1984). For example, the competencies of an individual to be selected for a project team should be defined and updated electronically (Nordhaug, 1993). The difference between innovative performance appraisal and traditional performance appraisal studies lies in its dynamic nature as a process and in setting different performance criteria for employees (Mehr & Shaver, 1996).

Innovative performance appraisal supports the principle of bringing everyone to the "highest possible level of productivity," one of the fundamental principles of the Scientific Management Approach pioneered by Frederick Taylor, and focuses on improving employee success and behavior. At this point, a performance-based wage system is used to retain success-oriented individuals in the company.

Given that greater effort leads to greater income (Prospecting Theory), employees will perform better to increase their wage income. In a way, wages, which measure how much improvement an employee has shown in terms of performance, also provide information about productivity. However, there are many methods that make innovative applications of the performance-based wage system: bonuses arising from the right to implement a new idea, competition prizes, incentives, cash, company shares are just a few of them. On the other hand, instead of result-oriented rewards, an internal or external compensation system can also be applied (Conway et al, 1997).

In innovative businesses, a coach helps maximize employee potential and achieve agreed-upon goals. The coach, who increases the employee's performance level (Evered and Selman, 1989: 19-23), guides the employee towards greater success while leaving the responsibility to the employee (Wright, 2005). The innovative nature of coaching lies in starting with observation, discussing the problem, and providing two-way feedback (Evered and Selman, 1989: 142-150). An innovative business, since independent and creative thinking is essential, the coach achieves success "without directing employees" (Wright et al., 2005); thus, cultivating employees who listen, ask questions, and discover their own truths (Rosinski, 2003).

The reasons why empowerment is an innovative practice are: it improves organizational performance in the face of increasing competition, provides flexibility to the organization in terms of adapting to changing environmental conditions; it supports innovative behaviors, gives freedom of idea generation and autonomy, and finally, it encourages participation.

There are two main reasons why social activities are included as an innovative practice. The first is that social activities enable employees to come together with both their colleagues and employers; and also enable natural leaders to emerge from among them (Sabuncuoğlu and Tüz, 1998); the second reason is that these activities create the necessary physical environment for the exchange of ideas (Hewit & Dundas, 2006).

Informal knowledge sharing and network-based information systems are important for innovation (Jaruzelski & Katzenbach, 2012). In this regard, job rotation facilitates the sharing of new ideas and continuous learning among employees from different areas of expertise (Amabile, 1988). This increases the employee's intrinsic motivation (Hewit & Dundas, 2006) and creativity (Luecke, 2011). Consequently, the employee's individual job performance and belief in their work increase, leading to empowerment (Ginnoda, 1997). What makes empowerment innovative is that empowered employees are more productive (Sigler & Pearson, 2000), possess greater decision-making autonomy, and are more actively involved in communication with customers/suppliers. As a result, innovative businesses invest more in employees in terms of design and planning (Powell, 1995). In a sense, empowerment motivates the employee by consisting of four perceptual dimensions: "meaning, competence, autonomy, and influence" (Spreitzer, 1995). The absence of one of these, while not completely eliminating the perceived sense of empowerment, does reduce its degree. Therefore, the four dimensions together are described as the "almost complete and sufficient perceptual set" necessary to understand empowerment (Hu & Leung, 2003). What is important here is that the level of support from top management is positively related to the employee's degree of empowerment (Gudmundson, Tower & Hartman, 2003; Selvarajan, 2007).

The rapid globalization and change experienced worldwide are making social responsibility increasingly important (Eren, 2000). In this context, information society businesses are improving themselves in terms of environmental protection awareness and other social responsibility activities. Therefore, social responsibility, which means that businesses use their resources to "improve the society" in which they operate while achieving their goals (Bayrak, 2001), is becoming a necessity for innovative businesses striving to succeed in increasing competition (Hadgett, 1991).

CONCLUSION

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and innovation are positively correlated (McElwee and Warren, 2000). Among these practices, training, teamwork, performance evaluation, and empowerment have been found to be positively correlated with innovation (Shipton, 2006). Som (2008), in his research on sixty-nine Indian companies, used departmental role, empowerment, professional training, and performance evaluation as criteria for innovative practices. However, according to Jiménez-Jiméns and Valle (2005), training, reward, specialization, performance evaluation, and career development are more innovative. Of these, training was found to be the most innovative practice because it requires more research and allocation of resources for innovation (Trott, 2008; Laursen & Foss, 2003). At this point, innovation investments should be supported by training (Ángel & Sánchez, 2009). Because education is related to innovation (Ling & Nasurden, 2010), it enhances innovation performance by bringing about positive change in learning and behavior (Hewit-Dundas, 2006).

As businesses operate more in international environments, they must be more innovative to survive. To achieve this, employees need to be more encouraged to innovate. Therefore, HR practices designed to foster innovation should be preferred (Walsworth and Verma, 2007: 225). In a sense, innovative HR practices are system restructuring practices. Because benefiting from employees, for example, restructuring training, requires identifying employee qualifications accordingly (Zenger & Hesterly, 1997). In this respect, these practices, considered innovative, are adapted to organizational systems that emphasize participation in decision-making, team-based learning, openness to employee development, and effective knowledge sharing (Lado, 1994).

Business cultures should also strongly support innovation (Jaruzelski & Katzenbach, 2012). For example, Google Inc. and Procter & Gamble, due to their business cultures, are constantly open to new ideas and feedback from their customers. This gives employees the freedom to seize opportunities and encourages them to think outside the box. In a way, it creates an environment where mistakes can be tolerated (Sully de Luque & Javidan, 2004). At this point, a culture of innovation requires a flexible and less resistant business environment (Hornsby et al., 2002). In this context, Lonti and Verma (2003), in their research in Canada, found that a flexible work system increased innovation. In a sense, a culture of innovation is related to adaptation to change, the use of information channels, teamwork, decentralization, risk distribution and management, low bureaucracy, and employee reward and incentive.

The changes brought about by globalization have made innovation a necessity, not a luxury. For innovation to take place in a business, it depends on its adoption and integration into a way of life, starting from top management. If innovation is considered a crop, it needs a field—a culture of innovation—to be nourished and grow. In this case, the lifeblood of the crop is top management, and those who enable its growth are the employees. With organizational support, employees will more clearly demonstrate their contributions to innovation.

According to Pelenk's (2016) study, considering the high correlation between awareness, execution, and satisfaction with the results of innovative HR practices, it is quite possible that "awareness and execution influence the construction of an innovative culture through satisfaction with the results of innovative HR practices." This situation may stem from a structure in countries with high power distances, such as Turkey, where the distance between top management and employees is significant, and employees are hesitant to express their own opinions.

Research in the literature indicates that innovation-focused HR practices bring about reformative changes in innovation. This is precisely where HR, which tracks and records all stages of employees' lives from onboarding to retirement, from performance appraisal to compensation, and thus keeps a finger on the pulse of employees in their professional lives, bears a great responsibility. If HR structures its current practices according to change, employees can focus more consciously on innovative goals and strategies.

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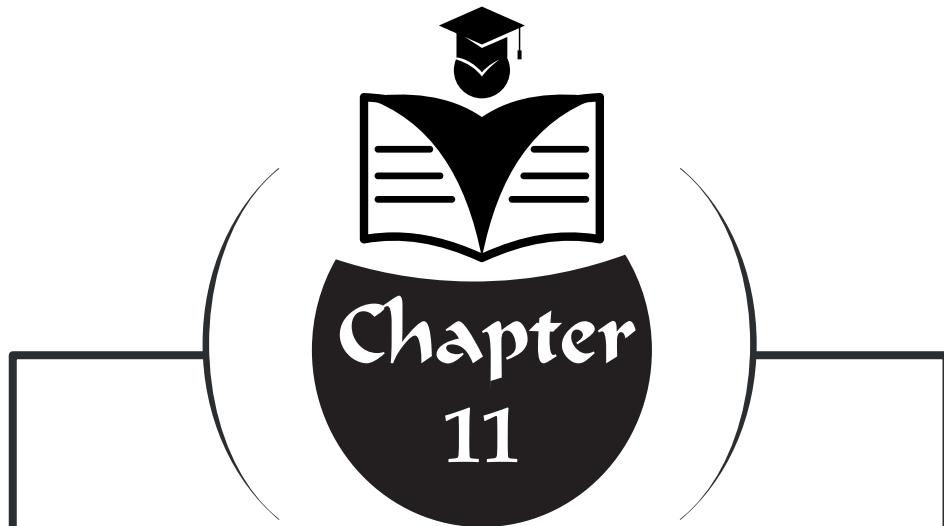
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PRODUCTION DYNAMICS AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY IMPLICATIONS FOR ENERGY CLASSIFICATIONS IN THE WHITE GOODS SECTOR

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human activities have caused unbalanced changes in the atmosphere and ecosystem over time. As a result, crises have begun to emerge due to global warming, climate change, air, and water pollution. This process has caused businesses to turn to sustainability and environmentally friendly production methods. The theoretical approach to environmental economics and sustainable development is to achieve a balance between economic activities and the state of the environment (Bogovic & Grdic, 2020). Green products, which consume less energy, use recyclable materials, and are produced with nature friendly production processes contribute to the development of environmental responsibility awareness. The increasing importance of energy conservation and rising energy prices have given rise to the concept of clean technology, offering businesses the opportunity to develop energy-efficient products. Products equipped with new technologies stand out with their low energy consumption, smart features, environmentally friendly materials, and ergonomic designs. These developments are also forcing businesses to constantly innovate in order to maintain their competitiveness in the market. Increased competition has become decisive not only for prices but also for quality, energy efficiency, and environmentally friendly features.

White goods, one of the most frequently used energy consumers in daily life, directly affect total energy consumption in terms of energy efficiency (Kama & Kaplan, 2012). Energy-efficient product design is related to the concepts of green design or eco-design, which aim to reduce the environmental impact of products, including energy consumption while maintaining the product's quality level (Fullerton & Wu 1998). Therefore, regulating energy consumption in products such as refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers, ovens, freezers, and air conditioners is crucial. Developing energy-efficient products, utilizing smart technologies, innovation activities, and user awareness programs are fundamental elements of this process. The aim is to minimize environmental damage by reducing individuals' energy consumption.

From Türkiye's perspective, the white goods sector holds a special importance within the economic structure, both in terms of production volume and export capacity. Türkiye has become the largest white goods producer in Europe and the second largest in the world after China (TÜRKBESD, 2023). Both in Türkiye and globally, white goods consumption has been shaped by different dynamics, especially after the pandemic, with demands focused on energy efficiency and digitalization (Freedonia Group, 2022).

According to the Türkiye National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (2024-2030), a savings of 30.2 billion dollars is predicted in 2033. In Türkiye, 25% of

primary energy consumption occurs in residences (Koç et al., 2018). Reducing residential energy consumption, which occurs at a very significant rate, and using efficient and economical technologies are also of great importance in terms of the action plan. For this reason, it is important to use efficient and low energy consuming devices. Circular economy adopts a holistic approach which starts from the design of products, covering production, consumption, reuse, repair, recycling and reproduction processes. This approach aims to reduce the environmental burden by ensuring that resources circulate within the economic system for as long as possible. In this way, it is aimed to prevent the conflict between economic growth and environmental protection.

With Türkiye also signing the Green Deal, many sectors are expected to be affected by this transformation. Compliance with the Green Deal is crucial for Türkiye, as the majority of its white goods production is exported to Europe. Due to the high costs involved, strategic planning is extremely important in this transformation. Countries that fail to comply with the Green Deal may face threats such as carbon taxes, which could create additional costs (Türe & Dural, 2023).

Factors such as price, quality, brand perception, environmental factors, energy efficiency, individuals' habits and demographic characteristics have an impact on preferences. When making a choice, the physical characteristics of the product and how consumers are affected by social, psychological and environmental factors are also effective. In particular, energy consumption and the choice of environmentally friendly products have become an increasing research topic in recent years. Energy efficient behavior reflects not only an environmentally friendly attitude but also a desire to reduce costs. Energy consumption that can be explained by consumers' socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics as well as their environmental awareness (Frederiks et al., 2015).

In their study, Akçi et al. (2020) tried to determine the factors affecting consumers' refrigerator preference. Accordingly, it has been determined that quality, usability and brand are the most important factors in consumer preferences. Uygurtürk & Kara (2023) examined whether the factors affecting the white goods preferences for consumers in Karabük differ according to demographic factors. Durmuş Senyapar et al. (2024) examined energy label awareness among Gazi University staff. The results showed that there were significant differences according to gender and education level. Especially women staff gave more importance to energy efficient products. The findings highlight the importance of specific communication strategies for different demographic groups. Wong & Tzeng (2019) determined that Millennials with greater levels of education and income level were more likely to engage in green purchasing behavior than others.

Population growth and industrialization have led to a continuous increase in the demand for energy. This situation has resulted in the concept of energy efficiency gaining importance in the context of sustainable environmental use. Energy efficient use of white goods is important to save energy about daily energy consumption. The aim of this study is to examine whether awareness of energy classes in the white goods sector differs according to the demographic data of the participants in this study.

The study has four sections. The first section is the introduction which explains the importance of literacy about energy classification applications in white goods sector. The second section introduces the data set, variables, and methodology of the study. The third section presents the analysis results and their evaluation. The fourth section concludes with a summary of the overall findings of the study.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study's scope includes white goods users in Türkiye. A non-random convenience sampling method was used, and a survey was conducted via online platforms to reach a wider audience. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) scale is a commonly used statistical indicator to assess the adequacy of sample size for factor analysis. Generally, KMO values of 0.6 and above indicate that the sample size is acceptable for analysis. Therefore, this study was conducted using a sample size of 150 individuals.

In the first part of the questionnaire there were 4 questions aimed at determining the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part contained 11 statements designed to measure participants' awareness of energy classes and their preferences in the white goods sector. These statements were answered using a 5-point Likert scale. The hypotheses to be tested within the scope of the study are presented below:

$H_{0,1}$: Awareness of energy classes in white goods has a significant effect on individuals' product preferences and usage tendencies.

$H_{0,2}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on gender.

$H_{0,3}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on age.

$H_{0,4}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on education level.

$H_{0,5}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on income level.

Cronbach Alpha reliability analysis was performed to evaluate the reliability of the data obtained in the survey. Factor analysis was performed to reduce inconsistencies between the data and to make them more reliable. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to the scale questions to determine the tests to be used in the analysis, and it was examined whether the data showed a normal distribution. P-value below 0.05 indicated that the data did not show a normal distribution. Therefore, nonparametric tests were preferred in this study. Kruskal-Wallis H Test, Mann-Whitney U Test, and Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test were used for difference analyses, and Spearman Correlation Analysis was applied to determine the relationships between variables. All data were transferred to the IBM SPSS 26 software package, and analyses were performed using this program.

3. ANALYSIS RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 and Figure 1 presented frequency distributions clearly reveal the sociodemographic profile of the sample within the scope of the research. The sample is predominantly female, with a significant peak in the 23-27 age group. This suggests that the study primarily focuses on young adult women.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender		
	Number	%
Female	101	67.3
Man	49	32.7
Total	150	100
Age		
	Number	%
18-22	15	10
23-27	74	49.3
28-32	19	12.7
33-38	14	9.3
39-43	10	6.7
44 and above	18	12
Total	150	100
Educational Level		
	Number	%
Primary School	8	5.3
High School	13	8.7
Pre bachelor's degree	9	6
Bachelor's degree	92	61.3
Master/ PhD	28	18.7
Total	150	100
Income Level		
	Number	%
18000 TL and lower	21	14
18000 TL- 35000 TL	12	8
35000 TL- 53000 TL	37	24.7
53000 TL- 70000 TL	29	19.3
70000 TL and above	51	34
Total	150	100

Regarding education levels, the vast majority of participants hold higher education degrees, indicating that the sample generally represents an educated segment. Data on income levels shows that a significant portion of participants belong to the middle and upper-middle income groups.

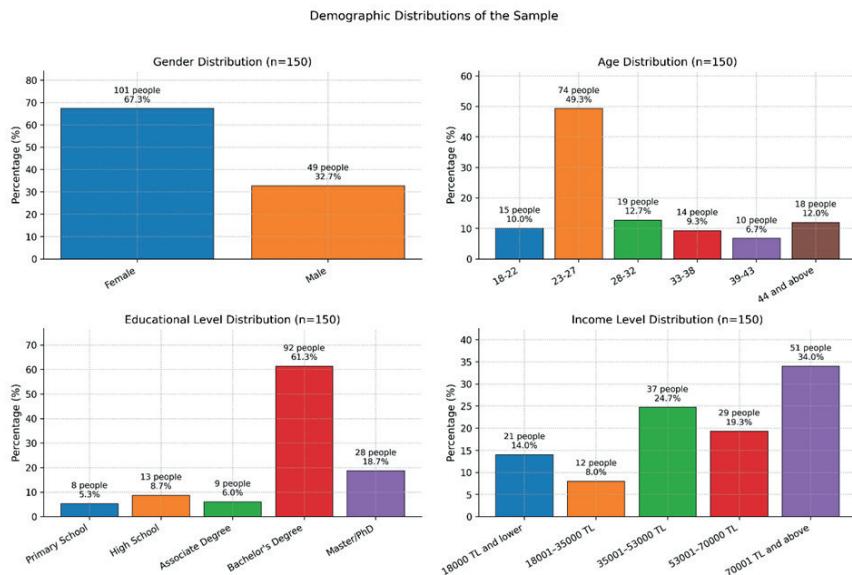


Figure 1 Demographic Distribution of the Sample

Table 2 Reliability Analysis Results

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
,784	11

As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, calculated to test the internal consistency reliability of the scale used in the study, was found to be .784. This value is significantly above the generally accepted threshold of .70, commonly used in social sciences. This result indicates that the 11 items comprising the scale measure a single construct or concept in a consistent and mutually agreeable manner.

Table 3 Factor Analysis Results

Dimension	Expression	Cronbach Alpha Value	Values of Factor Loadings	Factor Explained Variance (%)
Energy Class Awareness	I have knowledge about energy-saving (A+, A++, A+++) products in the white goods sector.	0.860	0.874	32.551
	In the white goods sector, I evaluate products by comparing their energy efficiency ratings.	0.870	0.848	
	I have knowledge about all energy efficiency classes in the white goods industry.	0.868	0.845	
	I understand the value and importance of high energy efficiency ratings (A+, A++, A+++) in the white goods sector.	0.880	0.814	
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	I can understand the potential amount of savings by reading the energy efficiency label on energy-saving (A+, A++, A+++) products.	0.880	0.793	57.483
	My detailed examination of energy efficiency ratings does not influence my product evaluation.	0.693	0.777	
	The information I've gained about energy efficiency classes doesn't change my overall attitude towards the products.	0.692	0.775	
	When choosing white goods, I consider those that are most suitable for my needs.	0.713	0.701	
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	I have access to descriptive information regarding energy classes. I'm having difficulty finding sufficient and understandable information about energy efficiency classes.	0.727	0.619	
	The usability of white goods is more important than their energy efficiency rating.	0.738	0.588	
		0.751	0.520	
KMO = 0.805; Barlett= 473.857; df=10 p<0.000; Cronbach Alpha =0.895				
Energy Class Awareness	My detailed examination of energy efficiency ratings does not influence my product evaluation.	0.693	0.777	57.483
	The information I've gained about energy efficiency classes doesn't change my overall attitude towards the products.	0.692	0.775	
	When choosing white goods, I consider those that are most suitable for my needs.	0.713	0.701	
	I have access to descriptive information regarding energy classes. I'm having difficulty finding sufficient and understandable information about energy efficiency classes.	0.727	0.619	
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	The usability of white goods is more important than their energy efficiency rating.	0.738	0.588	
		0.751	0.520	
		0.751	0.520	
KMO = 0.792; Barlett= 185.514; df=15 p<0.000; Cronbach Alpha =0.756				

Table 3 showed the factor analysis' results. The high internal consistency ($\alpha=0.895$) and strong factor loading values observed in the first factor indicate that energy efficiency awareness in society is not merely a superficial level of awareness but rather has transformed into a consistent and structured information system.

The availability of stable and predictable demand structures is an essential element for producing products and should have a positive impact on how companies view their long-term product development and ROI (return on investment) risk for capacity. The second element identifies how rapidly companies can move from data to behavior and gives them a guide to developing products. There is a significant focus on usability, which leads to the idea that, in addition to being efficient, a product must also be designed with a clear relationship between its function and how consumers will use the product, as well as to understand it through the user experience. This insight shows that companies working on R&D and innovation will need to focus both on developing new technologies for efficiency and on how to create a seamless experience when integrating those efficiency products with the user.

Table 4 Gender-Based Awareness of Energy Classes and Decision Differences

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	z	P
Awareness of Energy Classes	Man	49	91.12		
	Female	101	67.92	-3.090	0.002
	Total	150			
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	Man	49	96.35	-4.108	0.000
	Female	101	65.39		
	Total	150			

The Mann-Whitney U test's findings, as summarized in Table 4, demonstrated whether male and female respondents experience significant statistical differences in knowledge of energy efficiency class awareness and the resulting actions from that awareness. Statistically significant differences between male and female responses were established in both areas measured by this test. The first significant difference is present in the "Awareness of Energy Classes" category, where males had a higher mean rank (men $M=96.35$; female $M=65.39$) and this difference is statistically significant ($z=-3.090$; $p=0.002$). Therefore male respondents demonstrate higher levels of knowledge about energy classes than female respondents. The second area measured was entitled "Energy Class Awareness in Practice". The mean rank for male respondents ($M=96.35$) vs. female respondents ($M=65.39$) demonstrated a higher mean rank for males than females and this difference was statistically significant ($z=-4.108$; $p=0.000$). As a result, male respondents, compared to female respondents, were more likely to have a higher mean rank regarding energy class awareness when purchasing products and using full time.

Table 5 Age Differences in Energy Class Awareness and Decision-Making

	Age	χ^2	p	N	Mean-Rank
Awareness of Energy Classes	18-22	4.256	0.088	150	51.27
	23-27				71.45
	28-32				84.68
	33-38				88.29
	39-43				92.25
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	44 and above				83.39
	18-22				80.53
	23-27				68.85
	28-32		4.663	0.189	65.97
	33-38				91.82
	39-43				89.15
	44 and above				88.42

The results from the Kruskal-Wallis H test for “Awareness of Energy Classes” ($\chi^2=4.256$, $p=0.088$) and “Energy Class Awareness in Practical Use” ($\chi^2=4.663$; $p=0.189$) indicate that there were no statistically significant differences between age groups for either factor ($p>0.05$); however, the mean ranks reveal interesting trends. Although no statistically significant differences were found for either factor based on age, there were trends shown by means ranks that are noteworthy. For example, while individuals aged 18-22 had a significantly lower score than all other groups for both factors, those aged 39-43 had the highest scores for each factor. The mean ranks for practical usage of energy class awareness were highest for the 18-22 age group and lowest for the 28-32 age group. In particular, it can be said that the young adult group (18-22) exhibits a different profile compared to other groups in terms of both knowledge level and practical tendency.

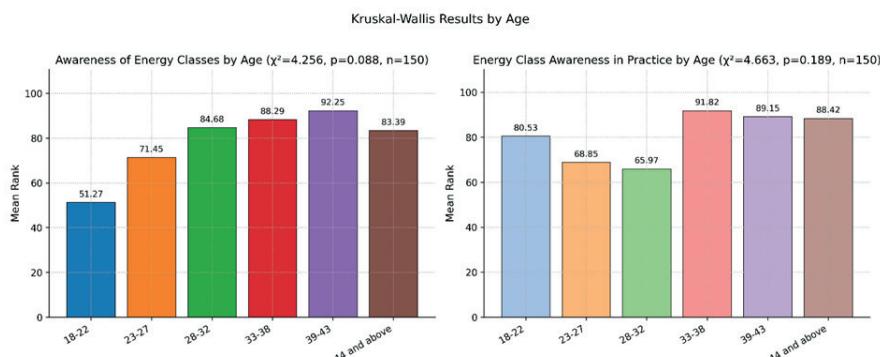


Figure 2 Kruskal-Wallis Results by Age

Table 6 Energy Class Awareness and Decision Variations by Education

	Education Level	χ^2	p	N	Mean-Rank
Awareness of Energy Classes	Primary School				54.81
	High School				74.57
	Pre bachelor's degree	0.897	0.03	150	81.96
	Bachelor's degree				67.56
	Master/ PhD				84.04
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	Primary School				110.06
	High School				70.06
	Pre bachelor's degree	0.587	0.000	150	93.00
	Bachelor's degree				98.00
	Master/ PhD				66.36

The Kruskal-Wallis H test results presented in Table 6 and Figure 3 show that education level has a statistically significant effect on both dimensions of energy awareness. The significance level for “Awareness of Energy Classes” was found to be $p=0.03$ ($\chi^2=0.897$). Examining the mean rank values, the highest level of awareness was observed in postgraduate (Master/PhD, Mean Rank=84.04) and pre-bachelor's (Mean Rank=81.96) education groups, while the lowest level was observed in primary school graduates (Mean Rank=54.81). A much stronger significance level was found in the “Energy Class Awareness in Practice” dimension ($p=0.000$, $\chi^2=0.587$). Interestingly, the groups with the highest average rank in this dimension are bachelor's (Mean Rank=98.00) and associate's (Mean Rank=93.00) graduates, while postgraduate graduates (Mean Rank=66.36) have a relatively lower rank. This finding suggests that high theoretical knowledge does not always express into stronger practical behavior. In conclusion, it appears that educational level is a critical and significant variable in both the processes of acquiring knowledge and putting it into practice, but the relationship between the two dimensions is not linear or simple.

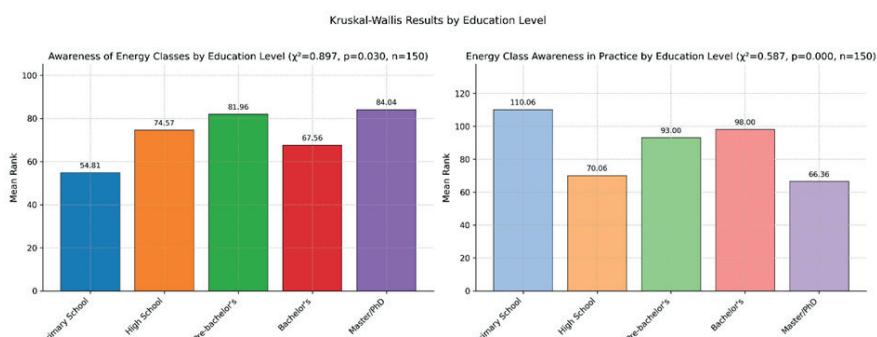


Figure 3 Kruskal-Wallis Results by Education Level

Table 7 Income-Based Differences in Energy Class Awareness and Decisions

	Income Level	χ^2	p	N	Mean-Rank
Awareness of Energy Classes	18000 TL and lower	4.828	0.171	150	58.02
	18000 TL- 35000 TL				69.13
	35000 TL- 53000 TL				71.91
	53000 TL- 70000 TL				79.79
	70000 TL and above				84.36
Energy Class Awareness in Practice	18000 TL and lower	1.105	0.168	150	78.50
	18000 TL- 35000 TL				98.29
	35000 TL- 53000 TL				70.39
	53000 TL- 70000 TL				83.52
	70000 TL and above				68.05

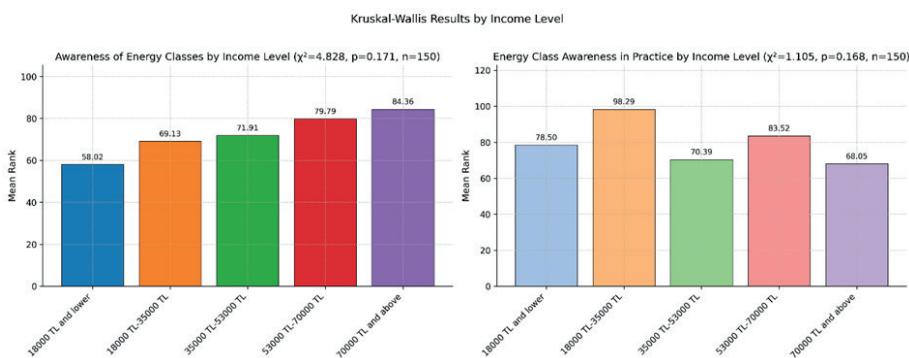


Figure 4 Kruskal-Wallis Results by Income Level

Table 7 and Figure 4 show that there wasn't any significant difference based on age income level. There wasn't any statistically significant difference was found between income groups in terms of Energy Class Awareness ($\chi^2 = 4.828$, $p = 0.171$). However, when looking at the average ranking values, it was seen that awareness increased as income increased (average rank 58.02 in the lowest income group, 84.36 in the highest income group). There was also no statistically significant difference between groups regarding the reflection of Energy Class Awareness in Practice ($\chi^2 = 1.105$, $p = 0.168$). However, according to the average rankings, it can be observed that middle income groups (especially between 18,000 TL and 35,000 TL) had a higher tendency to practice. These findings indicate that income level does not directly and significantly affect energy class awareness, but there is a trend towards higher awareness in higher income groups. Low-income households generally have fewer energy-efficient appliances than higher-income households. Schleich (2019) found a consistent trend in the adoption rates of energy-efficient technologies depending on income level in various European countries. However, a study by Young (2008) on Canadian households shows that appliance replacement patterns are influenced by being low-income.

Table 8 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Results
$H_{0,1}$: Awareness of energy classes in white goods has a significant effect on individuals' product preferences and usage tendencies.	Rejected
$H_{0,2}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on gender.	Accepted
$H_{0,3}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on age.	Rejected
$H_{0,4}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on education level.	Accepted
$H_{0,5}$: There is a significant difference in attitudes regarding awareness of energy classes in white goods based on income level	Rejected

Table 8 summarizes that hypotheses H_1 , H_3 , and H_5 are rejected, while hypotheses H_2 and H_4 are accepted. The results of the hypothesis were significant in terms of the energy efficiency awareness of production, as well as the development of management strategies related to production and cost. The findings from the rejection of the first null hypothesis show the disparity between the theoretical knowledge about energy-efficient products and the reality of their consumption behaviour. The results are significant for the manufacturing industry. The investment in R&D and production of the higher energy-efficient products does not necessarily create a resulting demand in the marketplace.

With the acceptance of the second and fourth null hypothesis, there needs to be further differentiation in the product development and product line strategies of the targeted consumers. Because of the gender differences, further segmentation of the products must be completed within product management. Furthermore, the differences due to the education levels create a different value for high-efficiency product consumers when comparing individuals with different education levels. Therefore, the product lifecycle costs will need to be calculated and reported differently for the various segments of consumers. Conversely, the conclusion to reject H_{03} and H_{05} suggests that the overall market structure for production planning will be more homogeneous than what was previously expected. The absence of any statistically significant difference in demand potential between the age groups indicates that products developed with an emphasis on energy efficiency may be viewed as equally desirable by consumers across many different age groups. In addition, the lack of statistically significant differences between demand potential due to different levels of income suggests that high-efficiency products do not have to be sold as premium products targeting only those with higher incomes. In this way, reducing the unit cost of the product through a favorable financial structure allows for greater dissemination of more efficient technologies by benefiting from economies of scale in production.

In conclusion, when these hypothesis tests are considered together, it becomes clear that the production strategy for energy-efficient products should be formulated within a demand structure that is heterogeneous and shaped by behavioral factors. Production cost optimization and investment decisions should be based not only on technical efficiency parameters but also on this socio-demographic segmentation and the reality of information-behavioral mismatch. The efficiency of resource allocation is closely related not so much to the technical superiority of the product itself, but rather to how the target audience perceives and transforms this superiority into value.

4. CONCLUSION

Awareness of energy classes in the white goods sector were analyzed according to the demographic data of the participants in this study. Results of the analysis showed that in the “Awareness of Energy Classes” dimension, the mean rank of male individuals was significantly higher than that of female individuals. When examining the mean rank values, it is observed that the 18-22 age group has a significantly lower value compared to all other groups, while the level of knowledge is highest in the 39-43 age group. Examining the mean rank values, the highest level of awareness was observed in postgraduate (Master/PhD) and pre-bachelor’s education groups, while the lowest level was observed in primary school graduates. Regarding energy efficiency awareness based on income level, there wasn’t any statistically significant difference found. However, descriptive results indicated that higher income groups had a relatively higher level of awareness.

Educational programs may be useful to increase individuals’ awareness of energy classification. In efforts to increase awareness of energy classification among individuals, it may be more effective to focus on the costs of practices of waste energy. Also, individuals can be encouraged energy-saving activities and environmentally friendly behaviors. Financial assistance such as subsidies, tax breaks, and installment payment options can be offered to purchase energy-efficient white goods.

In terms of home energy efficiency and savings financial risks, time risks, and ease-of-use risks can be considered to mitigate. Practices such as discounts, returns, and payment security can be implemented. To prevent time risks, the product installation and delivery process can be expedited; and simplified product design and user-friendly instruction manuals can be considered. Offering individuals money-back guarantees on new energy-efficient appliances or free trials of new services can increase consumer adoption.

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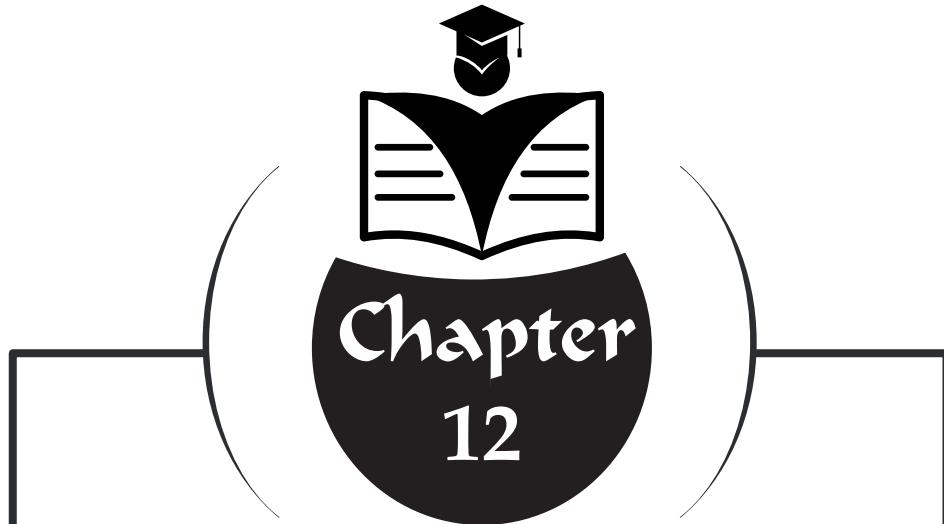
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MAXIMUM LIKELIHOOD ESTIMATION FOR INVERTED EXPONENTIATED PARETO DISTRIBUTION UNDER RANDOM CENSORING

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1. Introduction

Handling incomplete observations is a fundamental aspect of statistical modeling, especially in areas such as survival studies, reliability testing, and clinical research. Censoring occurs when the full measurement of a variable is unavailable, often due to study duration limits, logistical constraints, or design considerations. Properly accounting for censored observations allows analysts to extract maximum information from partial data without discarding valuable evidence. Utilizing techniques like likelihood-based inference or Bayesian estimation enables robust parameter determination and a clearer understanding of the underlying phenomena. Effectively incorporating censored data strengthens the accuracy and relevance of statistical conclusions in practical applications where full data collection is rarely possible.

In lifetime and survival experiments, fully observed datasets may not be possible, as prolonged follow-up periods and operational costs impose practical constraints on data collection. Censoring in statistics emerges when the exact value of an observation is not fully observed and is only known to lie within a certain range or beyond a specified limit. Life testing experiments commonly consider different censoring mechanisms, including Type I and Type II censoring.

Type I and Type II censoring represent the two most widely used classical censoring mechanisms. Under Type I censoring, an event is observed only if it occurs before a predetermined termination time, whereas Type II censoring proceeds until a fixed number of events of interest have been recorded (Kumar & Kumar, 2019). Random censoring refers to a censoring mechanism in which the censoring time is itself a random variable rather than a predetermined constant. It typically occurs when an item or subject is withdrawn from the study for reasons unrelated to the failure process, so that the event of interest is not observed by the end of the experiment. Structurally, random censoring may be regarded as a generalized form of Type I censoring, since observation ends at a censoring time rather than after a fixed number of failures (David & Moeschberger, 1978). This type of censoring commonly arises in reliability studies, survival analysis, and clinical trials, where subjects or components may leave the study or fail at unpredictable times. The use of random censoring allows statistical models to account for the variability in observation times and still extract meaningful information from incomplete data. By incorporating random censoring into analysis, researchers can obtain unbiased and consistent estimates of model parameters, even when the exact lifetimes of some units are not fully observed. This approach ensures that the underlying distribution of the data is appropriately represented, improving the accuracy and applicability of the resulting statistical inferences. Random censoring is commonly observed in a wide range of applied fields. In medical follow-up

studies, participants may withdraw or relocate before the event of interest is observed. In longitudinal surveys, respondents may discontinue participation before the end of the observation period. In reliability experiments, test units may be removed from service due to external interruptions before failure occurs. In such cases, the lifetime is only partially observed, and the data are treated as randomly censored.

The randomly censored data is introduced by Gilbert (1962). Subsequently, a number of studies have addressed statistical inference under random censoring. The Rayleigh model under random censoring was examined by Ghitany (2001) and by Saleem and Aslam (2009). The Burr Type XII distribution is studied by Ghitany and Al-Awadhi (2002) while the generalized exponential and Weibull models are investigated by Danish and Aslam (2013) and Danish and Aslam (2014) respectively. The Maxwell distribution has been employed by Krishna, Vivekanand, and Kumar (2015) for modeling survival times, with censoring times assumed to follow the Maxwell distribution, and inference has been conducted using both maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian estimation methods. The generalized inverted exponential distribution utilized by Garg, Dube, and Krishna (2020) to model lifetime data, with inference carried out using the ML and Bayesian methods under random censoring. Krishna and Goel (2018) studied the two-parameter exponential distribution, assuming exponentially distributed censoring times, and developed both classical and Bayesian inference. Similarly, Ajmal, Danish, and Arshad, (2022) conducted an objective Bayesian analysis for the Weibull distribution, comparing reference prior-based Bayesian inference with the Jeffrey's and ML methods using importance sampling and simulation for a random censoring scheme.

The lifetime distributions play a significant role in describing reliability and survival behavior. In this context, Ghitany, Tuan, and Balakrishnan, (2014) introduced the inverted exponentiated exponential distribution (IEED) family, which also involving inverted exponentiated Pareto (IEP) distribution. The probability density function (pdf) and cumulative distribution function (cdf) for the IEP distribution are

$$f(x; \alpha, \beta) = \alpha \beta x^{-(\beta+1)} (1+x)^{-(\beta+1)} \left[1 - \left(\frac{1+x}{x} \right)^{(-\beta)} \right]^{\alpha-1}, \quad x, \alpha, \beta > 0 \quad (1)$$

and

$$F(x; \alpha, \beta) = 1 - \left[1 - \left(\frac{1+x}{x} \right)^{-\beta} \right]^\alpha, \quad x, \alpha, \beta > 0 \quad (2)$$

respectively. The α and β are model parameters. In Figure 1, different shapes of pdf, cdf and hazard rate function (hrf) are plotted for different values of parameters.

Inverted Exponentiated Pareto Distribution

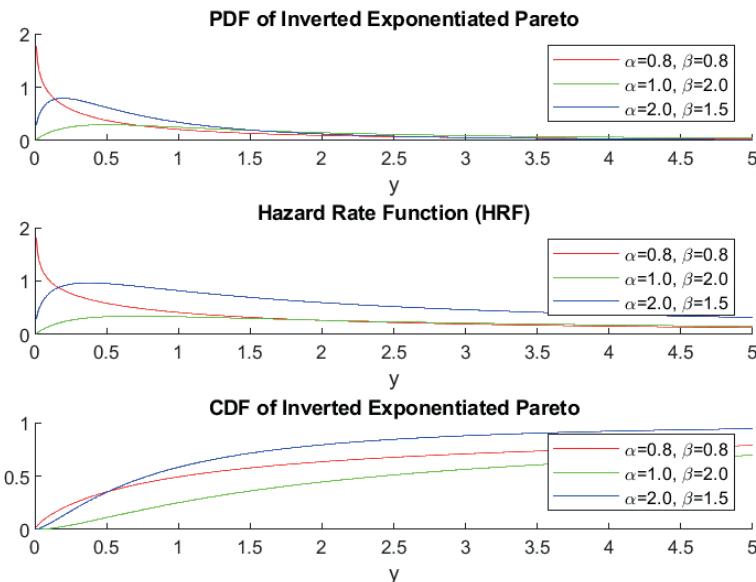


Figure 1. The pdf, hrf, and cdf for given parameters (Bagci Genel, 2025.)

The existing literature on the IEED family has largely focused on reliability analysis under various censoring schemes. System reliability for the IEED family has been investigated using both classical and Bayesian frameworks in the presence of censored data (Kızılıslan, 2018; Kumari, Tripathi, Sinha, & Wang, 2023a). Estimation procedures for the inverted exponentiated Rayleigh (IER) distribution under censoring are examined by Hashem, Alyami, and Yousef, (2023) and Maurya, Tripathi, Sen, and Rastogi (2019). Rastogi and Tripathi (2014) studied parameter estimation for the IER distribution under Type II progressive censoring, along with the estimation of reliability and hazard functions, employing the Expectation–Maximization algorithm within the ML framework. Similarly, Maurya, Tripathi, Sen, and Rastogi (2018) derived maximum likelihood estimations (MLE) for the IEP distribution under progressive censoring. In addition, parameter estimation for competing risks models with latent failure times following the IEED family has been addressed using the ML and Bayesian methods under generalized progressive hybrid censoring (Lodhi, Tripathi, & Wang, 2021). More recently, reliability estimation for multi-component systems based on the IEP distribution has been studied in the presence of censoring (Kumari, Tripathi, Sinha, & Wang, 2023b).

Most recently, in a study by Bagci Genel (2025) classical estimation methods, including the ML, Maximum Product of Spacings, Cramer von

Mises, and Anderson Darling methods for complete samples. In this study, MLE for the IEP distribution is considered under a random censoring scheme, and applications to survival data are presented.

2. Method

2.1. Random Censoring Model

Let X_1, X_2, \dots, X_n be lifetimes for n units that are placed under observation. These lifetimes are assumed to be independent and identically distributed with pdf $f_x(x)$ and cdf $F_x(x)$. For each unit, let T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n denote the corresponding censoring times, which are also assumed to be independent and identically distributed with density $f_T(t)$ and distribution function $F_T(t)$. The lifetime variables and censoring times are assumed to be mutually independent.

The observed data consist of pairs (Y_i, D_i) , where $Y_i = \min(X_i, T_i)$ represents the recorded time and D_i is a censoring indicator defined as $D_i = 1$ if the event of interest is observed ($X_i \leq T_i$) and $D_i = 0$ otherwise. Under these assumptions, the joint pdf of Y and D can be obtained as

$$f_{(Y,D)}(y, d) = [f_{X(y)}(1 - F_{T(y)})]^d [f_{T(y)}(1 - F_{X(y)})]^{1-d} \quad (3)$$

where $y > 0$ and $d = 0, 1$. The survival function of the censoring time is assumed to be related to that of the lifetime variable through a proportional hazards structure, such that

$$1 - F_T(t) = (1 - F_X(t))^\rho, \rho > 0. \quad (4)$$

When $\rho = 0$, this model corresponds to the case of no censoring. Consequently, by using equations 3 and 4, the joint pdf for Y and D is obtained as

$$f_{(Y,D)}(y, d) = \rho^{1-d} f_X(y)^d (1 - F_X(y))^\rho = \rho^{1-d} \alpha \beta y^{\beta-1} (1 + y)^{-(\beta+1)} \left[1 - \left(\frac{1+y}{y} \right)^{-\beta} \right]^{\alpha(\rho+1)-1}, y > 0, \quad (5)$$

$$d = 0, 1, \alpha, \beta, \rho > 0.$$

2.2. Estimation

Classical statistical methods form the foundation of quantitative analysis across many research fields, serving as essential tools for estimating parameters and testing hypotheses. These techniques interpret probability in terms of long-term frequencies, treating it as the proportion of times an outcome occurs across repeated trials. This framework produces objective results that do not rely on prior knowledge, making it especially useful when little or

no prior information is available. Approaches such as MLE and confidence intervals offer reliable ways to analyze data, promoting consistency. The relevance of these methods spans experimental planning, quality assessment, clinical studies, and other areas where data-driven, dependable conclusions are essential for informed decision-making

The MLE is a classical parameter estimation method, aiming to obtain parameter values that maximize the likelihood function. It presents the probability of observing the collected data under a given model. MLE is valued for its efficiency, producing estimators that are consistent and asymptotically unbiased under regularity conditions.

The ML estimations of the parameters α , β , and ρ are denoted by $\hat{\alpha}_{ML}$, $\hat{\beta}_{ML}$ and $\hat{\rho}_{ML}$ are obtained by maximizing $(\hat{\alpha}_{ML}, \hat{\beta}_{ML}, \hat{\rho}_{ML}) = \arg \max l(\alpha, \beta, \rho; y, d)$. In the presence of random right censoring, the parameters of the joint distribution are obtained by maximizing the log-likelihood function. The resulting log-likelihood function is provided in Eq. 6.

$$l(\alpha, \beta, \rho; y, d) = n \ln \alpha + n \ln \beta + (\beta - 1) \sum_{i=1}^n \ln y_i - (\beta + 1) \sum_{i=1}^n \ln(1 + y_i) + (\alpha(\rho + 1) - 1) \sum_{i=1}^n \ln \left[1 - \left(\frac{1+y_i}{y_i} \right)^{-\beta} \right] + \sum_{i=1}^n (1 - d_i) \ln(\rho) \quad (6)$$

The numerical iteration methods are used to compute the estimates of the $\hat{\alpha}_{ML}$, $\hat{\beta}_{ML}$, and $\hat{\rho}_{ML}$. Matlab R2021a software and its built-in functions are used in the implementation. The `kmplot` function (Curve Cardillo G., 2008) is utilized for Kaplan-Meier estimation of the survival function for visualization purposes.

3. Data

The first dataset, obtained from The Open University, contains the prices of 31 wooden toys sold in a Suffolk craft store in April 1991, previously utilized by Shafiei, Darijani, and Saboori (2016).

The data are presented as follows. 4.2*, 1.12*, 1.39, 2.0, 3.99, 2.15, 1.74, 5.81*, 1.7, 0.5, 0.99*, 11.5, 5.12, 0.9, 1.99*, 6.24, 2.6, 3.0, 12.2*, 7.36, 4.75*, 11.59, 8.69, 9.8, 1.85*, 1.99, 1.35, 10.0, 0.65*, 1.45.

The second data, reported in Meintanis (2008), originates from a life test of 23 ball bearings and records the number of revolutions until failure for each bearing.

The observed values are as follows: 17.88*, 28.92, 33.00*, 41.52, 42.12, 45.60, 48.80, 51.84, 51.96, 54.12, 55.56*, 67.80, 68.64*, 68.64, 68.88*, 84.12,

93.12*, 98.64, 105.12*, 105.84, 127.92, 128.04, 173.40. Censored items are marked with an asterisk (*).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents modeling two different data from the reliability field with the random censored IEP model using the MLE method. The fitting performances are explored through fitted-empirical survival plot and Kolmogorov Smirnov test.

The ML estimations for the α, β, ρ parameters of the random censored IEP model are $\hat{\alpha}_{ML} = 0.6426$, $\hat{\beta}_{ML} = 4.2080$, and $\hat{\rho}_{ML} = 2.3333$ for the first data. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov (KS) test is a goodness-of-fit test used to assess how well a model fits the data. Here, the KS test statistic and p-values are provided. If the p-value is less than 0.05, H_0 is rejected, which states that the data follow the randomly censored IEP model. A higher p-value indicates a better fit.

4.1. Application for the first data set

For the wooden toy dataset, the KS test yields a statistic of 0.2978 with an associated p-value of 0.3327. These results suggest that the randomly censored IEP model provides an appropriate representation of the data, demonstrating a reasonable agreement between the fitted model and the observed values. This indicates that the model is capable of capturing the underlying distributional characteristics of the wooden toy lifetimes effectively. Empirical and fitted survival function employing the wooden toy data set is provided in Figure 2.

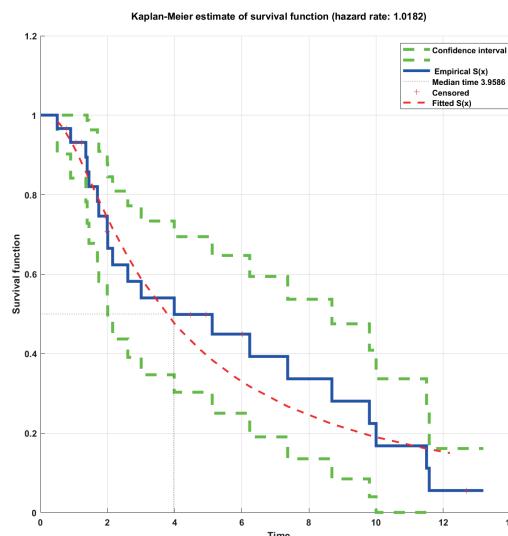


Figure 2. Empirical and fitted survival function for the first dataset

According to Figure 2, the fitted model captures the general behavior of the observed survival data, with minor deviations observed at the tails. Overall, it suggests a good correspondence between the empirical and fitted distributions.

4.1. Application for the second data set

The ML estimations of the parameters for the randomly censored IEP model, based on the ball bearing dataset, are obtained as follows: $\hat{\alpha}_{ML} = 1.6591$, $\hat{\beta}_{ML} = 132.9468$ and $\hat{\rho}_{ML} = 2.2857$. The KS test statistic and p-values are provided for the second dataset as well. For the ball bearing data, the KS test statistic is 0.2817 with a p-value of 0.5428, suggesting that the randomly censored IEP model provides a good fit and adequately describes the data.

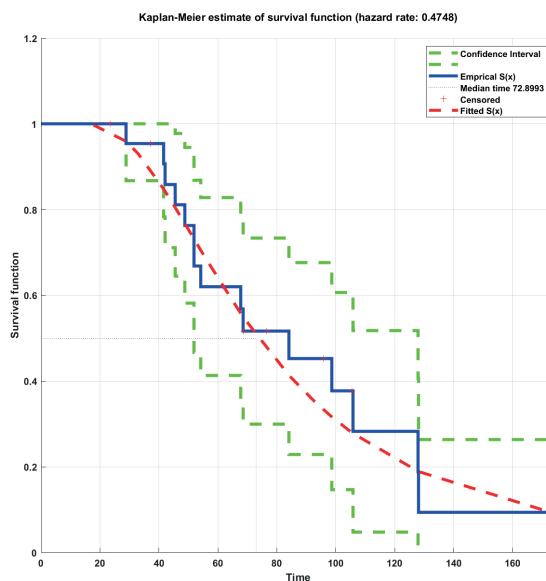


Figure 3. Empirical and fitted survival function for the second dataset

The fitted curve closely follows the empirical steps, suggesting that the chosen model captures the general pattern of the observed survival times. Some deviations between the fitted curve and the empirical estimate are observed at certain time points, particularly where data are sparse, which is expected due to censoring effects. Overall, the plot indicates that the fitted model provides a reasonable approximation of the survival experience of the sample while remaining within the confidence bounds.

4. Conclusion

In this study, the randomly censored IEP model is applied to two real-world reliability datasets using the MLE method. The fitting performance of the model is evaluated through empirical and fitted survival functions as well as the KS goodness-of-fit test. The results indicate that the models adequately capture the underlying lifetime behavior, with the fitted survival curve closely following the empirical pattern and minor deviations for both of the data considered.

Overall, the randomly censored IEP model demonstrates flexibility and effectiveness in modeling lifetime data across different reliability aspects. The MLE method provides reliable parameter estimates, and the goodness-of-fit assessments suggest that the model is capable of capturing the essential distributional characteristics of the observed lifetimes. These findings highlight the suitability of the randomly censored IEP model for practical reliability analysis and its potential application in various engineering and industrial settings.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There is no conflict of interest in the making of this study.

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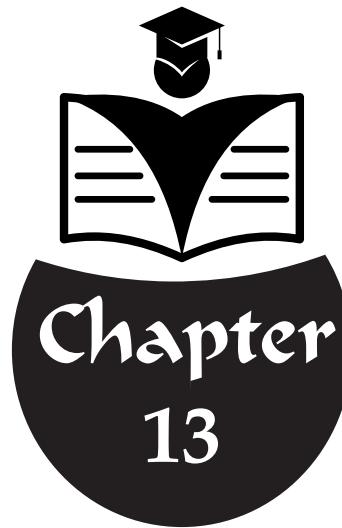
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REFRAMING SENIOR TOURISM DEMAND THROUGH HEALTHY AGEING

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Introduction

The global demographic structure is currently undergoing one of the most profound transformations observed over the past century. Projections by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that the global population aged 60 and over will exceed two billion by 2050. More significantly, this period will mark the first time in modern history that older populations grow faster than younger cohorts (WHO, 2025). Evidence from the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) further suggests that this transformation extends far beyond shifts in age composition alone. In practice, population ageing generates wide-ranging consequences for health systems, social protection mechanisms, labour markets, and consumption patterns (UN, 2015; OECD, 2023). Within this broader context, ageing populations have long been interpreted as a potential source of growth and diversification within the tourism sector.

Within tourism research, senior tourism demand is frequently framed as an already established and economically attractive market segment. A substantial body of literature emphasises that older tourists often possess relatively stable disposable incomes, greater temporal flexibility, a willingness to travel outside peak seasons, and a stronger tendency toward repeat visitation (Alén et al., 2012; Santos & Santos, 2021). As a result, senior tourism is commonly treated as a demographic outcome -almost an automatic extension of population ageing- rather than as a phenomenon requiring deeper examination.

This assumption becomes less convincing, however, when the everyday conditions shaping later life are examined more closely. Despite the tendency to regard senior tourism demand as self-evident, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the circumstances under which such demand can be sustained, weakened, or lost altogether. Older adults' ability to travel emerges from a complex interaction of health status, functional capacity, income continuity, social participation, and psychological well-being (Yazdanpanahi et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2023; Musselwhite & Haddad, 2018). Empirical research consistently shows that a substantial share of older adults is unable to travel due to declining mobility, chronic health conditions, loneliness, or financial constraints, resulting in considerable levels of unmet travel demand (Che Had et al., 2023; Luiu et al., 2017).

From this perspective, a more fundamental critique comes into focus. Senior tourism demand is often approached as a given, rather than as a capacity that requires protection and active management. In reality, it is neither static nor inherently secure. Instead, it represents a fragile form of capacity that must be continuously sustained over time. The loss of functional capacity among older individuals therefore constitutes more than an individual health

concern; it also poses a structural challenge to the long-term sustainability of tourism demand. As functional capacity declines, older adults gradually lose their ability to participate in tourism activities and increasingly shift from being active participants within tourism systems to recipients within health and care systems.

Against this background, the primary aim of this chapter is to reconsider the demand side of senior tourism through the lens of functional capacity. Within the World Health Organization's healthy ageing framework, functional capacity occupies a central position and refers to individuals' ability to perform activities they value and find meaningful (WHO, 2020). Mobility, cognitive capacity, independence, decision-making ability, and social participation constitute the core dimensions of this capacity. The extent to which older adults are able to engage in tourism is closely tied to the preservation of these capabilities. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to bridge the conceptual gap between healthy ageing and tourism demand by advancing a holistic perspective in which senior tourism is understood not merely as a demographic opportunity, but as a process fundamentally concerned with the sustainable management of functional capacity over time.

Population Ageing and the Illusion of Automatic Demand

In much of the tourism literature, the global increase in the older population is interpreted as a factor that directly and inevitably leads to higher tourism demand. The rapid expansion of the population aged 60 and over is therefore often framed as a "natural market expansion" for senior tourism, with an implicit assumption of a linear relationship between demographic growth and tourism demand (Alén et al., 2012; UN, 2015). This assumption, however, overlooks the structural and individual conditions that determine whether demand can be sustained over time. Population ageing alone does not generate sustainable tourism demand; rather, it signals a fragile process in which demand may deteriorate when enabling conditions are absent.

First, it is essential to recognise that the population aged 60 and over does not constitute a homogeneous group. Older adults differ substantially in terms of health status, functional capacity, income level and continuity, social ties, educational background, digital literacy, and lifestyle (WHO, 2020; OECD, 2023; Cleaver et al., 1999). Even within the same age cohort, marked differences exist in individuals' capacity to travel. Treating population ageing as a single, uniform source of tourism demand is therefore reductionist from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Research on unmet travel needs illustrates this heterogeneity clearly and exposes the limitations of automatic demand assumptions. Empirical studies further demonstrate that many older adults express a desire to travel but are unable to do so due to

health problems, transport constraints, inadequate destination infrastructure, financial limitations, or insufficient social support (Luiu et al., 2017; Spinney et al., 2009). As Moniruzzaman et al. (2013) note, travel behaviour in later life is shaped not only by motivation, but also by a range of physical and social constraints. These findings point to a substantial gap between potential and realised demand in senior tourism.

Several mechanisms contribute to the erosion of tourism demand in later life. Declining health and the increasing prevalence of chronic conditions directly limit older individuals' capacity to travel. Loss of mobility and physical accessibility barriers further restrict participation in tourism activities and often shorten travel duration (WHO, 2015). At the same time, loneliness and weakening social ties reduce travel motivation, while the absence of suitable travel companions makes demand increasingly fragile. Income loss or a lack of income continuity further reduces disposable income and shapes travel decisions (OECD, 2023). Taken together, these mechanisms illustrate that senior tourism demand is not an automatically expanding phenomenon. Instead, it represents a capacity that is highly sensitive to health, social policy, and economic conditions. Tourism strategies developed without acknowledging this fragility are therefore unlikely to produce sustainable outcomes.

Population ageing should thus be interpreted not as an automatic increase in tourism demand, but as a potential field of demand that requires active support through appropriate policies, healthy ageing strategies, and social support mechanisms. This perspective reinforces the need to conceptualise senior tourism as a dynamic system fundamentally linked to the preservation of functional capacity.

Healthy Ageing as a Precondition for Tourism Demand

Healthy ageing should be understood not only as a health or social policy objective, but also as a fundamental prerequisite for the sustainability of tourism demand in later life. Although tourism research traditionally associates demand with factors such as economic resources, leisure availability, and travel motivation, the health-based functional capacity that enables these conditions often remains underexplored. From this standpoint, dominant conceptualisations of tourism demand appear relatively short-term in nature and largely oriented toward an already active and visible audience. In the case of senior tourism, however, health policies operate as indirect yet highly influential tourism policies, shaping not only participation levels but also the long-term viability of demand.

WHO defines healthy ageing as “the process of developing and maintaining the functional capacity that enables well-being in older age” (WHO, 2020).

This definition represents a clear departure from biomedical approaches that frame ageing primarily through disease accumulation. Instead, it emphasises what individuals are able to do and sustain through their interaction with physical, social, and institutional environments. Within this framework, functional capacity emerges as a critical analytical lens for understanding older individuals' ability to participate in tourism.

According to the WHO, functional capacity encompasses the physical, cognitive, and social abilities that enable individuals to engage in activities they value and find meaningful. This capacity can be examined through four interrelated components: mobility, cognitive capacity, independence, and decision-making ability. Each of these dimensions plays a decisive role in the emergence and sustainability of tourism demand. Individuals experiencing mobility limitations encounter substantial barriers to travelling, moving within destinations, and participating in tourism activities. Similarly, cognitive decline complicates travel planning, navigation, and safe behaviour in unfamiliar environments. Reduced independence transforms individuals from autonomous travellers into persons requiring assistance, while impairments in decision-making capacity directly affect travel motivation, confidence, and perceptions of safety (WHO, 2015; Ravensbergen et al., 2022).

At this stage, a critical threshold becomes apparent. When health deteriorates to the point that functional capacity can no longer be maintained, older individuals lose their ability to participate in tourism as active agents. This loss shifts them from being demand-generating actors within tourism systems to passive recipients within health and care systems. Such a transition not only diminishes individual quality of life but also results in both quantitative and qualitative declines in tourism demand. The sustainability of senior tourism demand is therefore directly contingent upon the effectiveness of healthy ageing processes.

Preventive healthcare, active living initiatives, and effective chronic disease management are consequently of strategic importance. Policies that promote physical activity, lifelong learning, socially inclusive environments, and accessible healthcare systems contribute to preserving functional capacity and extending older individuals' ability to participate in tourism (WHO, 2020; OECD, 2023). While these policies may not explicitly target tourism, they create the essential conditions that make tourism participation possible. Without healthy ageing, sustainable senior tourism demand cannot be achieved. Tourism demand should thus be conceptualised not as a demographic outcome, but as a dynamic capacity grounded in health, functionality, and independence. Accordingly, senior tourism strategies must be integrated with healthy ageing policies to ensure both conceptual coherence and long-term sustainability.

Functional Capacity, Independence and Travel Ability

The ability of older individuals to participate as tourists depends on a specific set of functional conditions. As outlined earlier, tourism demand is shaped not only by willingness or economic resources, but fundamentally by functional abilities. Healthy ageing therefore represents a necessary precondition for sustainable tourism demand, and within the tourism context this precondition becomes visible through the direct relationship between functional capacity and travel ability.

Functional decline refers to the gradual loss of physical, cognitive, and sensory capacities commonly associated with ageing. The literature consistently demonstrates that such decline has a decisive influence on travel frequency, distance, and complexity among older adults (Spinney et al., 2009; Moniruzzaman et al., 2013). Among these factors, declining mobility stands out as one of the most significant constraints on travel in later life. Difficulties related to walking, balance, or reliance on assistive devices limit older individuals' ability to use transport systems, navigate destinations, and engage fully in tourism activities. While this issue is often discussed within the accessibility literature, the challenge cannot be attributed solely to physical infrastructure. The continuity of transport systems, access to clear information, navigation arrangements, and the predictability of services also shape older adults' perceptions of mobility and confidence (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011). Once functional capacity falls below a certain threshold, even highly accessible destinations struggle to generate sustainable tourism demand. In this sense, accessible supply cannot compensate for insufficient functional demand.

Cognitive capacity represents another critical dimension of travel ability. Travel inherently involves cognitively demanding tasks, including planning, decision-making, navigation, and problem-solving. With increasing age, slower cognitive processing, reduced attention span, and greater difficulty in multitasking can heighten the perceived complexity of travel (Sundling, 2015; Nagamatsu et al., 2011). Research on navigation and information systems shows that complex transport networks, inadequate signage, and highly digitised services often increase stress and anxiety among older adults (Chee, 2023), contributing to decision fatigue and declining travel motivation. In practical terms, travel participation is shaped not only by objective functional competence but also by travel confidence and perceived autonomy. Travel confidence refers to individuals' subjective belief in their ability to manage unfamiliar situations, act independently, and maintain a sense of control while travelling (Patterson & Pegg, 2009). As functional capacity diminishes, this perception weakens, leading older individuals to perceive travel as risky, exhausting, or no longer appropriate for them.

Taken together, senior tourism demand rests on a delicate balance between functional capacity, independence, and travel ability. When this balance is disrupted, older individuals gradually cease to function as active actors within the tourism system. This underscores the need for senior tourism policies and strategies to move beyond a narrow focus on destination accessibility and instead adopt holistic approaches that strengthen both the functional capacity and perceived independence of older adults.

Employment, Income Continuity and Travel Motivation

The continued employment of older individuals should not be interpreted solely as an economic or labour market policy issue. Employment beyond formal retirement also functions as a significant determinant of sustainable tourism demand, for a range of interconnected reasons. While tourism research often explains older adults' travel behaviour primarily through post-retirement leisure time and accumulated financial resources, the indirect yet substantial influence of continued employment on tourism demand remains largely underexplored. Employment in later life shapes travel motivation through its effects on psychological well-being, social participation, and income continuity. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that remaining employed or engaged in productive activities supports self-esteem, life satisfaction, identity continuity, and cognitive vitality in later life (Wang & Shi, 2014; OECD, 2020). In particular, the sense of "still being useful" enables older individuals to perceive themselves as socially valued and active contributors, reducing the risks of depression and loneliness while strengthening meaning and purpose in life (WHO, 2020).

From a broader structural perspective, the employment of older adults is increasingly becoming a necessity rather than merely a matter of individual preference or social welfare. Declining working-age populations, rising old-age dependency ratios, and mounting pressure on social security systems are making longer working lives unavoidable in many national contexts (OECD, 2023). At the same time, labour markets are becoming more knowledge-intensive and increasingly reliant on experience-based roles such as mentoring, consulting, and organisational guidance -functions that are difficult to replace through automation or artificial intelligence. Viewed collectively, the accumulated human capital of older individuals is emerging as a strategic resource that supports economic productivity while also ensuring intergenerational knowledge continuity.

Employment in later life frequently takes flexible forms, including part-time work, project-based employment, consulting roles, or volunteering. These arrangements tend to align more closely with the health conditions, energy levels, and lifestyles of older adults, while also facilitating the maintenance and

expansion of social networks. Existing research indicates that volunteering and part-time employment, particularly among highly educated older adults, contribute positively to psychological well-being and social participation (Alén et al., 2012; Dehi Aroogh & Mohammadi Shahboulaghi, 2020). Recognising and supporting employment models that reflect these preferences is therefore of particular importance.

The relationship between employment and tourism demand extends beyond psychological outcomes. Income continuity directly influences disposable income and remains a key determinant of travel frequency and quality among older adults. Post-retirement income loss constitutes one of the most significant constraints on travel participation (Santos & Santos, 2021), whereas continued income -even at a partial level- supports larger travel budgets and higher-quality tourism experiences. Employment also shapes perceptions of time. Older individuals who remain engaged in work are more likely to perceive travel not as a withdrawal from everyday life, but as a meaningful and restorative break within it (Kim & Moen, 2002; Wang et al., 2011). Taken together, these dynamics indicate that employment contributes to maintaining older individuals as productive, income-generating, and socially engaged actors, while simultaneously strengthening the foundations of sustainable tourism demand. Older employment policies should therefore be understood not only as labour market or social security measures, but also as indirect yet influential tourism demand policies.

Social Participation, Loneliness and Travel Demand

Another decisive factor shaping the formation and continuity of sustainable tourism demand is the level of social participation and social connectedness among older individuals. While tourism demand is often analysed in relation to individual health status, motivation, and income, travel -particularly in later life- constitutes a fundamentally social practice. The capacity of older adults to travel therefore depends not only on physical and economic resources, but also on the existence of social networks and the ability to sustain meaningful relationships within them. A substantial body of literature demonstrates that loneliness and social isolation exert severe negative effects on both physical and mental health among older adults. Prolonged loneliness is associated with increased risks of cardiovascular disease, depression, cognitive decline, and premature mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; WHO, 2020). As health deteriorates, travel capacity becomes directly constrained, suggesting that loneliness operates as one of the “silent erosion mechanisms” of senior tourism demand.

In practice, the proportion of older adults living alone has increased considerably, particularly in Europe and North America (International Labour

Organization-ILO, 2014). Changes in family structures, geographic separation from adult children, and rising life expectancy have contributed to making solitary living in later life increasingly common (OECD, 2019). Although living alone may strengthen perceptions of independence, weakened social ties pose substantial risks in terms of health, safety, and psychological well-being. These risks influence travel decisions, often leading older individuals to avoid or postpone travel altogether. Strengthening social networks and promoting community-based living arrangements therefore hold significant potential to disrupt this negative trajectory.

Community-based living environments facilitate collective participation in both everyday life and leisure activities. In contexts where social ties are strong, travel decisions are more likely to be made collectively, transforming travel from an individual endeavour into a shared experience. Empirical studies indicate that older adults with higher levels of social participation not only travel more frequently but also report greater satisfaction with their travel experiences (Pantelaki et al., 2021; Meshram & O'Cass, 2013). From this perspective, communal and shared living models are gaining attention not only within housing and social policy, but also as mechanisms that support the sustainability of tourism demand.

Shared living arrangements increase opportunities for social interaction among older adults while providing a natural basis for group travel. Individuals who live together or interact regularly are less likely to encounter difficulties in finding travel companions, thereby increasing their likelihood of participating in tourism. Group-based travel arrangements also reduce safety concerns and enhance perceived accessibility for older adults. Taken together, social participation plays a critical role in maintaining health, preserving functional capacity, and sustaining tourism demand in later life. Social networks mitigate loneliness, strengthen motivation, and encourage collective mobility and shared experiences, which together form the foundation of travel behaviour. Policies and living models that reinforce social participation should therefore be regarded as essential infrastructure components for sustaining senior tourism demand.

Tourism as an Enabler of Healthy Ageing

Tourism should not be conceptualised solely as a consequence of healthy ageing among older individuals; it also functions as a mechanism that actively supports and reinforces this process. Although tourism is commonly framed as a form of consumption that becomes possible once conditions such as health, income, and functional capacity are met, travel constitutes a multidimensional experience that contributes to physical, psychological, and social well-being in later life. From this perspective, tourism should be understood not as a

passive outcome of favourable conditions, but as an active component within the healthy ageing cycle.

Beyond its direct health-related effects, tourism serves as a powerful meaning-making practice for older individuals. In later stages of life, people often experience a heightened need to reflect upon, reinterpret, and assign meaning to their life narratives. At this point, travel facilitates reconnection with past experiences, the creation of new narratives, and the reinforcement of the sense that “life still goes on” (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The resulting “I’m still here” narrative allows older individuals to position themselves not as passive recipients of care, but as active, curious, and experiential subjects. This psychological repositioning contributes positively to self-esteem and overall life satisfaction. In addition, identity formation, belonging, and learning increasingly shape travel motivations in later life. Tourism experiences therefore extend well beyond the act of visiting destinations, offering opportunities for cultural engagement, social bonding, and lifelong learning. Research on lifelong learning demonstrates that sustained cognitive stimulation plays a key role in slowing cognitive decline and enhancing psychological well-being among older adults (Formosa, 2019), suggesting that travel operates as a form of spatial and experiential learning that supports healthy ageing processes.

The psychological benefits of tourism have also attracted growing scholarly attention. Travel can alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety by disrupting daily routines, exposing individuals to novel stimuli, and restoring a sense of agency and control over one’s life (Chen & Petrick, 2013). Particularly in later life, when everyday environments may become increasingly restrictive, travel offers opportunities to re-experience feelings of freedom, autonomy, and self-direction. These outcomes closely align with the psychological and social dimensions emphasised in the WHO’s healthy ageing framework (WHO, 2020). Within the active ageing paradigm, which prioritises participation, productivity, and life satisfaction, tourism is recognised not merely as a leisure activity, but as a domain in which active ageing is tangibly enacted.

Taken together, experiential consumption through travel represents far more than material expenditure for older individuals; it constitutes an expression of personal development, social participation, and the ongoing search for meaning. This perspective underscores the need to conceptualise tourism as a preventive and empowering social practice that supports healthy ageing. Tourism is therefore not simply an activity enabled by good health; it is also a mechanism that contributes to maintaining a healthy, active, and meaningful life. By moving beyond demand-as-outcome interpretations, this approach opens conceptual space for positioning tourism as a complementary and reinforcing component of healthy ageing policies.

Integrating Supply and Demand: A Circular Functional Model

Senior tourism does not operate through a simple linear relationship between supply and demand; rather, it functions as a circular system organised around functional capacity. As demonstrated in earlier sections, senior tourism demand is neither an automatic outcome of demographic ageing nor a phenomenon that can be sustained solely through improvements in destination infrastructure. Instead, sustainable senior tourism demand emerges from a dynamic cycle in which healthy ageing, functional capacity, employment, social participation, and age-friendly destinations continuously reinforce one another.

The starting point of this cycle is healthy ageing. According to the WHO, healthy ageing refers to the process of developing and maintaining functional abilities that support wellbeing in later life (WHO, 2020). Healthy ageing enables the core components of functional capacity, including mobility, cognitive capacity, independence, and decision-making ability. Functional capacity not only supports older individuals in their everyday lives but also forms the foundation for travel, openness to new experiences, and sustained engagement in social life. Preserving and strengthening functional capacity is therefore essential for older individuals to remain economically active, socially connected, and capable of participating in tourism.

As discussed previously, part-time employment, consultancy, volunteering, and project-based work contribute not only to economic participation but also to psychological wellbeing, self-efficacy, and a sense of social belonging. Employment and social participation ensure income continuity and the maintenance of social networks, both of which directly shape key determinants of tourism demand, including disposable income, travel motivation, and access to travel companionship. It is through these mechanisms that tourism demand begins to materialise. Contrary to dominant assumptions in the literature, however, senior tourism demand is neither static nor inherently secure; rather, it represents a structurally fragile outcome that must be continuously reproduced through functional capacity and supportive policy environments.

Sustained tourism demand, in turn, stimulates the development of age-friendly destinations. Investments in accessible infrastructure, health-supportive services, safe public spaces, and inclusive transport systems made in response to older tourists' needs contribute to making destinations more age-friendly overall. Such environments benefit not only visiting senior tourists but also the local older population by creating conditions that support healthy ageing. In this way, age-friendly destinations feed back into the healthy ageing process by encouraging physical activity, social interaction, and psychological wellbeing. Through these reciprocal dynamics, a self-reinforcing circular

relationship emerges between healthy ageing and tourism demand.

If the demand side -namely health, functional capacity, employment, and social participation- is neglected, this cycle becomes fragile and ultimately unsustainable. Senior tourism policies should therefore prioritise the protection and strengthening of demand-side capacities at least as much as, and arguably before, investments in supply-side infrastructure. By conceptualising senior tourism not as a demographic opportunity but as a functional capacity cycle requiring active management, this study demonstrates that healthy ageing policies and tourism policies are fundamentally interconnected and must be designed and implemented in an integrated manner.

Policy Implications: From Tourism Policy to Integrated Ageing Policy

Senior tourism cannot be meaningfully addressed as a policy field confined exclusively to the tourism sector. The notion of age-friendly tourism attains its full relevance only when it is repositioned within an integrated ageing policy framework that encompasses health, employment, and social policy domains. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, sustainable senior tourism demand emerges from a holistic system in which healthy ageing, functional capacity, income continuity, and social inclusion are addressed in a coordinated manner. From this perspective, investments in senior tourism should be understood, at their core, as investments in healthy ageing systems.

In prevailing practice, age-friendly tourism is frequently reduced to supply-side measures such as accessible accommodation, transport infrastructure, ramps, and physical environmental adaptations. However, when the demand-side conditions -namely the health status, functional capacity, income continuity, and social connectedness of older individuals- are weakened, such supply-oriented interventions remain insufficient to generate sustainable tourism demand. Age-friendly tourism policies must therefore move beyond destination-centred solutions and adopt an integrated life-course perspective. Within this framework, health policies operate indirectly yet decisively as tourism policies, since preventive healthcare, active-living-oriented housing and urban design, effective chronic disease management, and accessible primary healthcare systems directly shape older individuals' ability to travel (WHO, 2020). Investments in healthcare systems not only mitigate long-term care costs but also contribute to preserving and extending the foundations of senior tourism demand.

Employment and social policies play an equally critical role in shaping senior tourism demand. Supporting older individuals in remaining productive through part-time employment, mentoring, and volunteering enhances both income continuity and psychological wellbeing. While income continuity

strengthens disposable income and travel motivation, the sense of “still being useful” is closely linked to life satisfaction and the willingness to travel. Policies that promote employment in later life should therefore also be recognised as tourism demand policies. Moreover, demographic and economic pressures increasingly render older-age employment not merely a supported option but a structural necessity. Shrinking working-age populations, rising old-age dependency ratios, and the expansion of knowledge-intensive sectors are making extended working lives unavoidable in many national contexts (OECD, 2023).

In occupations that depend on experience, institutional memory, guidance, and mentorship, older individuals are increasingly assuming central rather than supplementary roles. Preparing for extended working lives should therefore go beyond regulatory measures such as raising retirement ages and instead involve comprehensive systems that support health, functional capacity, digital adaptability, and access to flexible working arrangements. Without such support, expectations of prolonged labour market participation risk undermining both economic productivity and individual quality of life. This issue carries direct implications for tourism demand. Employment arrangements that secure income continuity but are misaligned with healthy ageing principles may fail to sustain travel capacity. By contrast, employment policies designed in accordance with healthy ageing generate dual benefits by supporting both productivity and travel motivation.

Social policies further contribute to sustaining tourism demand by reducing social isolation and strengthening social participation among older individuals. Community-based living, shared housing, and co-housing models reinforce social ties while simultaneously increasing the likelihood of participation in group travel and tourism activities. These models offer municipalities particularly effective tools for developing age-friendly cities and destinations. Accordingly, the central policy implication for municipalities, ministries, and destination managers is to conceptualise senior tourism not as a sector-specific niche, but as a component of a multi-actor, multi-sector ageing strategy. Municipalities should integrate health, social services, transport, and cultural policies; ministries should strengthen institutional cooperation across tourism, health, and labour policy domains; and destination managers should plan age-friendly investments from a long-term demand sustainability perspective.

In summary, investing in senior tourism demand extends well beyond improving destination accessibility. It requires sustained investment in the systems that make healthy ageing possible. Without such an integrated and holistic approach, senior tourism policies are likely to remain short-term, structurally fragile, and ultimately unsustainable.

Conclusion

As argued throughout this chapter, the global growth of the ageing population does not automatically translate into a self-sustaining or guaranteed demand for senior tourism. Contrary to the generalisations frequently found in the tourism literature, demographic expansion represents a potential opportunity that can only be converted into tourism demand under specific social, economic, and health-related conditions. Senior tourism demand should therefore not be approached as a default or pre-existing market, but rather as a form of functional capacity that must be preserved, supported, and actively governed over time.

The central argument developed in this study challenges the widespread assumption that senior tourists constitute an inherently attractive and readily accessible demand segment. Travel capacity in later life is shaped by a set of interdependent factors, including health status, functional capacity, income continuity, social participation, and psychological wellbeing. Deterioration in any one of these dimensions can lead to a rapid erosion of tourism demand. Senior tourism demand should thus be understood not as a static outcome of demographic ageing, but as a dynamic and inherently fragile process requiring continuous reinforcement.

By moving beyond conventional approaches grounded primarily in demographic indicators and disposable income, this study reconceptualises tourism demand through the WHO's framework of healthy ageing and functional capacity. Within this perspective, tourism demand emerges from the interaction of healthy ageing processes, sustained functional capacity, continued engagement in employment or other productive activities, and social participation. This conceptualisation contributes to the literature by positioning senior tourism not merely as a consumption domain, but as a system that interacts with and is shaped by broader ageing dynamics.

From both policy and practical perspectives, the findings underscore the limitations of senior tourism strategies that focus exclusively on supply-side interventions such as physical infrastructure and destination design. Age-friendly tourism policies are unlikely to generate sustainable demand if they remain disconnected from health, employment, and social policy domains. Investments in senior tourism should therefore be understood, first and foremost, as investments in systems that support healthy ageing and functional capacity across the life course.

In conclusion, this study offers a novel conceptual lens for understanding senior tourism demand, arguing that it should be approached not as a demographic opportunity, but as a functional capacity requiring long-term

governance and coordination. By placing sustainable demand at the centre of the analysis, this framework adds conceptual depth to the academic literature while providing practical guidance for policymakers, municipalities, and destination managers. Future research adopting integrated supply-demand perspectives grounded in healthy ageing holds significant potential for generating more durable solutions to the structural challenges confronting both tourism systems and ageing societies.

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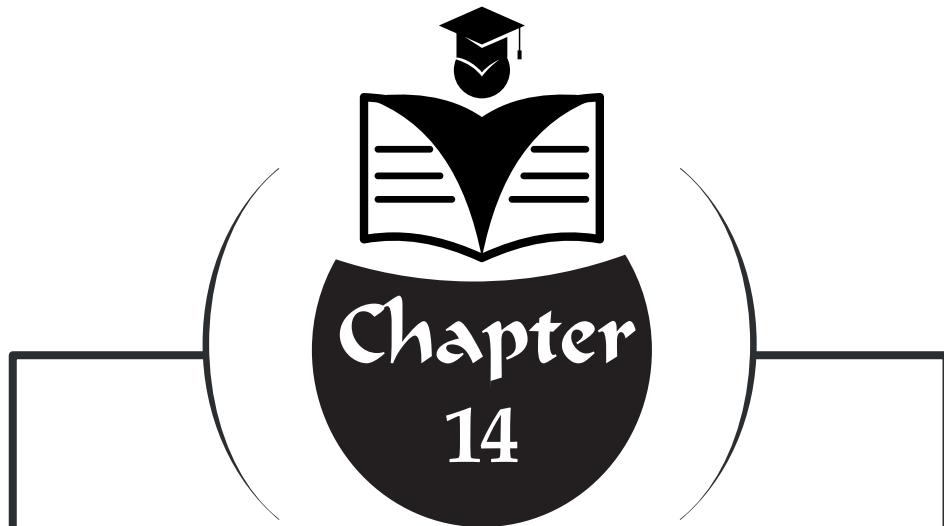
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THE GREEK BOYS' SCHOOL PLANNED FOR CONSTRUCTION IN ALAÇATI: AN ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS BASED ON ARCHIVAL PLANS AND ELEVATION DRAWINGS

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This study examines a Greek boys' school that was planned to be constructed in Alaçatı, based on documents held in the Ottoman Archives, although it cannot be determined with certainty whether the project was ever realized. The plan and elevation drawings attached to the archival documents provide direct evidence regarding the building's plan scheme, spatial organization, and façade composition. In this study, the architectural characteristics of the building are examined on the basis of these drawings, and the data obtained are briefly compared with the general architectural approaches of educational buildings belonging to the Greek community in Western Anatolia during the late Ottoman period. At present, there is no concrete evidence indicating that the building was ever constructed. The dating of the building's plans to the early twentieth century, together with the subsequent proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era and the resulting change in the ruling authority, suggests that the project was never realized. In this context, before addressing the architectural features of the building, a brief overview of the demographic structure of the Greek community in Alaçatı and the development of its educational institutions provides the necessary background for contextualizing the design under discussion.

The Historical and Demographic Development of Alaçatı

Alaçatı is a settlement located in Western Anatolia within the geographical sphere of ancient Ionia, whose origins extend back to antiquity. Its location opposite the island of Chios and within the hinterland of the ancient city of Erythrai demonstrates Alaçatı's close connection with the historical development of the region. Alaçatı and its surroundings thus constitute an area characterized by settlement traces belonging to various periods of Anatolia's cultural history. It is known that the Çeşme Peninsula has hosted human settlement since the Bronze Age; moreover, archaeological remains datable to the Roman period were identified during surface surveys carried out between the town of Alaçatı and Alaçatı Port (Gezgin, 2012, pp. 18, 27). There are differing views regarding the origins of the settlement known today as Alaçatı. Some scholars argue that Alaçatı was a settlement formed by a distinct community and maintain that the original name of the settlement was Alacaat. By contrast, alternative interpretations concerning the origin of the toponym have also been proposed, with some studies in the literature suggesting that the name is of Greek derivation (Kütükoglu, 2010, pp. 45–46).

Following these debates concerning the name and origins of the settlement, the transformation of Alaçatı's demographic structure over time and the influence of different communities on the settlement will be briefly addressed. Having hosted various population groups throughout its history, Alaçatı today is characterized as a settlement predominantly inhabited by a Turkish population. The precise period during which Alaçatı became Turkified

and the process through which Turkish settlements were established in the region cannot be determined with certainty. The process of Turkification, which began with the arrival of the Turks in Anatolia and accelerated after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, profoundly transformed the historical geography of Anatolia. In 1081, under the leadership of Çaka Bey, İzmir and its surroundings came under Turkish control; however, this situation lasted for approximately twenty years (Gezgin, 2012, p. 29). Following the death of Çaka Bey, the region once again came under the rule of the Byzantine Empire. Although Turkish dominance was re-established in the region with the capture of İzmir by Aydınoğlu Umur Bey in 1317, there is no concrete evidence regarding the status of the settlement of Alaçatı during this period. In the Ottoman period, Alaçatı appears in documents under the names Alaca-at / Alacaat from the mid-fifteenth century onward. In one of the earliest records, the tahrir defteri dated 1468 (H. 873) records the settlement as one of the yaya çiftlikleri allocated to the yaya. Following the construction of Çeşme Castle, the village of Alacaat, together with İldırı and Birgécik, was listed among the dirliks assigned to the gatekeepers, granary officials, artillerymen, bölükbaşı, imams, and soldiers of the castle. At this time, Alacaat is understood to have consisted of 127 households; the settlement included two imams and one mücerret, and its total revenue amounted to 29,999 akçe (Gezgin, 2012, pp. 31–32). Another document, the Çeşme Kanunname dated 1530, records 211 dwellings in Çeşme, 127 in Alacaat, and 60 in İldırı, indicating that in this official text the settlement of Alaçatı was likewise referred to by the name Alacaat (Özgönül, 2010, p. 18).

Among the documents providing information on Alaçatı are Ottoman official population census records that reflect the demographic structure of the period. In this context, two population censuses pertaining to Çeşme are recorded for the sixteenth century. According to these records, in 1529 Çeşme was inhabited by a population of 21,850 individuals, all of whom were Turkish; similarly, in 1575 the total population numbered 19,724, again consisting entirely of Turks (Kütükoğlu, 2010, pp. 92–94). These data indicate that during this period the settlement was composed exclusively of a Turkish population. By contrast, population data from 1844 record Alaçatı as a nahiye and show that the Greek population was particularly concentrated in the central settlement. Considering that population censuses of this period were based on military and tax obligations and therefore recorded only the male population, the data indicate that in the center of Alaçatı 2,919 Greek, 93 Turkish, and 18 Kipti male inhabitants were registered. Across the nahiye as a whole, the total male population consisted of 2,945 Greeks, 381 Turks, and 18 Kipti. In the villages, the Greek male population was limited to 26 individuals in the village of İldırı, while the remaining villages were inhabited exclusively by Turkish male populations. This situation points to a marked

demographic differentiation between the central settlement of Alaçatı and its rural surroundings in the mid-nineteenth century (Şimşir, 2017, p. 1379).

In the early nineteenth century, Mac Farlane, who visited Çeşme in 1828, reported that the majority of the population of Çeşme consisted of Greeks, while describing Alaçatı as a settlement characterized by a skyline defined by minarets and mastic trees. The Aydin Salnamesi dated 1881 also supports this observation. According to the data recorded in 1881, Alaçatı had a population of 4,122, of whom 78 were Turkish and 4,055 were Greek. In another study dating to the end of the same century, Cuinet, who conveyed his observations of the region, noted in his work published in 1894 that Alaçatı and its surrounding villages were inhabited by 7,200 Muslims, 20,307 Greeks, 50 Jews, and 500 individuals of foreign origin (Mac Farlane, 1828; Cuinet, 1893, as cited in Özgönül, 2010, p. 19).

By the late nineteenth century, the estimated total population of the Çeşme kaza, in which Alaçatı was located, amounted to 53,250, of whom 45,035 were Greeks, 7,965 were Turks, and approximately 250 were Jews. In the early twentieth century, population records for the Çeşme district as a whole indicate 34,419 Greeks, 4,276 Turks, 158 Jews, and 54 individuals of foreign origin. These data demonstrate that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Greek population reached a marked predominance in comparison to the Turkish population. By contrast, the limited availability of detailed information on the Greek population in records dating to the second half of the eighteenth century suggests that this demographic increase occurred largely in the later period (Şimşir, 2017, p. 1379).

In the early twentieth century, the demographic transformation observed in Alaçatı and its surroundings acquired a more profound character during the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence. During the Turkish War of Independence, on 2 June 1919, Çeşme and Alaçatı were occupied by Greek forces (Gezgin, 2012, p. 37). In the course of the occupation, a portion of the Muslim population residing in the region was compelled to migrate to the interior parts of Anatolia. Immediately following the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence, the majority of the Greek (Rum) population left Alaçatı, and the settlement was repopulated by Muslim inhabitants. During this period, the settlement of Muslim migrants arriving from various regions led to significant changes in Alaçatı's social structure, way of life, and physical environment (Özgönül, 2010, p. 19).

It can be observed that the architectural production of the city of İzmir was shaped by its demographic structure, particularly through the coexistence of different ethnic groups, foremost among them the Greek population. Especially in the field of residential architecture, the interaction

established with Greek architectural traditions played a decisive role in the formation of the city's architectural style and urban fabric. The fact that Greek houses display similar façade characteristics not only in the center of İzmir but also in settlements such as Buca, Alsancak, Ayvalık, Foça, Çeşme, and Chios reveals that this interaction gave rise to a shared architectural language on a regional scale (Uçar, H. & Uçar, A., 2013). Similarly, it is observed that public buildings belonging to the Greek community—such as hospitals and educational institutions—also exhibit the same architectural language across different settlements.

The data presented above indicate that Alaçatı possessed a multilayered demographic structure in which different population groups coexisted over the course of its history; however, particularly in the nineteenth century, the Greek population acquired a marked numerical and spatial predominance within the settlement center. This demographic concentration influenced the organization of social and cultural life in Alaçatı and played a decisive role not only in everyday life but also in the formation of religious and educational institutions. In this context, the educational institutions established by the Greek population in Alaçatı emerge as one of the domains in which the settlement's social structure became concretely manifested.

Following the 1923 population exchange stipulated by the Treaty of Lausanne, Greek refugees who migrated from Anatolia reproduced their spatial memories of the lost homelands within a new geographical context by establishing settlements in Greece bearing the names of the places they had left behind. Settlements such as Nea Smyrni (New Smyrna), Nea Ionia, Nea Filadelfia, and Nea Erythrea were incorporated into the national spatial framework of Greece as sites of memory that sustained ties with the former homeland, despite the rupture of geographical continuity brought about by the population exchange (Alpan, 2021, p. 335). It is evident that this production of memory was not confined solely to the scale of major urban centers; rather, memories associated with smaller settlements were likewise represented and rearticulated within newly established spatial contexts. The construction of a fountain named Dokuz Çeşme in Nea Kokluca by Greek migrants who had relocated from Kokluca—an Ottoman-period settlement with a predominantly Greek population, today known as Altındağ—demonstrates that even small-scale settlements occupied a significant place within the broader framework of urban memory (Uçar, 2020, pp. 332–333).

The social and institutional structure shaped by the concentration of the Greek population in Alaçatı can also be interpreted, within a broader historical framework, through the lens of spatial memory. A number of the religious, educational, and public spaces created by the Greek community in the course

of everyday life have disappeared over time; although their existence is known through documentary evidence, these buildings have not survived to the present day and can be identified primarily through archival sources. Within this context, the Greek boys' school planned to be constructed in Alaçatı is examined as a striking example through which this former social and cultural structure may be traced architecturally.

Educational Institutions of the Greek Community in Alaçatı

It is known that from the nineteenth century onward, various educational institutions belonging to the Greek community were active in Alaçatı. Within this context, the Elenikon School, which was active in 1806 and is regarded as the first community school, represents one of the earliest examples of formal education in the settlement. According to contemporary records, a total of fifteen teachers—eight male and seven female—were employed in Alaçatı, and education was provided in separate schools for male and female students. During this period, it is understood that approximately 850 male and 720 female students were receiving education in the settlement. One of these schools is known to have operated in a building that still survives today and is currently known as the Taş Otel. Initially, the educational expenses of the schools were covered by taxes paid by the community; however, in response to objections to this practice, funding was subsequently provided through church budgets and donations. Another educational institution within the boundaries of Alaçatı was a coeducational school located in Agrilia, the settlement's harbor area, which was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. Efforts toward institutionalization in the field of education continued during this period; in 1833, the inhabitants of Alaçatı established the Erythrai Association with the aim of constructing a new school. Although the association acquired a large parcel of land for this purpose, the initiative could not be brought to completion for various reasons (Gezgin, 2012, p. 76).

Based on the existing architectural heritage and field surveys, only a single tangible example—the Taş Han building—can be identified as having survived among the Greek school buildings established in Alaçatı and Çeşme during the nineteenth century. It is not possible to determine with certainty which buildings corresponded to the other educational institutions or whether they have survived to the present day. This study aims to examine the planning, design, and construction processes of Greek schools in the Ottoman period through the case of a Greek boys' school that, according to archival documents, was planned for construction in the town of Alaçatı, administratively affiliated with the Çeşme kaza. Although it cannot be determined with certainty whether the school was ever constructed or, if constructed, whether it was subsequently lost in later periods, the plan and

elevation drawings attached to the archival documents nevertheless provide data that allow for a preliminary assessment of the building's architectural characteristics.

Within this framework, in order to evaluate the emergence and institutional characteristics of Greek educational buildings in Alaçatı, it is necessary to briefly address the legal and administrative structure governing schools belonging to non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire. The Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi of 1869 subjected the establishment of schools by non-Muslim subjects to specific regulations and increased state supervision over these institutions. Following this regulation, schools that had previously operated without official authorization obtained formal permits by fulfilling the required conditions; in parallel, an increase in the establishment of new schools was also observed. Greek schools, for which licensing requirements were relatively more flexible compared to those applied to other communities, experienced particularly notable development during this period. Indeed, according to data from 1878, there were 665 Greek schools across Ottoman Anatolia, 117 of which were located in İzmir and its surrounding region (Özer Baş, Demir & Gölükçü, 2024, p. 706).

Schools belonging to the Greek community in the Ottoman period were generally located within the grounds of the churches to which they were affiliated and frequently bore the same names as these churches. This situation indicates that educational activities were conducted in close connection with the religious and administrative organization of the community. In İzmir, prominent examples of such schools operating within church complexes include Aya Fotini, Aya Yorgi, Aya Dimitrios, Aya Ekaterini, Aya Yoannis, Aya Nikolaos, Evangelistra, Aya Apostolos, Aya Konstantinos, Aya Markella, Aya Haralambos, Profitis İlios, Aya Trifon, and Aya Paraskevi (Berber, 1998, pp. 28–29).

This general pattern of construction and institutional organization can be observed in a similar manner in the village of Alaçatı, which was administratively affiliated with the Çeşme kaza, as in other settlements connected to İzmir. An examination of documents preserved in the Ottoman archives reveals that certain members of the Greek community residing in the village of Alaçatı, within the Çeşme kaza of the İzmir sancak, submitted petitions to the competent authorities requesting permission for the construction of a school for the education of their children. In these petitions, particular emphasis was placed on the fact that the plot of land identified as belonging to the Greek community did not possess the status of an ancient monument and that the planned school building would be constructed in a manner that would not cause any disturbance to the surrounding Muslim

population. These statements indicate that, during the Ottoman period, non-Muslim communities were required to comply with certain administrative and social conditions in the construction of schools, and they further demonstrate that such buildings were subject to state supervision not only in architectural terms but also with regard to social harmony and public order. The documents also include information concerning the financing of the proposed school construction. Accordingly, it is understood that half of the expenses were to be covered by the Mektep Sandığı, while the remaining half was to be financed from the accumulated funds (nükud-1 müterakime) belonging to the Ayateryada, Ayakostandino, and Arsudiya churches in Alaçatı. Despite the presence of a Greek male population numbering 6,217 individuals residing in 2,798 households in the town of Alaçatı, the existing Greek boys' school was stated to be insufficient to meet this demand. For this reason, it is understood that the Greek Patriarchate submitted an official application to the state seeking permission for the construction of an additional boys' school in the region (BOA, SD., 1432.9.1; BOA, SD., 1432.9.2; BOA, SD., 1432.9.4; BOA, SD., 1432.9.5; BOA, SD., 1432.9.6; BOA, İ.AZN., 78.21.8).

The petition explicitly states that the final approval for the construction of the school was contingent upon the issuance of a ferman by the sultan. In this respect, the document constitutes an important historical source that reveals both the educational initiatives of the Greek community in Alaçatı and the formal modes of interaction it established with the Ottoman administration. As can be understood from the documents, it was envisaged that all expenses related to the construction of the planned school would be covered entirely by the community itself, and no allocation from the state budget was requested. The petition further indicates that the necessary correspondence would be undertaken in order to submit this matter for the sultan's approval.

Moreover, the statements contained in the document demonstrate that the request for the construction of a school by the Greek community in Alaçatı was first evaluated by the local administrative authorities and subsequently forwarded to the central bureaucracy, namely the Dâhiliye Nezareti and the Şûrâ-yı Devlet. The fact that the financing of the school was to be provided entirely through the community's own resources indicates that this initiative was in accordance with the principle adopted by the Ottoman administration in its educational policy toward non-Muslim communities, whereby permission was granted without financial support from the state budget. This situation is significant in that it demonstrates that the construction processes of educational buildings during the period were conducted under strict bureaucratic supervision and that Greek communities were able to realize such initiatives only within the framework of state authorization and oversight (BOA, İ.AZN. 78.21.17).

Architectural Features of the Greek Boys' School Planned for Construction in Alaçatı

The plan and elevation drawings attached to the archival documents in question constitute an important source for identifying the architectural characteristics of the Greek boys' school planned for construction in Alaçatı (BOA, 78.21, H. 12.04.1326). These drawings provide direct evidence for assessing the building's spatial organization and design. The Greek inscription "Εκπαίδευτήρια Αλλατσάτων Αρρεναγωγείον" (*Ekpaideftiria Allatsaton Arrenagogion*) appearing on the plan indicates that the building was designed as a boys' school within the framework of the educational institutions in Alaçatı (Fig. 1).

In addition, the Greek note "Κάιρον 14.12.1907" suggests that the drawing was prepared in Cairo on 14 December 1907. The presence of this note, together with the accompanying signature, implies that the drawing may be associated with an official involved in the preparation or approval of the project.

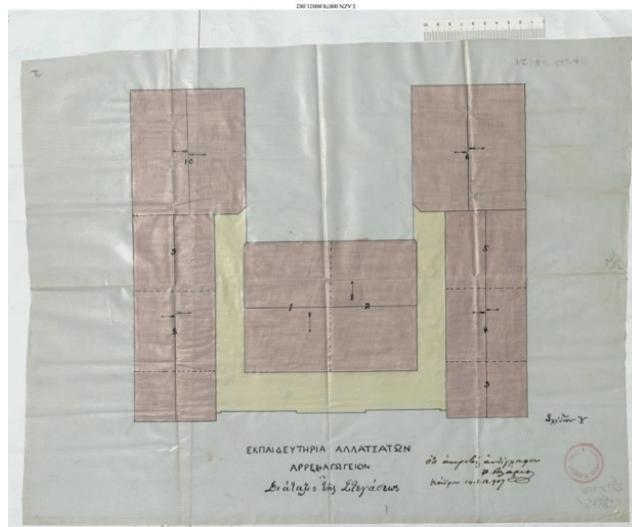


Figure 1. Plan Scheme of the Greek Boys' School in Alaçatı

Note. From BOA, 78.21.2, H. 12.04.1326.

The reference to "Cairo" in the document suggests that the Greek school planned to be constructed in Alaçatı may have been designed in Cairo and that similar buildings might have been prepared as standard or prototype projects intended for implementation in different locations. It is known that in the early twentieth century a large proportion of the Greek population in Egypt was concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria. This demographic growth

was supported by the expansion of the cotton trade in the second half of the nineteenth century and by the privileges granted through the capitulations; as a result, Egypt emerged as both a place of refuge and a center offering significant economic opportunities for Greeks migrating from Ottoman territories. As a consequence of this population concentration, Greek communities in Egypt established strong organizational structures in urban centers and increasingly focused their cultural and religious activities in these locales (Kitroeff, 1989, pp. 12–13). From the late nineteenth century onward, Greek communities in Egypt developed a more institutionalized form of organization that differed from the traditional community structures of the Ottoman Empire. During this period, the Greek communities of Cairo and Alexandria evolved into corporate bodies engaged not only in religious affairs but also in educational, charitable, and cultural activities. Indeed, the Greco–Egyptian Orthodox Community founded in Alexandria in 1843 gained official status under the name of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria in 1887, and in 1904 a similar organizational model was established in Cairo with the formation of the Hellenic Community of Cairo. The statutes of these communities defined the construction and administration of educational institutions as one of their primary objectives. Accordingly, a school plan prepared in Cairo during this period can be understood as being directly connected to the activities of these well-organized and influential community structures (Kitroeff, 1989, pp. 16–17).

An examination of the building's plan characteristics indicates that it has a nearly square rectangular plan, elongated along the north–south axis (Fig. 2). The plan is organized symmetrically along a central axis and consists of a three-winged layout arranged around a courtyard. The spaces are positioned to form a U-shaped configuration surrounding the courtyard, while a T-shaped courtyard is located at the rear of the building. The entrance opens onto a columned portico elevated by a few steps, a design feature that enhances the building's representational quality and monumental character. On the entrance façade, a niche is positioned at the center, flanked by two door openings. These openings lead into two separate rooms located in the front section of the building. As understood from the plan and section drawings, the rooms are arranged with direct internal access to one another through an interconnecting doorway (Fig. 2, 3). Considering their location and spatial relationship within the plan, it may be suggested that these spaces served administrative functions. The section drawing further reveals that the rooms on the entrance façade are elevated one step above the corridor level and feature wooden floors supported by wooden beams. Each of the two rooms opens onto the corridor, that provides internal circulation through a single doorway. In the right and left wings of the building, a linear arrangement is observed in which four rooms are aligned side by side in each wing. These

spaces, which vary in size, may have functioned as classrooms in accordance with the building's overall purpose. They open onto a longitudinal corridor that runs through the building and connects the two wings, serving as the principal element of internal circulation. At the rear of the building, a spacious courtyard aligned with the central axis is located, accessed by stairways descending from either side. The placement and formal characteristics of the small-scale units within this courtyard suggest that these spaces were most likely used as toilets.

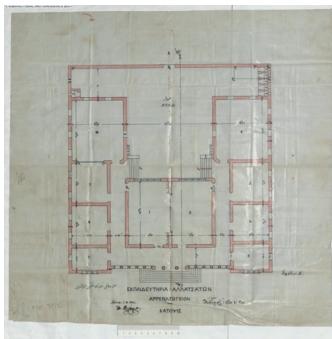


Figure 2. Ground Floor Plan of the Greek Boys' School in Alaçatı Note. From BOA, 78.21.6, H. 12.04.1326.

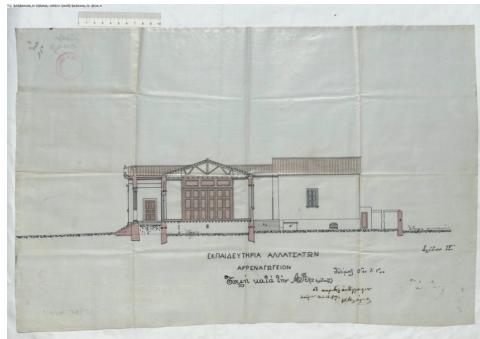


Figure 3. Section View of the Greek Boys' School in Alaçatı Note. From BOA, 78.21.4, H. 12.04.1326.

Based on the available documents, information can be obtained solely regarding the building's entrance façade. Designed in the Neoclassical style, the structure features a symmetrical façade composition. The main façade is articulated as a portico defined by columns (Fig. 4). The entrance section, elevated by a flight of steps, is organized with four large columns. These columns rise from bases and terminate in Corinthian capitals with fluting applied to the two inner columns (Fig. 5). Behind this colonnaded arrangement, a semicircular niche is positioned along the central axis, flanked on either side by a door opening. The two sides of the façade are defined by solid balustrade elements and rows of columns arranged above them. The upper level of the façade is terminated by stepped, profiled cornices. The spaces located on either side of the façade are emphasized by being slightly projected forward in relation to the central section. These projecting masses open to the exterior through rectangular windows articulated by pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The masses are crowned with triangular pediments, which reinforce the monumental effect of the front façade; the apexes and corners of these pediments are ornamented with acroteria, a decorative feature commonly employed in the architecture of the period.

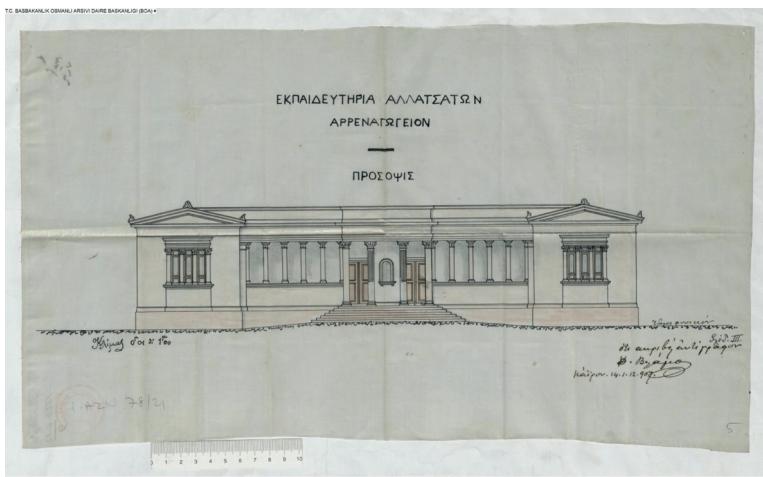


Figure 4. Elevation Drawing of the Greek Boys' School in Alaçatı

Note. From BOA, 78.21, H. 12.04.1326

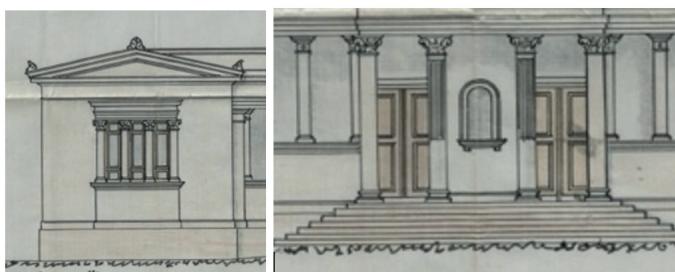


Figure 5. Detail from the Elevation Drawing of the Greek Boys' School in Alaçatı

Note. From BOA, 78.21, H. 12.04.1326

An examination of Greek schools in Anatolia indicates that these buildings share certain common architectural characteristics. In particular, examples dating from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century are distinguished by symmetrical façade arrangements and plan schemes executed in the Neoclassical style. This typological approach can also be observed in Greek educational buildings constructed at different scales and within varying contexts.

One examples that can be evaluated within this framework is the building currently in use as Namık Kemal High School, which was originally constructed as the Greek Orthodox School (Evangeliki Scholi), one of the largest schools in İzmir at the time (Fig. 6). Owing to its monumental scale, columned façade composition, and triangular pediments, the building displays a monumental, restrained, and symmetrical (Ersoy Alpandiner & Akyüz Levi, 2019, p. 90).

Another building of monumental character in İzmir is the structure that today serves as the main building of Atatürk High School (Fig. 7). This building was constructed between 1909 and 1912 as the new premises of the Central Girls' School, which had been established by the Greek community in the vicinity of the Aya Fotini Church in 1839. The structure represents an example of Neoclassical architecture in the city (Şimşek Özel, 2018, pp. 174–175). Another Greek school known to have existed in İzmir is the building understood to have been located within the complex of the Agios Ioannis Teologos Church. Following the demolition of the church, the school—known to have been constructed on the same site—was used during the Republican period as İsmet Paşa Primary School; however, it was later largely destroyed by a fire. Today, only a portion of the courtyard, the monumental entrance gate, and some subsidiary structures have survived, while a significant part of the bell tower, visible in historical postcards, has been lost (Arlı & Uçar, 2022, p. 1441). The symmetry of the façade composition, the use of triangular pediments, and the regular alignment of rectangular openings in this school building point to the influence of the Neoclassical style, which was widely employed in educational buildings dating from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.



Figure 6. *Namık Kemal High School, İzmir (formerly the Greek Orthodox Evangeliki Scholi)*

Note. From Ersoy Alpandiner, A., & Akyüz Levi, E. E., 2019, pp. 86–87.



Figure 7. *Atatürk High School, İzmir (formerly the Greek Central Girls' School)*

Note. From Şimşek Özel, 2018, pp. 175, 177.

When compared with the monumental examples discussed above, the Greek Boys' School planned to be constructed in Alaçatı may be regarded, in terms of design, as a smaller-scale and more modest example. One of the smaller-scale buildings in Anatolia that demonstrates clear similarities to the Alaçatı project is a school building located in Kula. The building's symmetrical plan organized along a principal axis, the spatial arrangement of rooms aligned along a corridor, and the façade composition emphasized by a columned and monumental entrance exhibit clear parallels with the Greek Boys' School planned in Alaçatı (Özer Baş, Demir, & Gölükçü, 2024, p. 720).

In the context of Greek schools in Western Anatolia, the Greek schools of Tire and Ayvalık—whose plan and elevation drawings are preserved in archival sources—exhibit design characteristics similar to those of the Greek Boys' School planned for construction in Alaçatı. A comparison of the façade designs of the Tire Greek School and the Alaçatı Greek Boys' School reveals notable commonalities, including a compositional approach based on symmetry, a pronounced emphasis on the central axis, the use of triangular pediments, and shared Neoclassical stylistic elements (Fig. 8) (for the Greek school in Tire, see Soysal, 2016). In both cases, a monumental entrance arrangement and a balanced façade composition with a strong horizontal emphasis were preferred. Similarly, when the elevation drawing of the Ayvalık Greek School—known to have been constructed in the late nineteenth century—is compared with the Alaçatı example, it points to a shared architectural language in terms of its columned entrance arrangement, use of pediments, and symmetrical façade composition (Fig. 9). When these examples are considered together, it becomes evident that, despite variations related to local scale and functional requirements, Greek educational buildings in Western Anatolia during the late Ottoman period adopted a common representational approach shaped within a Neoclassical framework, with particular emphasis on façade design.

On the basis of this comparative assessment, it becomes evident that the plan layout, façade design, and massing of the Greek Boys' School planned for construction in Alaçatı are consistent with the architectural approach commonly adopted in Greek community educational buildings during the late Ottoman period. The Neoclassical style, which was frequently preferred in Greek schools in the Ottoman context, was also widely employed in European architecture from the early nineteenth century onward. This style emerged as a conscious reinterpretation of Ancient Greek architecture (Pevsner, 1977, p. 179). Within the scope of the Greek schools examined in this study, Neoclassicism is manifested through design elements such as symmetrical plan organization, spatial configurations developed around courtyards, and a pronounced emphasis on monumental entrances.

The fact that the building examined in this study is dated to 1907, together with the significant administrative and political changes that followed shortly thereafter with the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era, suggests that the Greek boys' school planned for construction in Alaçatı may not have been implemented. Fieldwork conducted in Alaçatı, as well as the examination of photographs and documents in archival sources, has not yielded any concrete evidence indicating that the building was constructed. While the available data allow for such an assessment, future archival discoveries or the emergence of new sources may enable a reassessment of the building's status.

In this context, even though it is not definitively known whether the building was constructed, the existing plan and elevation drawings make a meaningful contribution to the literature by enabling an evaluation of architectural approaches to planning, spatial organization, and façade design in Greek schools.



Figure 8. Elevation drawing of the Greek school planned for construction in Tire

Note. From BOA, İAZN, 64.9, H. 11.11.1323.



Figure 9. Elevation drawing of a Greek school planned for construction in Ayvalık

Note. From BOA, İAZN, 4.24, H. 22.11.1310.

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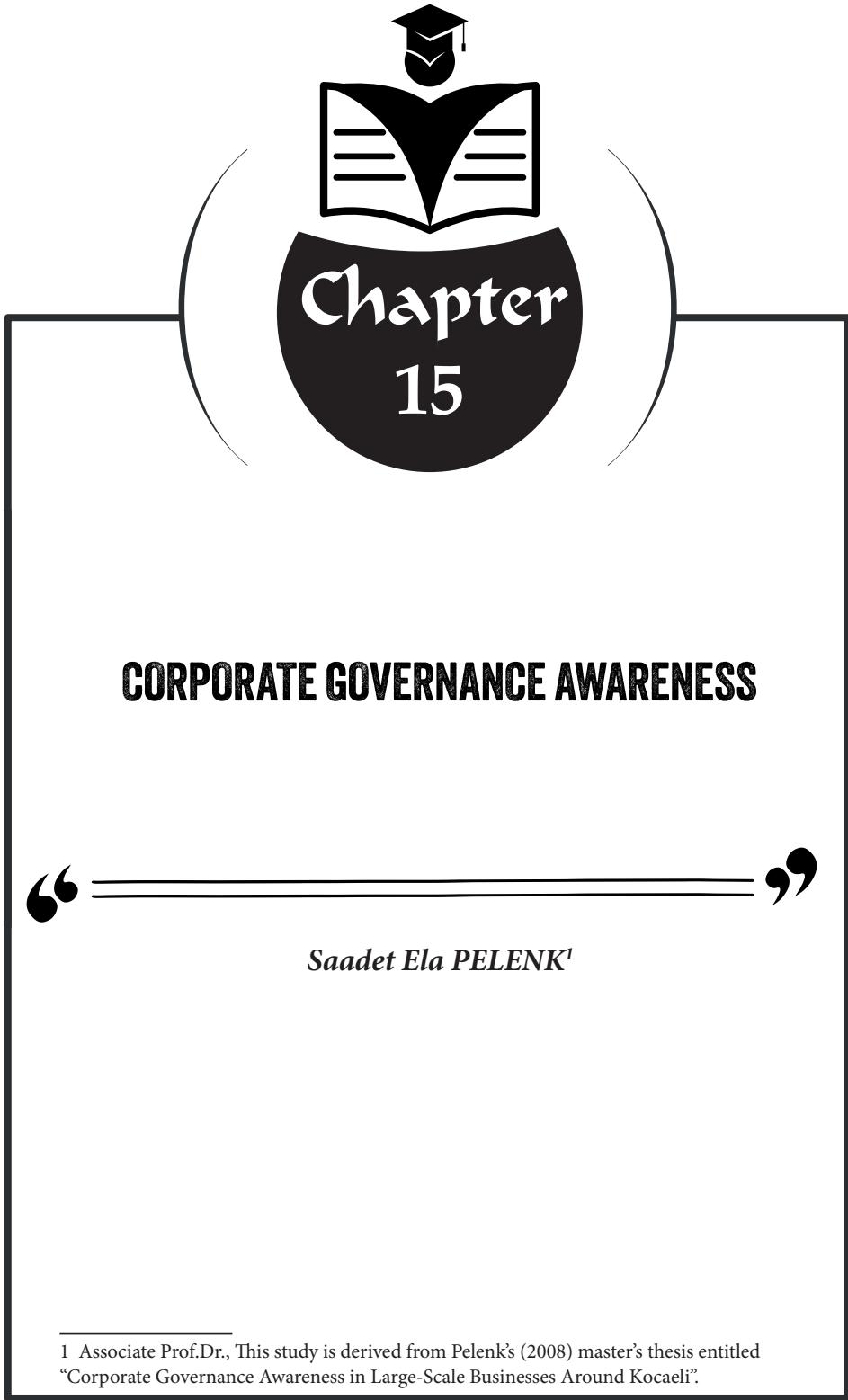
Archival Documents

BOA, İ.AZN., 78.21, H. 12.04.1326, Çeşme'nin Alaçatı kasabasında mektep inşası.

BOA, ŞD., 1432.9, H. 03.04.1326, Çeşme kazasına bağlı Alaçatı kasabasında Rum erkek çocukların mahsus mektep inşası.

BOA, İ.AZN., 64.9, H. 11.11.1323, Tirede Rum zükür mektebinin müceddededen inşası.

BOA, İ.AZN., 4.24, H. 22.11.1310, Ayvalık kasabasında Rum cemaati etfâl-i inâsi için bir mektep inşası.



CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AWARENESS

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¹ Associate Prof.Dr., This study is derived from Pelenk's (2008) master's thesis entitled "Corporate Governance Awareness in Large-Scale Businesses Around Kocaeli".

INTRODUCTION

Today, with the increasing weight of the private sector in the economies of countries, economic success has largely become dependent on the success of the private sector and, consequently, on the success of companies. International fund managers, when investing in developing countries or companies operating in these countries, have begun to consider the quality of Corporate Governance practices as much as financial performance. High quality Corporate Governance means integration into international capital markets, thereby reducing the cost of capital for companies, increasing financing opportunities and liquidity, and securing more funds from capital markets. This situation highlights the necessity of approaching the functions and studies related to Corporate Governance with a scientific approach.

Corporate governance is about ensuring that companies' management and control systems are transparent, visible, consistent, and accountable, thereby building trust with financial markets, employees, suppliers, customers, and society. With a corporate governance approach, companies increase their efficiency and consequently the value of the shares held by their partners, while being aware of their responsibilities and conducting their relationships with all individuals and organizations in accordance with laws and ethical values. Today, the Enron and WorldCom scandals in the USA, Parmalat in Italy, Ahold in the Netherlands, and Yanguangxia in China, which arose as a result of wrong management and control policies, the global financial crises that emerged as a result of the integration of financial markets, the increased mobility of international capital movements due to globalization, and the privatization practices that have become widespread since the 1980s have made Corporate Governance more important all over the world.

The crises that occurred in the early 2000s dealt a blow to the sense of security of both global markets and companies. This climate of insecurity led to a new search process that enabled the concept of Corporate Governance to take shape and come to the forefront. The biggest differences that Corporate Governance has created in the existing management structure are the components of the concepts of togetherness and participation. While in the classical management structure, the person who founded and managed the company was the same person; the rapid development of companies led to the separation of the founding shareholder position and the management position, and the emergence of the concept of joint management. The concept of Corporate Governance has changed the content of the management concept where one unit manages other units, adding communication, interaction, and joint management to the concept.

In the 21st century, globalization, competition, and technological advancements have changed the market structure, resulting in companies no longer being able to rely solely on national markets and capital. Today, with access to international capital and markets requiring the fulfillment of certain standards, companies have found it necessary to make internal changes to meet these standards. Corporate governance has responded to the need for change arising from the development and growth of companies. Companies needing capital increase and the ability to maintain speed and flexibility in a competitive environment have required new partnerships, institutional and individual investors to continue their development.

Corporate governance is fundamentally a perspective built on trust. The concept of corporate governance aims to ensure that companies can operate within the principles of transparency, fairness, accountability, and responsibility, and it has become a global issue, particularly after corporate scandals in the US. Recent scandals involving Enron, WorldCom, Global Crossing, Tyco, etc., have caused significant losses to all relevant parties, especially the shareholders of these companies, and have shaken and unsettled financial markets. These events in the US, following recent global crises, resulted in the enactment of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in 2002. While this law primarily covers auditing issues, it also includes corporate governance rules. The European Union has also emphasized through its authorized representatives that it consistently supports the corporate governance, auditing, and accounting standards brought about by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

In Turkey, however, the main trigger for facilitating the spread of Corporate Governance is structural change stemming from the effects of crises on the economy and companies. The economy, which experienced two economic crises in 1994 and 1998, suffered a very significant shock with the 2001 crisis, and the most important trigger of this economic crisis was the banking sector. In Turkey, the Corporate Governance Association was established as a result of the studies initiated under the leadership of TUSIAD. In the early 2000s, the management, supervision and auditing authority of our Capital Market worked quite effectively on this issue. The Capital Market Board (SPK), in establishing corporate governance principles, followed a method in line with developments in the world, taking into account the specific conditions of our country within the framework of general principles adopted in the world, primarily the draft text on the “Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Corporate Governance Principles” published in 1999, and announced the “Corporate Governance Principles” to the public with the board decision dated July 4, 2003.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of Corporate Governance in its present sense was first addressed in the 1992 report (The Cadbury Committee Report: Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance), prepared by a committee chaired by Sir Adrian Cadbury in England and also briefly called the “Cadbury Report”. In the same report, corporate governance principles were determined for companies to comply with regarding the structure of the Board of Directors, independent directors, senior management, reporting and controls. In 1995, the Greenbury Report was created because of the need to deal more seriously with corporate governance issues related to executive compensation. In 1998, the Hampel report was created in England to review the recommendations in the Cadbury and Greenbury reports that had been published earlier. And then, in 1999, the Unified Code, which brought together three reports in succession, and subsequently, the OECD principles, Higgs, Revised Unified Code and Myners report were published.

In the Cadbury Report, where Corporate Governance was first officially mentioned, Corporate Governance is defined as the system relating to the management and control of companies (Cadbury,1992). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines Corporate Governance as a system that encompasses a broad framework that includes the management of a company, its board of directors, shareholders, and other stakeholders, shaping the level of activity of firms from macroeconomic policies to the level of competition, and also based on legal and institutional regulations. The OECD states that Corporate Governance also establishes a structure in which the company's objectives are defined, and outlines the ways in which these objectives will be achieved and performance will be monitored (OECD,2016).

The Corporate Governance view supports a board of directors composed mostly of independent directors. It is believed that external directors will manage the business independently (McCarthy & Puffer, 2002). With this statement, Corporate Governance is defined as an approach that considers the interests of both shareholders and managers, while also valuing the rights of other stakeholders, including employees, customers, creditors, funders, and the government (Millstein, 1998). Corporate governance is essentially risk management. In risk management and auditing mechanisms, a disciplined approach and regular control are also important. One of the greatest tools at our disposal for minimizing this risk is financial reporting. The fundamental principles of good corporate governance are fairness, responsibility, accountability, and transparency. In light of these principles, corporate governance aims for the institution to achieve the highest performance, be the most profitable, and the most successful.

The aims of these principles are:

- To determine the mutual rights and obligations of stakeholders;
- To ensure transparency in company management;
- To increase trust in company management;
- To ensure stable growth and high profitability by improving company performance (Tuzcu, 2004).

Corporate governance is a system used to manage and control businesses. It specifies how rights and responsibilities are distributed among different corporate participants. It attempts to establish various rules and procedures to solve corporate problems that the organization faces or may face. Corporate governance ensures that all stakeholders of the organization have access to corporate information and encourages those who manage the organization to strive to increase the value of the organization rather than to secure their personal interests (Luo, 2005).

At its core, governance involves challenging manageability as self-governing networks because it rejects centralized guidance (Cope, Leishman, & Starie, 1997). From a governance perspective, managing is seen as an interactive process. This is because neither in the public sector nor in the private sector does any single actor possess sufficient resources, capacity, and knowledge to solve problems on its own (Stoker, 1998).

There is no single model of good corporate governance. However, there are some common elements that make up good corporate governance. The principles are built upon these common elements and are designed to encompass the different existing models. For example, the principles do not endorse a specific board structure, and the term “board of directors” used in the principles encompasses board structures in different national models. In the typical two-tier system found in some countries, the term “board of directors,” as used in the principles, means “oversight board,” while the term “key director” means “management board.” The principles are used as a point of reference by different countries worldwide. The principles are also one of the Financial Stability Board’s Core Standards for Healthy Financial Systems and form the basis for the assessment of the corporate governance element in the World Bank’s Compliance with Standards and Regulations Reports (ROSC). The principles are evolutionary in nature and are reviewed in light of significant changes in conditions to ensure their continued role as a leading tool in policymaking in the field of corporate governance. The principles are presented in six different sections:

- I) Providing the foundations for an effective corporate governance framework;
- II) Shareholder rights and fair treatment and essential partnership functions;
- III) Institutional investors, equity markets and other intermediaries;
- IV) The role of stakeholders in corporate governance; V) Public disclosure and transparency;
- V) Responsibilities of the board of directors (G20/OECD, 2016).

Corporate governance is founded on the principles of equality, transparency, accountability, and responsibility. The Transparency Principle is the action of disclosing financial and non-financial information about the company, except for trade secrets of vital importance to the company and information not yet disclosed to the public, in a timely, accurate, complete, understandable, interpretable, helpful and easily accessible manner at low cost, within the legal framework. Accountability Principle In terms of corporate governance, this principle expresses the obligation of the company's board of directors to be accountable to the shareholders regarding the activities and practices carried out, and the questioning of the board's authority and responsibilities. Equality/Fairness Principle: This principle expresses the rights of shareholders and the equal treatment of shareholders, the equal treatment of all shareholders in all activities of the business, and the prevention of potential conflicts of interest. Accountability Principle: This principle describes the compliance of the decisions taken by the company's board of directors on behalf of the joint-stock company, as well as all activities and performances, with the laws, principles and rules, the company's articles of association and the company's specific rules, and the ability to control this (SPK,2005; Burak, & Öztaş, 2015).

Some crises experienced in the world have also triggered corporate governance. For example, in the Enron crisis, it was revealed that the reports prepared by the auditors did not reflect the company picture in a complete, accurate and easily understandable way. While some of this is due to legislative loopholes and similar reasons, it can be said that the main reason is the failure to apply the principle of separation of powers in the executive-supervisory relationship in companies (Healy, & Palepu, 2003). The fundamental aims of Corporate Governance are to contribute to growth and financial stability by supporting market confidence, the integrity of financial markets and economic efficiency; to help bridge the gap between the interests of those who manage the company, including key shareholders, and the interests of

shareholders more generally, by increasing investor confidence and reducing the cost of capital for the company; and to help the company accept and fulfill its legal obligations and build value-creating relationships with its stakeholders, including employees and creditors.

The agency approach to corporate governance generally addresses conflicts of interest between shareholders and management and aims to minimize agency costs arising from these problems (Fama, 1980). The agency model, when evaluated according to organizational structure and relationships, is decisive in determining managerial behavior. As a result, the actions of managers, who are an authorized body in the decision-making process, can lead to various managerial problems. For example, the manager's psychological state can be a risk factor. The manager may not want to relinquish control of the current situation with a self-serving attitude. In this case, the expectations of both parties are reduced in terms of relationships, and controlling the agency costs becomes more difficult (Akın, 2004).

Corporate governance has both internal and external governance mechanisms. Boards of directors and ownership structure are internal governance mechanisms, while the takeover market and the legal regulatory system are external governance mechanisms (Pelenk, 2008). On the other hand, corporate governance systems can be classified into two types: market-oriented and network (relationship)-oriented systems. In a network-oriented corporate governance system, because the effectiveness is concentrated in a small group, there is no external control mechanism to control corporate governance practices. Within this system, the long-term outlook of shareholders, who form specific groups, rather than the stable short-term, ensures that the company's performance, especially the performance resulting from R&D activities, is given more prominence. In such systems, hostile buyouts, mergers, debt-based acquisitions, and downsizing activities resulting from them are less common, and the market has a stable structure. This stable structure highlights efforts to develop intellectual capital and improve the quality of intellectual assets in network-oriented corporate governance systems, enabling the firm to act in accordance with its goal of sustainable growth and value maximization. Internal job markets are common in relationship-based systems. In internal job markets, managers start at the lowest level, and the company evaluates and promotes them based on specific performance criteria. The long-term performance of managers within the company is relatively more important. Due to the low level of inter-company transfers and mobility in internal job markets, managers become fully committed to their company and seek to build good relationships with stakeholders. (Keenan, & Aggestam, 2001; Hoskisson, Yiu, & Kim, 2004).

The role of stakeholders in corporate governance is important. It begins with the principle that “Corporate governance should recognize the rights of stakeholders as defined by law and support active cooperation between the company and stakeholders in creating sound investments in terms of income, business and finance.” Where there is a legally protected stakeholder interest, stakeholders should have the opportunity to obtain effective redress regarding their rights.

- a) The corporate governance framework should guarantee respect for stakeholder rights protected by law.
- b) Stakeholders should be able to receive adequate compensation if their rights are violated.
- c) This framework should allow for performance-enhancing mechanisms for stakeholder participation. Examples of such mechanisms include employee representation on the Board of Directors; share ownership plans or other dividend-sharing mechanisms; and governance methods that consult stakeholder opinions on certain key decisions.
- d) Stakeholders should have access to the necessary information. This ensures that stakeholders have the information they need to fulfill their corporate governance responsibilities.

In this context corporate governance has responded to the need for change arising from the development and growth of companies, resulting in changes in corporate structures. Companies needing capital increase and the ability to achieve a certain speed and flexibility to survive in a competitive environment have needed new partnerships, corporate and individual investors to continue their development. The need for sustainability and meeting resource needs has created the need for institutionalization.

While in the classical management structure the founder and manager of the company were the same person, the rapid development of companies has led to the separation of the founding shareholder position and the manager position, and the emergence of the concept of joint management. The hierarchical structure of the classical management approach has not been successful in a competitive environment that requires speed and quality simultaneously. Corporate governance is a management style that responds to these changes.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, globalization, competition, and technological advancements have changed the market structure, resulting in companies being unable to rely solely on national markets and capital. Today, with access to international capital and markets requiring the fulfillment of certain standards, it has become imperative for companies to make internal changes to meet these standards. Companies that need international finance and investment institutions to enter the international market must prove their reliability and meet certain standards in order to enter this market. Having corporate governance practices and high governance performance is very important for companies to meet standards and provide the necessary trust. Companies that effectively implement corporate governance weather crises more easily because they can ensure internal communication and strive to implement corporate governance principles.

Corporate governance can be defined as the system that regulates the relationship between shareholders and company management. The fundamental characteristic of the system is that it includes the internal management arrangements of companies as well as how a strategic and managerial decision is made.¹⁰² The definition that can be called corporate social responsibility will also find its place at this point. Corporate social responsibility aims to increase the value of the social stakeholders of companies in the long term, instead of just the short-term profit expectation of shareholders (Monks& Minow, 2001).

Corporate governance is fundamentally a perspective built on trust. The main goal in corporate governance is to build trust. To achieve this goal of building trust, corporate governance operates on four principles: transparency, fairness, accountability, and responsibility. Corporate governance benefits not only the company that applies these governance principles, but also all stakeholders who have a direct and/or indirect relationship with the company. In other words, corporate governance provides benefits to the company that applies these principles, shareholders, employees, customers, institutional investors, the entire society, and the state.

Corporate governance aims to enable an organization to achieve the highest performance, and ensures that the organization contributes not only to its current earnings but also to future generations with the same values, along with the responsibility that comes with its successes. Companies that can correctly implement corporate governance are those that can inspire confidence in the markets, their sector, their customers, employees, and society.

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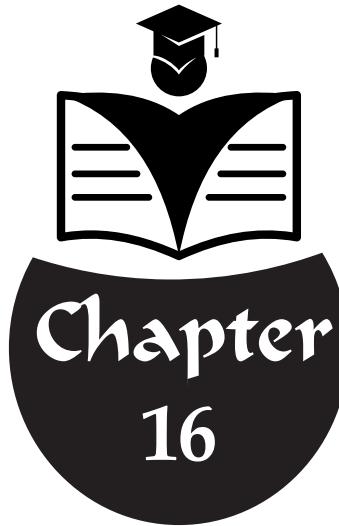
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Transforming Local Social Policies for the Elderly: Disability and Elderly Services in Istanbul (2019–2024)^{1,2}

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1. Introduction

Local government services for disabled and elderly individuals should be evaluated not only as administrative practices or social assistance mechanisms, but also as concrete reflections of the welfare state concept at the local level. Local governments, one of the areas where the social state principle has the most direct contact with citizens, are increasingly taking on a central role in managing life risks such as old age and disability. This situation necessitates that local social policies be addressed not only at the service delivery level but also within a theoretical framework.

Prominent theoretical approaches in the social policy literature offer essential analytical tools for understanding municipalities' service delivery methods and priority areas. This study, while interpreting the service practices of local governments for disabled and elderly individuals during 2019–2024, particularly draws on Gøsta Esping-Andersen's Welfare State Typology and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. These two approaches allow for the joint evaluation of both the institutional structure of local social policies and their impact on individuals' life experiences. Regional Government Services within the Framework of Welfare State and Capability Approaches

Esping-Andersen (1990) classifies welfare states according to the degree to which they reduce individuals' dependence on the market and explains the scope of social services through state-market-family relations. One of the basic functions of the welfare state is to reduce the risks individuals face throughout their lives through collective mechanisms. Old age and disability are among the most important of these risk areas; therefore, services for these groups are among the key indicators of the quality of welfare regimes.

Local governments are positioned as localized actors of the welfare state, primarily through care services, social support programs, and accessibility practices.

Esping-Andersen's welfare regimes approach allows for the evaluation not only of the quantity of services provided by municipalities but also of their impact on individuals' life independence and social participation. In this context, home care services, senior citizens' centres, disability support units, and social participation projects can be read as local welfare mechanisms that reduce individuals' dependence on family or the market. Amartya Sen's (1999) Capability Approach defines well-being not solely in terms of income level or service provision, but in terms of individuals' "ability" and "potential" capabilities. This approach provides a strong theoretical foundation for evaluating social policies, particularly for elderly and disabled individuals. According to Sen, the crucial factor is the extent to which the resources provided enable individuals to participate effectively and meaningfully in social life.

Accessible transportation services, psychosocial support programs, social living spaces, and care services offered by local governments align with the capability approach when they aim not only to protect elderly individuals but also to support their participation in social life as active citizens. In this context, municipal services for elderly and disabled individuals can be considered interventions that increase their capacity to maintain daily living practices, preserve social relationships, and exist in the public sphere.

Today, the ageing population and increasing care needs make the role of local governments in social policy more visible. In rapidly changing metropolitan areas, particularly Istanbul, local social policy practices, initially focused on services for people with disabilities, have expanded over time to include older people. This expansion signals a shift from aid-based approaches to service models focused on social support and inclusion. The main objective of this study is to analyze changes in local governments' service approaches towards disabled and elderly individuals, based on activity reports from different districts of Istanbul for 2019 and 2024. In this context, quantitative and qualitative changes in service delivery are examined comparatively, centring on the concepts of "disabled," "non-disabled," "old age," "ageing," "social life," and "disadvantaged." The study aims to reveal how local social policies are being reshaped within the framework of the welfare state approach and the capabilities perspective. In line with this theoretical and conceptual framework, the research methodology, data set, and analysis process will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study was designed within a qualitative research framework, and document analysis was used. Qualitative research offers research designs grounded in understanding and interpretation, allowing for in-depth examination of social phenomena within their natural contexts. Document analysis is one of the fundamental qualitative data collection techniques that enables the systematic examination of written and visual materials to make inferences about social processes, institutional orientations, and policy practices. The main reason for choosing the document analysis technique in this study is that it enables monitoring of the transformation of local governments' social policy approaches towards disabled and elderly individuals over time through official and institutional documents. Municipal activity reports are among the basic policy documents reflecting the priority areas, service scopes, target groups, and institutional discourses of local governments. In this respect, these reports are considered reliable and comparable data sources in social policy analyses.

2.2 Data Collection Process

The dataset for this study consists of the activity reports of 12 district municipalities in Istanbul, which exhibit diversity in terms of socio-economic, demographic, and spatial characteristics, for the years 2019 and 2024. The municipalities examined in this study are: Ataşehir, Bakırköy, Beşiktaş, Büyükçekmece, Eyüp Sultan, Fatih, Kadıköy, Maltepe, Sultanbeyli, Sultangazi, Ümraniye, and Üsküdar. These districts were selected using purposive sampling because of their locations across different regions of Istanbul and their diverse socio-political profiles. Purposive sampling is an approach in which the researcher deliberately selects units that are believed to possess the most relevant information for the study's objective (Patton, 2015).

The activity reports included in the analysis were obtained from publicly available documents on the municipalities' official websites. Only approved activity reports for the relevant years, for which full text was available, were used in the study; incomplete, summarised, or draft documents were excluded from the analysis. This situation was considered a conscious limitation aimed at increasing the validity and reliability of the research.

2.3 Data Analysis Process

In this study, the document analysis process was carried out using a three-stage framework aligned with the systematic stages outlined in the literature. This framework aims to reveal the transformation in local governments' social policy approaches towards disabled and elderly individuals between 2019 and 2024, holistically and comparatively.

In the first stage, a conceptual scan was performed. In this context, the municipal activity reports examined were evaluated through pre-reading on services for disabled and elderly individuals, which is the primary focus of the study. A systematic content scan was conducted in the reports based on key concepts such as "disabled", "elderly", "old age", "social life", "care", "accessibility", "home care", "active ageing" and "social support". The aim in this stage is not only to determine quantitative service data, but also to make visible the institutional discourses, priority areas and target group definitions of local governments regarding service delivery. The contexts in which the concepts are used and how they have acquired a semantic framework over time have been analyzed.

In the second stage, a comparative analysis method was used. Accordingly, the service capacity, service types, and target groups included in the 2019 activity reports were compared with the goals, practices, and achievements stated in the 2024 reports. Through this comparison, it was evaluated whether the social policy practices of local governments, shaped around services for individuals with disabilities, have shown expansion, transformation, or

continuity in their inclusion of elderly individuals over time. Thus, the trends and change tendencies of local social policies over time were analytically revealed.

In the third stage, the collected data were analyzed using thematic classification. Municipal services were categorized under three main themes:

- (i) physical infrastructure and accessibility,
- (ii) psycho-social support services, and
- (iii) specialized health and care services. This thematic framework enabled a comparative evaluation of the scope of services for both disabled and elderly individuals, and systematically highlighted which service areas local governments prioritize.

In the final stage of the analysis process, the findings were interpreted in light of the social policy, sociology, and gerontology literature. Structural trends in local government services for elderly and disabled individuals were addressed holistically. To limit researcher subjectivity, data were evaluated directly from statements in reports and concrete service examples; in-text findings supported the interpretations. This approach is among the fundamental principles that strengthen analytical transparency and interpretability in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009).

2.4. Methodological Limitations

This study has some methodological limitations. Firstly, the research is limited only to the activity reports published by municipalities. Since activity reports are institutional statements, problems encountered in practice, the effectiveness of services, or the experiences of individuals benefiting from the service cannot be directly evaluated through these documents. This situation shows that the study's findings reflect the official policy and service-delivery perspectives of local governments.

Secondly, the reports analysed were prepared by different municipalities and do not have a standardised structure for reporting, language, scope, or level of detail. This situation has led to some service areas being addressed at different levels of detail among municipalities. However, this limitation has been mitigated mainly by identifying common themes in the comparative analysis.

Finally, the study is limited to specific district municipalities in Istanbul, and the findings are not directly generalizable to all local governments in Turkey. However, given Istanbul's socio-demographic diversity, the study offers important clues into local social policy trends.

The main aim of this study is to reveal how the social policy approaches of local governments, shaped around services for disabled individuals,

have transformed to include elderly individuals between 2019 and 2024. This analysis, conducted through the activity reports of Istanbul district municipalities, aims to evaluate the extent of expansion of local social policies in the field of ageing, the range of services, and institutional priorities.

In this regard, the findings show that, over time, the social policy practices developed by local governments within the framework of services for disabled individuals have begun to address, more visibly, the participation of elderly individuals in social life, their care needs, and their psychosocial support needs. In the next section, the findings obtained from the thematic analysis will be discussed in detail under the headings of physical infrastructure and accessibility, psychosocial support, and specialized health services.

3. Findings and Analysis

The activity reports of Istanbul district municipalities for the period 2019–2024 reveal that local social policies have not only expanded quantitatively but have also undergone a qualitative transformation from needs-based aid to rights-based and specialized service models. The findings show that municipalities have shifted from care-oriented approaches in their services for disabled and elderly individuals to holistic policies that prioritize social participation and quality of life.

3.1. Transition from Traditional Social Assistance to Specialised Service Models

When the 2019 activity reports are examined, it is evident that services for disabled and elderly individuals are primarily focused on basic social assistance, such as wheelchair provision, hospital beds, adult diapers, hot meals, and transportation services. During this period, services focused on meeting individuals' immediate and physical needs, while the social, psychological, and environmental dimensions were addressed only to a limited extent.

By 2024, however, this understanding of the service has changed significantly. It has been determined that municipalities have developed specialized centres and service models that address not only individuals' physical needs but also their social, mental, and environmental well-being. Structures such as "life offices," "barrier-free living centres," and "sensory integration centres" indicate that social policy is shifting from a care-oriented approach to one that aligns with the goals of active ageing and self-sufficiency.

3.2. From Spatial Accessibility to an Inclusive City Approach

In the 2019 reports, the concept of "barrier-free" was primarily limited to sidewalk ramps, stair arrangements, and physical access improvements. Spatial accessibility has primarily been viewed as a technical necessity.

The 2024 findings, however, show that accessibility is being addressed within the framework of inclusive urban design, going beyond physical arrangements. Parks, market areas, public spaces, and transportation services are being redesigned to enable elderly and disabled individuals to live independently. This transformation reveals that accessibility is conceptualized not only as an infrastructure issue but also as a prerequisite for social participation.

3.3. “Active Ageing” and Psycho-Social Support in Ageing Policies

In 2019, services for elderly individuals were mainly limited to home cleaning, personal care, and basic health support. These services position elderly individuals as passive recipients.

The 2024 reports, however, show that the concepts of active ageing and ageing in place have been institutionalized in ageing policy. The proliferation of social living homes, the increase in cultural and artistic activities, and the support of the digital skills of the elderly stand out as important developments that strengthen the ties of elderly individuals with social life. Alzheimer’s centres and psychosocial support programs for caregivers demonstrate that ageing policy is evolving into a holistic approach that includes not only the individual but also family members involved in the care process.

3.4. Data-Based Social Policy and Digitalisation

Another noteworthy aspect of the findings is the strengthening of the data-based management approach in the planning of social services. While services were presented primarily through the number of activities in the 2019 reports, the 2024 reports emphasize social investigation reports, needs maps, and digital tracking systems as decisive. This shows that social assistance is structured in an evidence-based, goal-oriented manner rather than randomly.

3.5. Social and Economic Empowerment for Disadvantaged Groups

Another significant transformation in local governments’ social policies is the positioning of disadvantaged groups not only as recipients of aid but also as productive individuals participating in social life. Social entrepreneurship, employment support, and cooperative models highlight the economic empowerment dimension of social policy. This approach demonstrates that local governments consider social policy not merely as short-term support mechanisms, but as a tool for sustainable social integration.

3.6. Social Policy Transformation with Data

The thematic findings presented in the previous section, based on qualitative document analysis, describe the direction and content of the transformation in local governments’ understanding of social policy. In this section, this transformation is concretized through quantitative data and

comparative indicators. The tables below show the change in service capacity of Istanbul district municipalities between 2019 and 2024, revealing how social assistance has evolved from needs-based, temporary support models to service approaches focused on accessibility, specialisation, and digitalisation.

In this context, the transformation in food aid and social support models is first discussed; then, the digitalization of service delivery, the expansion of targeting capacity, and the strengthening of rights-based social support mechanisms are evaluated comparatively.

The tables in this section present quantitative indicators of service delivery for Istanbul district municipalities between 2019 and 2024, in a comparative manner. Using the tables, the transformation in local governments' understanding of social assistance and social services can be monitored concretely through service capacity, targeting methods, and specialization levels. In particular, the transition from "needs-based" and short-term support models to service approaches focused on accessibility, specialization, and social innovation is supported by quantitative data.

The tables below show the change in service capacity between 2019 and 2024 and the transition from a "needs-based" approach to an "accessibility and specialization" focused approach.

3.6.1. Food Aid and Social Support Models

While food aid was generally provided through physical parcel distribution in 2019, it has shifted mainly in 2024 to a digital model through Social Support Cards and Social Markets.

Table 1: Food Aid and Social Support Models

Municipality	2019 Food Aid	2024 Social Support	Change Trend
Büyükçekmece	1,450 Family	18,832 Family	1198% increase; massive capacity increase.
Sultanbeyli	5,166 Family	9,348 Family	Transition from parcel delivery to Social Market.
Eyüpsultan	13,119 Packages	44,155 Family	Inclusiveness of the service has increased.

Beyond the quantitative increase in food aid, the change in methods is noteworthy. For example, the fact that Sultanbeyli Municipality made cash payments amounting to 82,264,534 TL in 2024 is a result of the "social rights" based approach that enables disadvantaged individuals to meet their own needs with dignity. This table shows that social support practices, which were mainly carried out through physical food parcel distribution in 2019, have

evolved into more flexible models that take individual preferences into account, such as Social Support Cards and Social Markets, as of 2024. Quantitative data indicate that social aid has undergone a significant transformation not only in the volume of distribution but also in the method of delivery and the logic of access.

3.6.2. Capacity and Specialization in Patient Transportation Services

While patient transportation services were only seen as transportation support in 2019, the 2024 reports show that these services have been integrated into the Ministry of Health systems (ASOS) and are carried out with more technically equipped vehicles.

Table 2: Capacity and Specialization in Patient Transportation Services

Municipality	2019 Patient Transfer Numbers	2024 Patient Transfer Numbers	Notes
Sultanbeyli	1,654 Trips	2,436 Trips	328 days of uninterrupted service.
Kadıköy	13,930 Total Procedures	6,291 Total Procedures	Transformation focused on home care and on-site intervention.
Büyükçekmece	3,402 Transfers	3,843 Transfers	Including oncology and disability transport.
Üsküdar	-	8,233 Ambulance Services	Average monthly transport capacity of 900.

By 2024, transportation services, especially for bedridden elderly and dialysis patients, had become one of the most in-demand and invested-in areas for municipalities. Data on patient transportation services show that municipalities significantly increased their capacity in this area during the 2019–2024 period. However, beyond quantitative increase, the table reveals that services have been restructured with specialized tools, planned referral systems, and a continuous care chain approach. This indicates that local governments have begun to take on a more professional role in health and care services.

3.6.3. Number of Psychological Counselling Sessions

Psychological support services have become a critical tool for disadvantaged groups to participate in “social life”.

Table 3: Number of Psychological Counselling Sessions

Municipality	2019 Session/Client Number	Number of Sessions/ Clients in 2024	Area of Expertise
Ataşehir	2,227 Children (Psychological Support)	1,691 Sessions (Youth-Focused)	Addiction treatment and adolescence. Online psychotherapy and online counselling.
Eyüpsultan	2,593 Sessions	1,181 Individuals (Various Therapy Types)	100% goal achievement rate.
Fatih	-	6,955 Sessions	Holistic mental health approach.
Üsküdar	-	6,135 Interventions (Assistant Healthcare Personnel)	Area of Expertise

The session numbers in this table indicate that social policy is directed not only to physical needs but also to mental health and psychosocial support. Data from 2024 shows that psychological counselling services have become institutionalized, and support mechanisms, especially for elderly individuals and caregivers, have become widespread. This trend supports the idea that social services are delivered holistically.

3.6.4. Transition from Traditional Social Assistance to Social Innovation

Table 4 summarises the most significant transformation in local governments' understanding of social policy. While passive aid models were more prominent in 2019, by 2024, digitalization, data-driven planning, social entrepreneurship, and innovative service models had gained prominence. Quantitative indicators show that social policy is evolving from a short-term aid approach to a sustainable, empowering structure.

Table 4: Transition from Traditional Social Assistance to Social Innovation

Municipality	Project	Contents	Scope
Beşiktaş	65+ Life Office and Gerontomimari Consulting This project demonstrates that elderly care services are transforming into a model focused not just on "care" but on "active and in-situ ageing".	Established in 2024, this office employs gerontologists, architects, and podologists. Their "gerontomimari consulting" service, particularly offered to individuals aged 75 and over who live alone, involves spatial arrangements to reduce the risk of falls in the homes of the elderly.	Digital Inclusion: Additionally, 234 individuals aged 65 and over received 8 weeks of digital literacy training, supporting their access to technology.

Kadıköy	<p>Alzheimer's Centres and the "Mindful Care" Model</p> <p>In Kadıköy, the district in Istanbul with the oldest population, Alzheimer's services have gained clinical depth.</p>	<p>Holistic Service:</p> <p>Neuropsychological tests and mental rehabilitation sessions are administered to patients at the 19 May and Göztepe Alzheimer Centres.</p>	<p>Caregiver Support:</p> <p>The project's vision is to focus not only on the patient but also on their caregivers. In 2024, "Becoming a Mindful Caregiver" and "Psychological Resilience" training were provided to patient relatives, strengthening the mental health dimension of social policy.</p>
Maltepe	<p>Maltepe95 and "Produce and Earn" Projects</p> <p>These are innovative models developed to enable disadvantaged groups to participate in economic and social life.</p>	<p>Maltepe95:</p> <p>This project, developed for children aged 0-3 and their parents, aims to improve parenting skills in impoverished families by viewing child development from the perspective of "a child's height of 95 cm".</p>	<p>Economic Empowerment: As part of the "Produce and Earn" project, stalls were set up at the Centre for Disabled Individuals (Ants Workshop) to sell handicrafts made by disabled children, thereby supporting the "producer" identity of disadvantaged individuals.</p>
Eyüp Sultan	<p>Barrier-Free Living Centre (EYM)</p> <p>This is an example of a shift in the disability field from a "helped" profile to a "self-sufficient" profile.</p>	<p>Education Focus: The centre offers a wide range of rehabilitation and hand skills training for children and young people with disabilities, including music therapy and computer training. In 2024, 126 students benefited from these specialized training programs [as mentioned in the sources as part of EYM's general activities].</p>	

Sultanbeyli	Data-Driven Smart Governance at the Local Level It is a model for managing social assistance programs using “needs maps” and scientific data.	Data-Driven Transformation: To identify the changing needs of citizens, the “Data-Based Smart Governance Project at the Local Level” has been launched. Within this scope, in 2024, a “Good Practice Examples Research” was conducted on 17 themes (elderly, disabled, women, etc.) and social policies were integrated into the 12th Development Plan.	
Üsküdar	Üsküdar Employment Center (ÜSİM) and Nevmekânlar They are visionary spaces that combine social life and economic participation.	Employment: Through ÜSİM, all citizens, including disadvantaged groups, are supported in entering the workforce.	Social Life: Nevmekânlar (Sahil, Enderun, etc.) serve as intergenerational cultural centres where the elderly and young people come together.

Conclusion and Evaluation

The example of Istanbul district municipalities from 2019–2024 reveals that local social policies have undergone a significant transformation not only in service volume but also in approach and orientation. The findings show that municipalities’ practices towards disabled and elderly individuals are moving away from traditional aid-based models towards a more inclusive, preventive, and rights-based approach to social policy. This transformation is concretized by the fact that disabled and elderly individuals are now considered not as “needy” individuals, but as citizens with rights.

The activity reports examined in this study show that active ageing, on-site services, accessibility, and specialization are increasingly gaining a central position in local governments’ understanding of social services. This situation reveals that old age and disability are not only seen as conditions requiring care and assistance, but also as life stages and experiences in which the individual’s participation in social life should be supported. Social housing, Alzheimer’s centres, life offices, and psychosocial support services, in particular, stand out as institutional reflections of this shift in understanding.

From a discussion perspective, this transformation shows that local governments are redefining their roles as local implementers of the welfare state. The consolidation of social services under independent directorates, the use of data-driven planning tools, and the digitalization of services indicate

that social policy is moving away from temporary, reactive interventions and toward a strategic, sustainable structure. In this context, local governments are becoming not only implementers of central policies but also actors who generate their own social policy agendas.

On the other hand, the findings also show that social policy is increasingly being addressed within a more holistic framework. The integrated approach to health, care, psychosocial support, spatial arrangements, and digital access services reveals that the life experiences of disabled and elderly individuals are evaluated in a multidimensional way. This approach is important because it shows that social services have a broad impact, encompassing not only the individual but also caregivers, family, and the immediate environment.

However, it should not be overlooked that this transformation is not occurring at the same speed and depth in all districts. The findings reveal that some municipalities are more advanced in specialized service models and data-driven management, while others still maintain a structure heavily focused on basic assistance. This situation demonstrates that institutional capacity, budgetary resources, and administrative priorities are decisive in shaping local social policies.

In conclusion, as of 2024, local governments in Istanbul have made significant progress towards a more inclusive, preventive, and sustainable social policy approach in services for disabled and elderly individuals. This process shows that social policy production at the local level has strengthened, and that municipalities' capacity to adapt to the ageing structure of society has increased. The study reveals that this transformation in the field of social policy by local governments provides an important foundation for future, more balanced, rights-based, and participatory urban policies.

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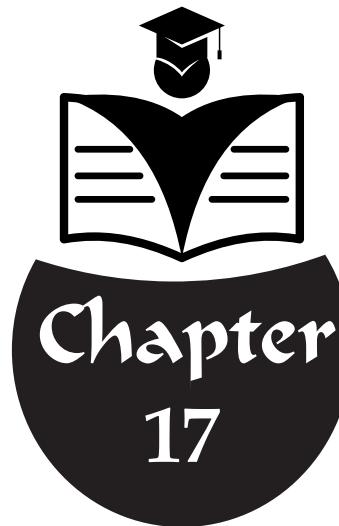
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REPRESENTATION OF AFGHAN IMMIGRANTS IN IRANIAN CINEMA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, Iranian cinema has established a cinematic tradition that has attracted international attention with its narrative language developed around social realism. This cinematic approach aims to make visible structural problems such as social exclusion, identity crisis, and marginalization, while addressing the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of Iranian society (Adelkhah & Olszewska, 1987; Deb, 2020). In this context, the living conditions, identity struggles, and social integration problems of Afghan migrants in Iran are among the prominent themes in Iranian cinema. The Afghan migration, which accelerated especially after the 1979 Soviet invasion, has become a permanent social phenomenon in Iran, encompassing millions of people; however, this process has also brought with it problems such as precarious work, poverty, and legal exclusion for migrants (ANU Press, 2008).

The position of Afghan migrants in Iranian society is mostly defined by illegal or unregistered, low-wage, and precarious labor conditions; This situation deepens their social marginalization (Farzin, 2020). Iranian cinema reflects this reality with a critical perspective, focusing on the invisibility, identity conflicts, and belonging issues of migrants. Forced migration processes triggered by challenging conditions such as natural disasters, wars, and environmental destruction separate individuals not only from their physical spaces but also from their social belongings; deepening the vulnerability of migrants. In this respect, migration should be considered not only as an economic or political crisis, but also as a humanitarian and structural crisis (Dashti, 2021; Castles & Miller, 2008).

The aim of this study is to analyze the representations of Afghan migrants in Iranian cinema and to examine the reflections of the problems of identity construction and social integration of migrants in cinema. In this regard, the films *The Cyclist* (1987, Mohsen Makhmalbaf), *Djomeh* (2000, Hassan Yektapanah), and *Baran* (2001, Majid Majidi), which offer important examples in terms of Afghan migrant representations, were selected using purposive sampling method. The films were examined within the framework of narrative structure, character development, and immigration themes, analyzing the economic exploitation, social exclusion, and identity crises experienced by Afghan migrants. Makhmalbaf's *The Cyclist* metaphorically depicts the struggle for survival of an Afghan migrant who cycles for days to save his wife wounded in the war, highlighting the extraordinary costs migrants face in order to become visible (Nader, 2019). Yektapanah's *Djomeh* centers on a young Afghan man working in the countryside and his search for belonging and acceptance, highlighting the social and cultural dimensions of migration (Azimi, 2017). Majidi's *Baran*, on the other hand, treats migrant identity as an individual experience, subtly making visible the ethnic and gender-based exclusion of Afghan women (Fairclough, 1995).

Although all three films mostly represent Afghan migrants as victimized and passive figures, they highlight their human aspects, enabling the viewer to empathize with them. However, the fact that representations are mostly limited to individual stories and do not include practices of collective resistance or solidarity reveals the limitations of immigrant representations in Iranian cinema. This study aims to analyze how the phenomenon of immigration is interpreted through cinema and the effects of these representations on social perceptions by examining the representations of Afghan immigrants in Iranian cinema in a multifaceted way.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Model

This study examines the identity and integration problems of Afghan migrants in Iran through the representations of Afghans in Iranian cinema. The research employs document analysis, a qualitative research method. Accordingly, three films—Baran, Djomeh, and The Cyclist—were selected using purposive sampling because they focus on the social and cultural problems experienced by Afghan migrants. Content analysis was applied to selected scenes from these films to achieve the research objective. During the analysis, character representations, spatial uses, and symbolic elements in the plot were analyzed; how migrant characters are represented and the ideological background of these representations were discussed (Fairclough, 1995). As a result of the content analysis, similar examples were juxtaposed and coded, and themes were formed from these codes. In this process, the visibility of Afghan migrants in Iranian cinema, their roles in the formation of social perception, and their impact on cultural integration were evaluated in depth. Thanks to this approach, cinematic texts have been considered not only as aesthetic products but also as socio-cultural and political discourse spaces. Thus, how the experiences of migration are represented through cinema has been analyzed in a multifaceted way, both in the context of individual identity construction and social integration (Hall, 1997).

2.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, the process of data analysis and interpretation was carried out through three selected films on the representation of Afghan migrants in Iranian cinema, and the findings were evaluated from a holistic perspective. First, the narrative structures, fictional frameworks, and thematic focuses of the films were examined to reveal how Afghan migrants are represented in economic, social, and cultural contexts. In the analysis process, the forms of exclusion experienced by migrants, identity construction processes, search for belonging, and experiences of invisibility were addressed at both individual and social levels. In the productions examined, the economic dimension of migration is conveyed through a symbolic language via the heavy costs endured

for survival; while the process of individualization of identity is dealt with through the theme of human transformation. The social dimension is reflected through the search for belonging, the difficulties of cultural adaptation, and the visibility of practices of othering. During the interpretation phase, it was found that representations of migrants are mostly shaped around victimhood and passivity; themes of collective resistance, organization, or empowerment are only partially present. However, some productions break stereotypes and offer an empathy-based narrative, thus highlighting the human aspects of Afghan migrants. The analysis results show that in Iranian cinema, Afghan migrants are positioned both as a reflection of societal perception and as figures with the potential to transform this perception. In this context, cinema is considered a dual-directional representational space that can both reproduce prejudices and strengthen empathy and social sensitivity.

3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Analysis of the Film *Cyclist* (1987) in the Context of Afghan Migrants

Mohsen Makhmalbaf's film *Cyclist* (1987) addresses the invisibility, economic exploitation, and degrading living conditions of Afghan migrants in Iranian society through an allegorical narrative. Through the desperate struggle of Afghan refugee Nasim to treat his sick wife, the film reveals that migration is not only a spatial displacement but also a process of physical and psychological destruction.



Figure 3.1. Nasim Meeting His Wife in the Hospital (*The Cyclist*, 1987)

The film opens with Nasim's daily labor: an immigrant who works hard all day and silently waits by his sick wife's bedside in the evenings. This silence sets the emotional axis of the film. A short but intense dialogue with his wife sets Nasim's entire story in motion:

- Wife: "Nasim... the medicines aren't enough anymore."
- Nasim: "I'll find them. No matter the cost."
- Wife: "Don't waste yourself... Not for me."
- Nasim (with firm determination): "If you live, I will live too."

This statement transforms Nasim's act of cycling from merely a way to earn money into an existential resistance. The immigrant's will to survive becomes a necessity fueled by love. Nasim's encounter with a bookmaker reveals the film's central moral conflict. For the bookmaker, Nasim is not a human being, but a body to be observed:

- Bookmaker: "If you cycle for seven days, you'll earn the money needed for your wife's treatment."
- Nasim: "Seven days without stopping?"
- Gambler (with a sarcastic smile): "Seven days, seven nights."
- Nasim (thinking silently): "Are they going to watch my suffering?"
- Gambler: "Everything in life is a spectacle, my friend."

This dialogue shows how migrant labor is commodified and how human life is turned into entertainment. Nasim is both a figure struggling for his family and an "object of spectacle" instrumentalized by the system.



Figure 3.2. Nasim Begins Riding a Bicycle (The Cyclist, 1987)

As the race progresses, the crowd grows, the enthusiasm intensifies; however, Nasim's body gradually withers. While the spectators watch his suffering with applause, the tragedy of immigration turns into a "spectacle of suffering." His response to a spectator's warning summarizes this situation:

- Spectator: "Stop now! There's a limit to money!"
- Nasim: "That's not my limit."

From the fourth day onwards, Nasim oscillates between reality and fantasy. His wife's voice is heard as a symbol of conscience and limits:

- Wife's voice: "Nasim, enough. Come home."
- Nasim: "This is home now. As long as the wheel keeps turning, I still exist."

This scene strikingly reveals the immigrant's placelessness and lack of belonging. For Nasim, home is no longer a fixed place; it is the cycle itself that consumes his body.

When the seventh day arrives, the gambler's words express the film's harshest criticism:

- Gambler: "Even death is a spectacle."

This sentence symbolizes how human life is devalued within the capitalist system and how the migrant body is transformed into an absolute object of exploitation. Nasim's refusal to let go of the pedal represents the last vestige of human dignity:

– Nasim (whispers to himself): "Turn... turn... if you stop, everything will be over..."

In the film's finale, the camera rises; the crowd fades, the bicycle continues to turn. It is unclear whether Nasim is alive or dead. This uncertainty points to the endless cycle of migrant labor: to work, to endure, and to remain invisible.

The Cyclist is a powerful cinematic narrative that criticizes the alienation of human labor, social exclusion, and the modern "spectator society" in the context of Afghan migration. The character of Nasim is neither glorified as a hero nor as a tragic figure; he is the silent representation of millions left outside the system. Makhmalbaf leaves the viewer with an open question:

When do we watch a person's suffering with empathy, and when with a spectacle of pleasure?

3.2 Analysis of the Film Djomeh (2000) in the Context of Afghan Migrants

Hasan Yekta Panah's film Djomeh addresses the silent, invisible, and constantly tested nature of migration through the daily struggle of Cuma,

an Afghan migrant living on a rural farm in Iran. Instead of grand dramatic events, the film makes visible the fragile position of Afghan migrants in Iranian society through everyday relationships, small tensions, and unfinished conversations. Cuma's silence is not a passive acceptance, but rather an existential strategy developed to avoid deepening exclusion. The gossip-based dialogue at the beginning of the film clearly reveals the migrant's "guilty from the start" position within society:

- Habib: "Juma, Juma, you went to a sorcerer."
- Cuma: "I didn't go."
- Habib: "They saw you go."
- Cuma: "I didn't go for myself, I went for someone else."
- Habib: "Didn't he have legs, that you went?"
- Cuma: "He needed them."

This short conversation shows that Cuma is a figure who constantly has to explain himself. His immigrant identity makes him suspicious from the start; even a well-intentioned act turns into rumor and surveillance. Throughout the film, Cuma's calm and defensive language silently carries the daily pressures of immigration.



Figure 3.3. Dialogue between Friday and the business owner (*Djomeh*, 2000)

The relationship between Cuma and the farm owner, Mahmut Bey, represents the class and hierarchical dimensions of migrant labor. Mahmut Bey is not an overt tyrant; however, his "well-intentioned" attitude does not eliminate inequality:

- Mahmut Bey: "Close the door, don't let the cows escape... How are you?"
- Habib: "Hello, how are you? Check the car, check the water."
- Mahmut Bey: "Load the goods quickly, I'm in a hurry."

In these scenes, Cuma's silence defines the migrant's place within the system: obedience, not speaking, is acceptable. Cuma's interest in the young girl working at the grocery store is less a romantic love story and more an expression of his desire for belonging and a normal life. However, this desire is constantly hindered by invisible social boundaries. The scene where migrant labor is regulated not only by physical but also by moral and hygienic standards clearly reveals this situation:

- Cuma: "I'm a worker, my clothes were dirty, I don't want anyone to say 'your clothes are dirty.' It's better for you if I dress cleanly in livestock farming. The Ministry of Health won't fine you."
- Mahmut Bey: "Thank you for thinking of me."

This dialogue shows that Cuma is obligated not only to work but also to constantly legitimize himself. Mahmut Bey's polite response softens the relationship; however, it does not produce equality.

Cuma's identity is deliberately left ambiguous throughout the film. The lack of details about his past emphasizes that migration is not an individual story but a structural experience. This becomes even more apparent in the conversation about marriage and age:

- Cuma: "In Afghanistan, girls and boys have to marry before the age of 20. If they don't marry, gossip will spread."
- Mahmut: "You're over 20, unmarried, did they spread rumors about you too?"
- Cuma: "They spread rumors about me too... But I can't tell everything."

The phrase "I can't tell everything" symbolizes the traumas the migrant carries but cannot express. Instead of dramatizing this silence, the film chooses to leave it incomplete, thus strengthening the untold aspect of migration. The short conversation in the grocery store simply summarizes the economic and social position of Afghan migrants in Iran:

- Customer: "How much is your daily wage?"
- Cuma: "Thirty Tuman isn't enough."
- Customer: "Does that save you?"
- Cuma: "We're workers, we have no choice."

- Customer: "You must be sending money to your family."
- Cuma: "We're convinced. There's a war there."

This dialogue shows that the migrant's life, as well as their labor, becomes an object of scrutiny. The expressions "we are forced" and "we are convinced" emphasize that migration is not a choice, but a necessary form of survival. The film's moral core is crystallized by a short dialogue between Cuma and Habib:

- Habib: "Bring your money to the bank, the interest is high."
- Cuma: "My words are not for money, but for humanity."

For Cuma, labor is not only a means of livelihood, but also a way to remain human. However, the film clearly shows that this moral stance does not find a response within the system.

The use of space concretizes the migrant's inability to settle down. Areas such as the barn, shed, and road are necessary stopping points where Cuma sustains his life; however, they never become "home." The desire to turn the shed into a home represents the yearning to put down roots; The bureaucratic barrier invalidates this desire from the outset:

- Cuma: "When Habib goes to Afghanistan, I'll clean the room on the roof. One side will be a workplace, the other a home."
- Mahmut Bey: "The Ministry of Health will come and say this can't be a home."

This scene shows that the immigrant is allowed to work; but not to stay permanently. Djomeh presents Afghan immigration not so much as physical movement, but as an experience of not settling down, knowing the boundaries, and silently withdrawing. The film leaves the audience with the question of Cuma's place becoming unclear in the final scene:

Can an immigrant truly "belong," no matter how much he adapts?

Cuma's love is expressed in its most naked and vulnerable form in the grocery store scene. This scene is a decisive turning point in the film's dramatic structure:

- Cuma: "I come here to shop, but for another reason. If you allow it, I will send Mahmut Bey to your father to ask for your hand in marriage."
- Grocery Store Girl: "They took your bicycle, children."

This abrupt and indifferent response shows that Cuma's most serious and sincere confession about his life is interrupted by a mundane detail. The scene symbolizes not only a rejection, but also the fact that the immigrant's emotional world is not taken seriously by society. Cuma's love is not reciprocated here, nor is it explicitly rejected; it is ignored and dissolved into

ordinariness. This reveals that not only the immigrant's labor, but also his emotions, are perceived as "superfluous."



Figure 3.4. *The grocery store girl that Friday falls in love with* (Djomeh, 2000)

From this point on, the film offers the viewer neither a happy nor a tragic ending. Instead, it emphasizes the continuity of migration. Cuma's story is not completed; he is merely withdrawn from the narrative frame. His silent withdrawal is less an individual defeat and more an acceptance of a structural impasse. Thus, the film strongly conveys that migration is not a temporary situation, but a permanent state of existence.

Djomeh portrays Afghan migration not through extraordinary tragedies or dramatic explosions, but through the silent, repetitive moments of everyday life. The absence of grand events is not a deficiency, but a conscious aesthetic and ethical choice. Through ordinary actions such as digging wells, tending to animals, and wandering through the market, the film represents the unending weariness and invisibility of migration; it invites the viewer to a slow and lasting awareness rather than sudden emotional reactions. Although Cuma is at the center of the narrative, he is not placed in the classic cinematic "victim" or "resistance hero" molds. His silence is not passivity, but a survival strategy. There is no overt rebellion; however, the exclusionary and hierarchical structure of the system is felt in every scene. The film makes visible the invisible labor and constantly postponed humanity of the migrant through this silent existence. The question left to the viewer at the end of the film is ethically crucial:

Is accepting a person limited to feeling pity for them, or does it require recognizing them as a truly equal subject?

Djomeh implies that pity often produces a hierarchical relationship, while showing that equality is a much more difficult but genuine confrontation. In

this respect, the film positions migration not only as the migrant's problem, but also as a moral test for the society that observes and lives alongside them. With its silent narrative, it offers a profound ethical reckoning that forces the viewer to question their own comfort zone.

3.3 Analysis of the Film Baran (2001) in the Context of Afghan Migrants

Majid Majidi's film Baran (2001) depicts the lives of Afghan migrants living in Iran not through great tragedies, but through silent ruptures, daily labor, and invisible boundaries. In the film, Afghan workers represent an "invisible" community working without identity, without security, and under the constant threat of inspection. This invisibility is established not only at the social level but also cinematographically; the camera often shows Afghan workers as figures fading into the crowd. The construction site, with its unfinished structure, becomes the spatial equivalent of the migrants' suspended lives. The fact that Afghan workers are referred to not by their names but by their ethnic affiliations clearly reveals that migration has turned into an erasure of identity. This exclusion is concretized in the foreman's words:

- Foreman: "A man without an identity cannot work here. If the inspector comes, we'll all be ruined."

This dialogue shows that identity has ceased to be a human right and has become a condition for being able to work and exist. The invisible pressure of the state is constantly felt through the figure of the inspector. The Afghan workers' panic and escape at the slightest rumor of an inspection makes visible the persistent fear inherent in migration:

- Afghan Worker: "They're coming... Hide!"

They're taking away those without identification." The ambiguity of the phrase "being taken away" deepens the invisibility of even the migrant's fate. In this respect, the film treats migration not as a temporary problem, but as a continuous form of existence; it does not offer a narrative of solution or liberation.



Figure 3.5. *Latif's identity dialogue (Baran, 2001)*

The revelation that the character we know as Rahmet is actually Baran, an Afghan girl, is one of the film's most powerful turning points. Baran's act of disguising herself as a man and working in her father's place symbolizes a system where survival is only possible by concealing one's identity. For Afghan immigrant women, this creates a double invisibility: being both an immigrant and a woman. Baran's silence is not passivity, but a strategy of self-preservation and survival. Najaf's warning clearly expresses this fragility:

– Najaf: “Don’t speak, Baran... If your voice is heard, everything will be over.”

This statement shows that even speaking and being visible means danger for the immigrant. Majidi's use of mirrors and reflections allows Baran's identity to be revealed indirectly, rather than directly, reinforcing the “unseen but felt” nature of immigration at a cinematic level. The character of Latif establishes the film's moral dimension. Initially, Latif's distant attitude towards Afghan immigrants stems less from personal hatred and more from the competition created by the precarious labor system:

– Latif: “I’ve been here for years. Am I going to lose my place just because an Afghan has arrived?”

The transformation Latif experiences upon learning Baran's identity is not a sudden romantic change; it develops as a process of ethical realization. The shoemaker's words prepare the emotional ground for Latif's renunciation:

– Shoemaker: “He who lives alone becomes a neighbor to God... Separation is such a fire that its flame burns the heart.”

The ethical climax of the film is established when Latif dares to relinquish his identity:

- Latif: "Give them my identity. Let them go... I'll manage."

This sentence is not a temporary act of compassion; it signifies a conscious price paid to make equality possible. Latif demonstrates an ethical stance by relinquishing the invisible privileges afforded by being a native. The film's ending, with Afghan workers being fired due to increased controls and the Baran family being forced to leave, emphasizes that migration is a state of continuous separation:

- Najaf: "We cannot stay here. This land is not for us."



Figure 3.6. Closing scene of the film Baran (Baran, 2001)

The film ends neither with a happy reunion nor a great tragedy; silence and a sense of incompleteness prevail. In the scene where Latif stares after Baran, the question is left unanswered:

"Is it possible to truly accept a person by possessing them, or by being able to let go of them?"

In this context, Baran frames Afghan migration not only as a sociological problem but also as an ethical and humanitarian test. With its silent ending, the film reminds us not of the insolubility of migration, but of its continuity, and invites the viewer to a lasting questioning of conscience.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to reveal how migration is interpreted in cinematic narratives and how these representations intersect with social perceptions by examining the representations of Afghan migrants in Iranian cinema through the films *The Cyclist* (1987), *Djomeh* (2000), and *Baran* (2001). Despite being produced in different periods, these films address Afghan migrants with similar themes: economic exploitation, identity ambiguity, invisible labor, the search for belonging, and social exclusion. The findings show that Iranian cinema mostly represents Afghan migrants as silent, passive, and fragile figures; however, these representations carry a strong human and ethical sensitivity. *The Cyclist* most strikingly highlights the economic marginalization and exploitation of labor among Afghan migrants, while symbolically demonstrating that visibility for migrants is only possible at an extraordinary cost. *Baran* addresses migration on a more internal level, focusing on identity, belonging, and gender, and particularly highlighting the double oppression faced by Afghan female migrants. *Djomeh*, on the other hand, conveys the everyday, silent, and persistent ambiguity of migration through the state of being caught between acceptance and exclusion.

When these films are considered together, it is seen that Afghan migrants are mostly homogenized as poor, hardworking, and obedient figures; while collective identity, political consciousness, and resistance practices are represented only to a limited extent. While cinema makes migrants visible, it often positions them as subjects who are “narrated” but rarely “speak.” However, it cannot be ignored that the problems experienced by Afghan migrants have gained global visibility thanks to the international circulation of Iranian cinema. In conclusion, the study has revealed that the representations of Afghan migrants in Iranian cinema both carry critical potential and contain significant limitations in terms of subjectification.

The representation of Afghan migrants in the Iranian context is mostly established through a categorical status rather than individual subjectivity. The framing of Afghans as a “burden” or “threat” in media and state discourses is reproduced in cinematic narratives through micro-practices such as identity control, precarious work, and invisibility. In the film *Baran*, bureaucratic control mechanisms reveal the structural pressure of the state, which is not directly visible but shapes daily life.

Economic instrumentalization is concretized in the film *The Cyclist*, where the migrant’s body and labor are transformed into a spectacle. This symbolizes the marginalization of the migrant’s human value in the face of economic value. Similarly, practices of rendering invisible and silencing point to a common logic of representation across cinema, education, and digital media. The frequent presentation of Afghan migrants in cinema as

figures who dissolve into the crowd contributes to the weakening of public subjectification.

In the film Djomeh, the migrant experience is constructed through fragile individual efforts lacking strong social networks; this narrative deepens the isolating nature of migration. Although cinema softens discourses of security and threat with humanistic narratives, the limited space for collective subjectification and open resistance of Afghan characters stands out as one of the fundamental limitations of these representations.

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