

Islamic Patterns of Consumption

Uğur Kömeçoğlu

Under the relatively liberal administration of the Motherland Party (1983-1991) Turkey witnessed the introduction of a market economy and the privatization of the mass media. Opening up the economy to market forces accelerated the emergence of *nouveaux riches*. During this process Islamic groups were also able to develop their own middle and upper middle classes by using the advantages of engaging in business in an open market economic system. This upward social mobility helped them to form their own educated elite. Through secular and modern education, Islamic actors also succeeded in transforming newly-acquired economic capital into social and cultural capital. As a result of this *embourgeoisement*, consumption gained a prominent place among Islamic groups. They have come to take part in consumerism as much as other sections of society do.

The transformation of Islamism in Turkey from radical and political struggles to moral and cultural representations in everyday life can be linked to the new ethics of consumption among Islamic actors. Since the 1980s a Turkish Islamic movement has developed through the appropriation of political avenues of participation. However, some recent changes in the post-1990 period can be related to the accommodation of Islam to the market economy and consumer society. In other words, Islamism has been transformed from within. The Islamic appropriation of new forms of urban economic and cultural life has reshaped the movement. As they pursue their economic interests, Islamic actors interact with society at large. Especially in inclusionary contexts where upward social mobility prevails, Islamic entrepreneurs and middle classes participate and become visible within the given public sphere, on the one hand, and try to mould new public spaces of their own in conformity with the requirements of the Islamic faith and Islamic way of life, on the other. This engenders tension with the ideological and collective prerequisites of the movement. In a sense, Islamic actors who owe their presence and empowerment to collective movements, are in the process of borrowing from secular lifestyles as they adopt modern consumption practices. Turkish Islamism now expresses more and more the traits of this cultural movement.

However, this is not a simple process of assimilation to worldly lifestyles or capitalistic forces. Consumption is significant because people can exercise control over how they consume and invest a sense of identity in the process. Moreover, consumption may generate important divisions among cultural groups. Middle class Islamic groups use the consumer components of clothing, eating and drinking, vacation and so on to demarcate a lifestyle, to mark out their way of life in contrast to the secular others. Their construction of a sense of identity occurs as much through the use of consumer items as it does through body poli-

tics. Consumption involving the human body and its Islamization through new kinds of physical statements has considerable significance.

The suggestion that social classes are in part constituted through cultural practices, including patterns of consumption, is not a new one. Veblen's (1934) and Bourdieu's work (1984) remain some of the most comprehensive treatments of the topic, although there have been other studies of the middle classes which have explored how consumption practices or lifestyles have served to differentiate between social groupings (Savage et al. 1992).

In the broadest sense, consumption practices work to reinforce social hierarchies. Whether or not such practices have become more important than the economic class position is difficult to judge, and in any case, the answer would vary depending on the social group in question. The economistic approach to consumption explored the relationship between patterns of consumption and major economic classes. But in the context of Islamic morality we can shift our attention from economistic to social definitions of class. In the social sciences, developing from Weberian perspectives, the notion has emerged of social status groups using consumption patterns as a means of marking out their group identity. For the purpose of this study, Weber's concept of social status has considerable significance, since he formulated the concept of status as encompassing the influence of ideas, beliefs and values upon the formation of groups without losing sight of economic conditions.

Income levels are only one part of the explanation of the new patterns of consumption. Consumer items have become involved in the processes, which have a degree of autonomy from economic class or even traditional social status groups. In this vein, Bourdieu emphasized the symbolic aspects of consumption and linked it to the making of distinctions and the marking of differences between groups whose position is established both by their socio-economic position in the system of economic capital, and by their position in the systems which transmit and reproduce cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). These two systems are, however, regarded as linked but relatively independent of each other.

Yet traditionally, consumption has been seen as either a material process rooted in human needs, or an ideal practice, rooted in symbols, signs and codes. Bourdieu's *Distinction* sought to combine the importance of social status and patterns of consumption as a way of marking one way of life from another, with the idea that consumption involves signs and symbols, not only the satisfaction of different sets of needs. Here, Bourdieu may be seen as having attempted to combine the well-established economistic approach to consumption through notions of social status groups with the newer analytical approach to signs, symbols, ideas and cultures. Departing from this point, it can be argued that the asceticism of 1980s Islamism has broken down into an ethic which promotes consumption as a means of establishing new Islamic social and cultural statuses.

In the post-1990 period affluent Islamic social groups used their purchasing power to claim social status through the visible display of commodities signaling high social standing. Patterns of consumption among the Turkish Islamic middle classes radically changed and the intensity of this practice reached a qualitatively new stage. Cultural patterns and lifestyles associated with middle class consumption as markers of status have been attractive to the Islamic circles. Western style furniture, modern home decorations, jeans, perfumes, attractive outfits, summer holidays and many other components of modern consumption have been emulated.

During an in-depth interview, the well-known Turkish Islamic intellectual Ali Bulaç complained that, although his family remained loyal to the religious tradition by taking their meals sitting on the floor, he had bought a large dining table at the behest of his wife. Instead of using the table for meals, the family employs it for other purposes: "It is not used [for dining]. We put books and other objects on it." In the house, the most spacious room decorated with Western style furniture is reserved for the guests, whereas the smallest and least comfortable room serves as the family living room. A formal living room that is always kept clean and tidy and is excluded from the usage of family members is typical of the modern middle class Turkish home. Bulaç also explained that the division of the inner house into formal and family living rooms was alien to him because in his hometown (Mardin) a single room could be used for multiple purposes by temporarily re-arranging the traditional light furniture. Bulaç tries to show how he could not avoid modern patterns of home decoration in the metropolitan city of Istanbul despite his unpretentious Islamic way of life. He says: "We are an Islamic family, but our use of the space is modern". Although urbanization has altered the patterns of consumption among rural-to-urban migrants, this example not only demonstrates that the use of identical products and the meaning attributed to them can vary across groups and categories within society, but also the fact that Islamic culture simultaneously adapts to and resists lifestyles associated with modernity.

Goods Related to Islamic Consumption: Pork, Alcohol, Cola, Perfume, Headscarves

The above anecdote shows that the more the peripheral Islamic actors have access to central urban life and economy, the more they may seek Islamic sources of reference to redefine or redraw the boundaries of their world.

For instance, a hotly debated issue among Islamic groups concerns the possibility of their being exposed to products derived from pork in the big cities. It has been argued that Muslims may have eaten pork or lard unknowingly. One of the cover banners of *Aksiyon*, an Islamic community weekly, read "*They are making us*

eat pork!"¹ Referring to the FAO's (Food and Agricultural Organization) reports according to which 3,000 tons of pork are consumed annually in Turkey, the weekly asks: "[In which sector] is this pork being used?" Pork and lard are not only forbidden (*haram*) for Muslims to eat, but all commodities produced from pork derivatives are considered ritually unclean (*necis*). For instance, toothbrushes, shaving brushes, shoes, leather outfits, hair gels, drug capsules, lipsticks, some other cosmetics and any other commodity containing pork derivatives or lard are all designated *necis* for pious Muslims; and a Muslim cannot perform the act of prayer (*namaz*) before removing all *necis* things from his/her body. The article warns Muslims to be extra vigilant in their consumption of certain items that might contain pork or its chemical derivatives. It states that 100,000 pigs are produced in the pig farms in Turkey; this large number is possible because pig breeding and reproduction are easy and inexpensive: On average a pig gives birth to twenty offspring a year, and a pig can eat everything except glass. The article further warns Muslim consumers to beware of the cheap hotdogs sold in the take-away stands (*biifeler*) because they have no brand names and are possibly made of pork.

In Turkey, from time to time the Islamic newspapers and magazines publish lists of food ingredients, citing scientific abbreviations which stand for pork derivatives, and encourage Muslims to establish research institutions on the issue. After mentioning that even in non-Muslim countries like the UK and the USA the state supports the formation of organizations that certify religiously allowed (*halal*) food, the newspapers give the Internet addresses of those organizations. By reporting such news concerning food consumption, Islamic actors seek to force the government and the Ministry of Health to be sensitive toward the issue and thus create a new public debate.

Whereas this example shows that exposure to consumerism has made Islamic actors more conscious of their Islamic identity, the following examples attest to the simultaneous processes of differentiation and de-differentiation through consumption.

Orthodox Muslims have long refrained from using perfumes containing alcohol. However, perfume consumption has recently gained popularity among Islamic groups. Some small Islamic firms produce perfumes that imitate the scent of famous Western brands but do not contain alcohol. Although, they use the same brand names, the perfumes are put into small bottles different from the originals. The imitation scents come in identical bottles and are only differentiated by their labels. In this way pious Muslim youth who wish to consume famous Western brand names are given the opportunity to do so by purchasing those semi-imitated fashionable perfumes. Since perfume without alcohol is very oily and leaves a longer-lasting odor on the skin, Islamic perfumes are sold in small bottles.

¹ See the web page of the magazine, <http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/detay.php?id=11099>.

Another example concerning alcohol is related to cola drinking. In the 1990s the Islamic company, *İhlas Holding* started to produce *Kristal Cola* as an alternative to Western cola brands, which are claimed to contain alcoholic ingredients. The advertisement for *Kristal Cola* included the phrase “*Drink with trust*” (*Güvenle için*), implying that one can never be sure of the content of Western cola. Actually, the ideological dispute over soft drinks is not new in Turkey; some leftist groups in the 1970s promoted the consumption of the local brand *Ankara Gazozu* instead of Western cola brands. When the Coca-Cola Corporation first began operations in Israel, Islamic countries in the Middle East boycotted the corporation and the Arab world was encouraged to drink Pepsi-Cola instead. During the 1970s, Islamists in Turkey, too, were supporting Pepsi-Cola for the same reason. Although Coca-Cola has traditionally dominated the international scene (or at least until 2004), for more than four decades Pepsi-Cola has enjoyed a monopoly in the Arab world, as close ties with Israel prevented Coca-Cola’s sale in the Gulf. At that time, however, Islamists in Turkey did not call into question the Pepsi-Cola ingredients. In fact the support for Pepsi-Cola was totally political and radical because the campaign aimed to hinder the economic development of Israel. However, the above-mentioned Islamic dispute over the ingredients of Western cola comes from a completely new perspective and attests to the transformation of Islamism from radical to moral and cultural practice. However, this does not diminish the importance of the economic aspect. One should remember that the Islamization of some goods is not disconnected from the ambitious profit orientation of Islamic entrepreneurs, who are certainly aware of the huge market potential of Islamic-based consumption, but the demand is certainly rooted in the moral and cultural domain.

The symbolic value of *Kristal Cola* and newly established *Cola Turka*, also founded by pious Muslim entrepreneurs, shows how consumption is always the mechanism that promotes localization, or Islamization in this case. Islamic consumers of *Kristal Cola* or *Cola Turka* balance such Islamicizing with attempts to show how cosmopolitan they are in their consumption of global commodities. The idea of a given commodity having an Islamic quality is thus a sign of the consumers’ involvement in increasingly global relations. The point is that the global consumption is experienced within a given “Islamic locality”. These examples show that Islamic signs, symbols, rules and principles are being articulated through capitalistic forms of consumption. They express the ambiguous desire for the demand to accommodate the “modern” while remaining “Islamic”.

It is also significant that the cover banner of the first issue of the weekly *Aksiyon* read “*Consumption temples*” (*Tüketim tapınakları*), connoting that people were worshipping consumption in the big shopping malls of Istanbul like Akmerkez, Capitol, etc. This kind of news reveals the tension between Muslims’ desire to consume and their wish to distance themselves from non-Muslim contexts of consumption.

Islamic consumers do not solely purchase items of clothing, food, cosmetics, perfumes, furniture or a style of entertainment; they also try to create a sense of who they are through what they consume. Thus the term consumption involves not only the consumption of material objects but also of symbols. Muslims consume items, which helps them to create and sustain their own image of identity. What they consume are also cultural signs. Consumers are interested both in the status value and the symbolic meaning of the commodities purchased. The will to consume Western perfumes in an Islamic way, for example, reflects the importance of fine scent as a status marker on the one hand, and shows how the ingredients of the same scent marks Islamic identity, on the other.

The reality of living in the city has increased the awareness of style, the need to consume within a repertory or code which is both distinctive to a specific social group and expressive of individual preferences. The modern urban Islamic individual is no longer the austere and modest type who would not spend money on trivial items. Islamic status groups use patterns of consumption both as a means of demarcating themselves from others and as a means of winning social acceptance by imitating well-recognized cultural signs. All status groups use some markers to differentiate themselves from others. The markers Muslims use to realize this are neither identical to nor completely different from those used by other groups, and signify group values as well as individual esteem.

The emphasis of my research is on how consumption practices are embedded in broader cultural relations through which goods acquire meanings. This line of thinking focuses on how goods gain cultural values, and how they become a part of daily practices through which identities are built. Thus, consumption can be viewed as an active process involving the symbolic construction of an Islamic identity, which necessitates symbolic distinctions to differentiate the Islamic way of life from its secular counterpart. In a media-saturated, consumption-oriented, and increasingly urban social environment such as contemporary Turkey, the possibility of Islamic identity as a viable cultural alternative competing with the mainstream secular culture is contingent upon establishing these similarities and distinctions.

The visual images or the wording of headscarf advertisements in Islamic newspapers, magazines and television channels can also be interpreted as the desire of Islamic actors to be recognized as members of high status groups. To cite just one of many examples, advertisement slogans used by Islamic headscarf companies use slogans such as “*For first class worlds*” (*Birinci sınıf dünyalar için*) and “*What is real is noble*” (*Asıl olan asil olandır*) and are accompanied by the visual image of a fully veiled woman. Islamic clothing companies also use foreign words like “creation” and “collection” in their brand names without any hesitation.²

² For a detailed discussion of these advertisements, see Özlem Okur (1997).

Roland Barthes (1973) argues that there is always a dual aspect to consumption: it fulfills a need, as with clothing, but also conveys and is embedded within socio-cultural symbols. A headscarf, for example, can both cover the hair of a Muslim woman and signify an image of the pious “first class” or “noble” Islamic female in public life. The function of consumer goods cannot be separated from the symbolic meaning of commodities, or what Barthes calls their significations. Islamic consumption is embedded within systems of signification, of making and maintaining distinctions, always establishing boundaries in both intra-group relations with Islamic actors and inter-group relations with secular actors. Headscarf consumption among urban, middle or upper middle class Islamic women has different symbolic dimensions. First, the luxurious fabrics, colors and styles of the headscarves used by the new Islamic women stand in direct contrast to the casual appearance of the traditional head-covering. Rural Muslim women still wear their headscarves knotted under their chins, and often let the hair above their foreheads show. The traditional head-covering contrasts with the present wearing of the headscarf among urban Islamic women, who do not let a single hair escape the scarf in public. Their inspirational motivation is fashion, not traditional modesty. Second, the usage of codes and signs employed by high status Westernized groups such as “noble”, “first class”, “creation” and “collection”, reveals the urban Muslim woman’s desire to be accorded the same status, but still to be differentiated from them by the very practice of veiling. Third, this type of veiling by differentiating itself from the traditional head covering, which lacks any political dimension, gives veiling a political meaning on the one hand, but, in the post-1990 period with its emphasis on stylishness and luxury, mitigates Islamic militancy characterized by orthodox modesty, on the other.

Social Psychology of the Veiled Female and Islamic Consumption

Islamic women in public spaces are symbolically introducing a form of distance between their “selves” and their social others. The Islamic headscarf and dress, though providing neither isolation nor anonymity, bestow the idiom of privacy upon their wearer and allow her to stand somewhat separate from the social interaction while remaining a part of it. The images associated with the individuation strategies of veiled girls are reflected in their styles of dress. Some young veiled actors state that they do not favor the mass-produced dresses or images of the Islamic clothing (*tesettir*) companies, which leave no room for personal differences, tastes or choices. In their opinion, such dress appeals more to the middle class housewife. For the urban veiled youth, personal preferences and originality in dress become more important as they try to create their own styles through individualistic preferences related to consumption.

Among the youth, the style of wearing the headscarf varies according to personal taste. It does not emerge as a fixed article of clothing to be worn uni-

formly. The actors are continually adjusting and readjusting the headscarf, changing the height at which it is worn, tugging on the lower part of it, tightening its ends, etc. There is a knack that makes the headscarf more elegant by varying the colors of the various clothing items and individualizing the mode of wearing. Wrapping the headscarf has become an art form. The young headscarved actors who frequently habituate particular public spaces object to uniformity in the manner of veiling. In contrast to those of a more radical disposition, they prefer to lessen the social distance between their “selves” and the unveiled females instead of emphasizing the physical difference. And this is accomplished by using common brands of headscarves or styles of consumption. It is possible to claim that the effort of lessening the social distance between veiled and unveiled women is an emerging pattern among the new generation of Islamic females, which can be understood as the normalization process of veiling created by a modern understanding of consumption.

Visual signs such as dress styles and accessories become important in creating an impression about the Islamic self. Young Islamic females regard new consumption patterns as a practical technique for resolving the dilemma of being veiled and being visible; the dilemma of their co-presence with males in the public spaces and the Islamic rhetoric surrounding domesticity and femininity. In fact, the nature of consumption accommodates this dilemma.

The hyperfeminine appearance of the fashion-conscious veiled girls with their exaggerated make-up, fitted blouses and jeans, their Western-brand rucksacks, foreign cigarettes and cellular phones points to the change in the way the Islamic self is expressed. Empowered with such consumption practices, these young actors also recast their needs for gender socialization, thereby increasing the extent of their social presence in public. In the summer they wear tunics in various light colors over trousers or jeans. This style of dress completely contrasts with the traditional Muslim attire. The tunics are not very long, mostly not reaching their knees, and are shaped at the waist. They are not loose fit but rather tight, highlighting the body's feminine form. Thus the young women have transformed the veil into a fashion statement. In the summer many of them wear open shoes which show their feet, and their toenails and fingernails are often painted in bright colors like pink or red. They also use quite seductive make-up, especially on their eyes. In this middle class publicness, with their choice of light colors and garments like tunics and jeans, their high-heeled shoes and make-up, women are expressing their femininity in public within the limits of an Islamic dress-code.

However, not all Islamic males accept these new consumption preferences. Because the new consumption preferences of fashion-conscious Islamic women blur the differences between the veiled and unveiled, between the Islamic and the modern, a new conflict emerges.

While the Western styles adopted by the veiled actors are subject to certain strictures, the women's ability to express personal styles in one form or another

promotes autonomy of action. The veiled actors' insistence on playing with the symbols of the unveiled is certainly an essential signifier of their will to interact with the secular others, and they do not mind the aspersion or criticism of Islamic males. These women give the others enough cues for the game of social interaction with secular segments of society to go forward.

In everyday life a person may be preoccupied with presenting an image of self to others, thus adopting a particular style. That is, "*to be a self is to be a human body that is mimetically involved with other such bodies but nevertheless has a capacity to distinguish itself consciously from others and to regard its prospects as its own*" (Hare and Blumberg 1988: 27-8). These interactive consumption games with the secular others are used as a "*catharsis for anxieties*" (Goffman 1973: 14). This type of consumption not only gives the veiled actor flexibility, but by decreasing the display of attachment both to the religious means and ends of her behavior and to the opinions of puritan Islamic males, she is not trapped into a commitment to moral obligations. Goffman (1956) has written eloquently on the person as a sacred object, a bearer of a demeanor, a recipient of deference. The veiled woman's sense of worth and significance is threatened by her moral vulnerability because her social appearance has been perceived as the embodiment of Islamic morality. But new styles of veiling challenge this puritanism intrinsic to Islamic morality.

Goffman takes the term "personal front" to refer to the items of expressive equipment, the items that people identify with the performer herself. Clothing and sex are included in personal front. He divides the stimuli which make up personal front into "appearance" and "manner". And they may sometimes tend to contradict each other (Goffman 1973: 24). The reaction of puritan Islamic males is related to such contradictions between "appearance" and "manner". The Islamic man expects a confirming consistency between the veiled female's appearance and manner. When the veiled woman does not fulfill the expected roles of interaction, he feels that Islamic public morals have been compromised.

Bourdieu links such differing preferences to his major concept of habitus. They are shaped far more by these deep-rooted and long-standing dispositions than they are by surface opinions and verbalizations (Bourdieu 1984). Many Islamic males want to shape veiled women's preferences for even such mundane aspects of culture as entertaining, smoking, laughing, chatting, listening to music, playing games, etc., which are shaped by competing habituses. Wearing the veil is not by itself sufficient for a woman's moral position in the public sphere. However, by the introduction and spread of new lifestyles and consumption patterns, an issue not really problematized in practice during the eighties arose. More significantly, the continuous debate around the question of appropriate codes of public behavior and manners for young veiled women reflects the quest for change which may be named as an unintended transformation of Islamism from within.

The beauty of veiled women also gained importance with the rise of new Islamic middle classes. Beauty parlors catering to the needs of veiled women began to appear. The *Secret Face Güzellik Merkezi* at İstinye in İstanbul is one such center. The word, “secret” refers to the privacy (*mabremiyet*) of the veiled woman’s beauty. The advertisement for the center in the Islamic newspapers includes the picture of an unveiled, short-haired, modern-looking woman wearing a low-cut jacket, which might seem ironic at first glance. The paradox, however, is resolved in the written text, which explains that “*female employees serve veiled female customers*”. (*Bayan elemanlarla tesettürlü hanımlara hizmet verilmektedir.*) Similarly in the hair salons located in more conservative parts of İstanbul, like Fatih, separate rooms are reserved for veiled women so that males can neither see nor touch their hair. Both instances show the manner in which certain public places for women are privatized according to Islamic principles governing the distinction between the forbidden and non-forbidden (*mabrem* and *na-mabrem*).

Islamic Holiday Sites: Spaces That Allow Both Similarity to and Differentiation from Secular Morality

Holiday sites in the south of Turkey offer a comfortable exoticism, prioritizing pleasure for all. Although words such as “tranquil”, “peaceful” or “secure” are not frequently used in the ads for Turkish holiday sites marketing the three “S’s” (sand, sea, and sun), Islamic hotels in the same region frequently promote a “*peaceful, tranquil, untroubled vacation*” (*buzurlu tatil*) to emphasize that Islamic morality is protected, especially with respect to gender relations. The direct translation into English of the expression *buzurlu tatil* with its Islamic connotations is difficult. *Huzurlu tatil* means pleasure within the limits of Islam. The hotels offer summer vacations in conformity with Islamic rules: hours of praying are respected and only non-alcoholic beverages are served. With its Islamic connotation *buzurlu tatil* also refers to maintaining the Islamic boundary between the private and public sphere. This is provided by the architectural design of the hotels, which offer private spaces for women, such as separate beaches and swimming pools. Thus the creation of Islamic privacy in exterior spaces once more challenges the conventional distinction between private and public.

There are several Islamic holiday sites on the western and southern coasts of Turkey: Hotel Ionia, Hotel Kerasus, Hotel Amarante, Sunset Beach Hotel, Şah Inn Hotel, Gülnihal Suite Hotel and Caprice Hotel. These sites are part of Turkey’s flourishing Islamic market. There are also camping sites, spas and beach resorts that segregate men and women. A cursory survey of these sites shows that most of them carry foreign brand names. Another seeming paradox is found in the TV advertisement for Sunset Beach Hotel that begins with the image of a whirling dervish, symbolically representing the asceticism inherent in Sufi Islam, which encourages the annihilation of the self and withdrawal from worldly

pleasures. In these advertisements, entertainment within the limits of Islamic morality is visualized side by side with an otherworldly appeal; worldly pleasures are juxtaposed to ecstatic meta-worldly pleasures. Thus, the modern lifestyles of consumer society are mixed with the signs and symbols of unpretentious Islamic identities. Caprice Hotel advertises “*a modern vacation complex where the sound of Muslim prayer (ezan) is heard five times a day*”. An additional advertisement slogan of this site, “*the name of alternative vacation*” (*alternatif tatilın adı*) points to the Muslims’ will to differentiate themselves in the same consumption domain.

Another issue relates to body politics at Islamic holiday sites, namely, the style of swimsuits. Swimsuits for Islamic women include a tight headscarf, a long-sleeved top and full-length pants. They fit loosely so as not to emphasize the women’s figures and are made of a quick-drying synthetic material. Interestingly, not only the covering of women but also the covering of men becomes an issue in this context. According to the *Sunni* body of knowledge on Islamic rules and principles (*Sunni Fıkıh*), males should cover their bodies from the belly to the upper knees. For this reason, Islamic clothing companies produce proper swimsuits for Muslim men. This type of male swimsuit is known among Islamic groups as *haşema*, which is the abbreviation of *hakiki şariat mayosu* (“genuine Sharia swim-suit”). The interesting point is that *haşema* is also the brand name of the first Islamic swimsuit company. The Islamic entrepreneur Mehmet Şahin, who designed this male swimsuit because of his own problems on the beach, said “*we used to have to cut off long pants, but we were not satisfied with this practice so we decided to establish the company*”.³ The company then expanded to include women’s swimsuits. “*We are even trying to develop a swimsuit that the sun can penetrate, so women can get a suntan*”, Şahin said. *haşema*’s catalogue features over half a dozen different colors, and the company cannot keep pace with demand.

Although other Islamic clothing companies produce male swimsuits in the same style under different brand names, Muslim consumers refer to all such garments as *haşema* because Islamic vacation is a new phenomenon and until recently there was no term for this type of garment in the Islamic idiom. The idea of consuming male swimsuits was alien to Muslim men. Even the slogan used in the advertisements for *haşema* – “*finally you can swim*” (*artık denize girebilirsiniz*) – attests to the novelty of the phenomenon. Through the emergence of Islamic middle classes with their demand for summer holidays, a brand name has been transformed into the generic name for a specific Islamic garment.

Since the 1990s the radical Islamic discourse of the previous decade has been challenged by self-reflexive practices that prove the social significance of modern consumption preferences and lifestyles in Islamic circles. Private beaches for Islamic women, sports centers for veiled girls, non-alcoholic restaurants, Islamic

³ See the website. <http://oursworld.net/ingilizce-ders/ingilizce-okuma/passages-08.htm>

⁴ Ibid.

vacationing, and Islamic hairdressers and beauty parlors illustrate the formation of new pious middle classes attempting to carve out their own alternative spaces. As Nilüfer Göle points out, these are the sites where the boundaries between the moral and immoral, between private and public, are problematized by Islamism. The agency of the Islamic consumer appropriating his/her own consumption items and such social spaces are transformative forces that visualize the cross-fertilization of Islam and modernity. Illustrations of Islamic experiences of consumption are not simply adaptations to consumer society or market rationality but self-reflexive experiences. On that account, we can speak of a new Islamic framework in which Islamism is waiving its political claims but increasingly permeating everyday life practices (Göle 2000: 94-95). The main reason why Islamic actors adopt modern consumption is that they want to try different public behavior and actions, everything from appearance, dress codes and styles to new forms of sociabilities. It is a matter of readapting, testing and reacting to the taken-for-granted Islamic limits. Islamic consumption is part of the new forms of public visibility that Islam has acquired in the past decade. Not only do these new forms transform the composition and social imaginary of Islamism, but they also shape the Islamic individual by bringing about a new dynamic and gender conflict among the Islamic actors as they familiarize themselves with values of consumption and reflect upon their new cultural practices. What emerges is the possibility of Islamic subjectivity, and of thought and experience, as a function of modern consumption.

References

- Barthes, R. 1973. *Mythologies*. London.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London.
- Goffman, E. 1956. "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor". *American Anthropologist*: 473-502.
- Goffman, E. 1973. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Woodstock, New York.
- Göle, N. 2000. Snapshots of Islamic Modernities. *Daedalus*: 91-117.
- Hare, P. A. and Blumberg, H. H. 1988. *Dramaturgical Analysis of Social Interaction*. New York.
- Okur, Ö. 1997. *Alternative Advertisements on Turkish Television Channels*. Unpublished M.A. thesis. Boğaziçi University, Istanbul.
- Savage, M., Barlow, J., Dickens, A. & Fielding, T. 1992. *Property, Bureaucracy and Culture*. London.
- Veblen, T. 1934. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. London.

Web Pages:

<http://www.aksiyon.com.tr/detay.php?id=11099>.

<http://ourworld.net/ingilizce-ders/ingilizce-okuma/passages-08.htm>

