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UNCOVERING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATERIALISM,
STATUS CONSUMPTION AND IMPULSIVE BUYING:
NEWFOUND STATUS OF ISLAMISTS IN TURKE

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Abstract: Islam is often associated with anti-consumerism. This study, suggests that a new elite with explicitly Islamist dispositions is being constructed in Turkey and aims to provide evidence that these elites build their identity through consumption that reflects its newfound status which leads to impulsive buying. This paper investigates the relationship of materialism to impulsive buying and the mediating role of status consumption on this association. To analyse whether the new elites differ from the general public in their consumption preferences, two sets of data were collected from a judgmental sample of 267 individuals with explicit Islamist dispositions and a stratified random sample of 413. The results provide empirical evidence to suggest that motivated by materialistic values, the explicitly Islamist individuals with high status consumption tendencies are likely to buy products/services impulsively.

Key Words: Materialism, status consumption tendencies, impulsive buying, Islamism, social class.

Introduction

Turkey's relatively recent shift¹ from an import substitution economy to a liberal demand economy² appears to be taking its toll on Turkish consumers. IPSOS Mori's recent cross national study to profile countries based on their materialistic tendencies³ shows that Turkey has the third highest materialism score with 57% following India (58%) and China (71%). The degree to which the Turks made acquisition and possession central values does not solely originate from Turkey's transition from a planned economy to a demand economy which may have caused consumption frenzy. The scarcity of consumer goods and the time and energy that had to be spent in queues to acquire basic material goods prior to the liberalization of the economy had already made the pursuit of material goods a regular everyday exercise for most.

The transition to a liberal economy is often associated with the rise of Islamism in Turkey⁴ and this appears to be justified with the Justice and Development Party (AKP), known for its conservative-religious identity⁵ coming to power in 2002 and governing the country for the last thirteen years. The AKP voters which make up around 50% of the total electorate, consist mainly of religious individuals who had an antipathy towards the Western life style and consumption because of bankruptcies and associated suicides caused by the neoliberal policies of the 1980's and 1990's. This religious and conservative group of voters, who were once considered peripheral, is becoming the new economic elite of the country, gradually replacing the ex-economic elite that are often argued to be made up of nationalist, centralist and secular Turks⁶.

AKP's voters are comprised of a once resentful ex-periphery that stigmatized consumption and the Western lifestyle. For this reason one would expect a similar distant attitude to consumption from both the AKP and their explicitly Islamist electorate which started making up a new elite. Surprisingly, as Sandikci and Ger conclude, Islamist politics is well embedded in consumer culture where a new consumption mode is being created via the synthesis of religion and modernity. Other studies have shown that the newly affluent Muslim middle classes often construct their identities through commodities and consumption practices⁷. Ger and Sandikci, in their ethnographic study, have found that the wardrobes of their participants with explicit Islamist dispositions are filled with brand-name handbags and shoes to mark their newly found status. This provides preliminary evidence to suggest that the new economic elite of the country (the ex-periphery) has de-stigmatized consumption and is consuming for status. However, investigations of whether the new elite's status consumption practices actualize in an impulsive or planned manner and whether and how it differentiates from the general public's behaviour remain scant.

Islam along with other religions and belief systems such as Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism⁸ involves self-restraint to excessive consumption and is associated with frugality⁹. Quran itself: “(...) for piling up worldly things diverts you”¹⁰ advises against consumption. While there is no doubt that Muslims still rely on their religious principles, one should also take the recent phenomena that happen in the Muslim world. Wilson et al., suggest that several factors which include the rise in: (1) Western university satellite campuses in Muslim countries, (2) halal approved commodities, (3) Islamic finance and banking systems¹¹ have reshaped the Muslim consumptionscape and the attitudes towards consuming. Additionally, the rise of AKP and its electorate put together a convenient atmosphere for the Islamists to re-embrace consumption. Accordingly, a heightened scholarly interest is also observed not only in consumer behaviour domain but also in the scientific study of religion.¹²

The purpose of this research is to clarify the nature of the relationship between materialism and impulsive buying and the mediating role of status consumption tendencies on this association amongst the Islamists in Turkey. Two separate sets of data were collected via structured questionnaires to assess whether the Islamists' materialistic values translate into impulse purchases because of their need to consume and display prestigious commodities that reflect status as suggested by Baudrillard¹³ and to see whether Islamists can be distinguished from the general public in this respect. The samples consisted of (1) 267 individuals with explicit Islamist dispositions and (2) a stratified random sample of 413 collected from five random municipalities in Istanbul.

The remainder of this article is as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature on materialism, impulsive buying and status consumption as they relate to the social class movements in Turkey and constructs the hypotheses. Section 3 details the data and methods employed in this study. Section 4 provides the results and the analysis. Section 5 provides concluding remarks while clarifying the implications for further research.

Literature Review

The idea that status consumption reflects individuals' position within social classes has been examined by many theorists¹⁴. Baudrillard's analysis of a sign-system, where consuming and displaying prestigious commodities promise a higher social standing in the artificial space of sign-value, views commodities as communicators of social meaning and status.¹⁵ The breaking down of traditional concepts such as the social class concept supports and concurs with Baudrillard's views of sign-value where consumption practices become the vehicle of status considerations and offer symbolic representations of social class.¹⁶ Similarly, Bourdieu and Nice and Douglas and Isherwood suggest that individuals continuously

symbolize their social similarity with their social collectivities while simultaneously classifying all others as different through the particularities of their everyday consumption.¹⁷

The social class concept may have not broken down in Turkey but has certainly been reshaped in the last thirteen years under the AKP's government. The seventy-nine year old class system (from its foundation year in 1923 until 2002 when the AKP came into power) where the nationalist, centralist and secular Turks were the centre, holding the economic power¹⁸ was altered by those with Islamist dispositions who simultaneously de-stigmatized consumption. Given that recent polls show that Turks have adopted a materialistic orientation, one would almost intuitively expect to observe a positive relationship of materialism to impulsive buying in the Turkish consumptionscape. Going beyond offering a reproduction of previous studies that scrutinize the materialism-impulsive buying association, this study attempts to understand whether status consumption tendencies augment this association only for those with explicit Islamist dispositions while not augmenting it for the general public.

Materialism

Materialism is often defined as the importance that consumers attach to earthly possessions and the ways these possessions assume a central place in their lives.¹⁹ Richins and Dawson define materialism as the meaning given to owning and acquiring material goods, in achieving major life goals or attaining desired states.²⁰ Although materialism is thought to have existed even in ancient civilizations,²¹ Belk and Mason suggest that the search for psychological satisfaction through discretionary consumption became available to the masses within the last five hundred years.²²

The operationalization of attitude measures of materialism dates back to the 1960's. Moschis and Churchill is one of the first studies to offer scales of attitudes towards materialism and attitudes towards money and possessions respectively. Inglehart's and Belk's scales are other measures that do not infer the operationalization of materialism from other constructs.²³ Richins and Dawson (1992), however have shown²⁴ that with the exception of Belk's materialism scale, all other scales do not conform with Churchill's and Nunnally's scale development guidelines.²⁵ Although it followed scale development guidelines, Belk's scale repeatedly showed low reports of scale reliability in 12 isolated data collections²⁶.

This study, therefore, adopts Richins and Dawson's conceptualization and operationalization of materialism. Richins and Dawson conceptualize materialism as a three-dimensional measurement encapsulating three factors named *centrality, success, and happiness*.²⁷ This scale does not infer

its operationalization of materialism from existing constructs but is based on a literature review.²⁸ The *centrality* dimension reflects the heightened importance given to possessions and their acquisitions. The *success* factor covers possession-defined success and is defined as “to judge their own and others’ success by the number of quality possessions accumulated”.²⁹ The *happiness* factor reflects the indispensable place of acquisition and possession of physical objects for satisfaction and well-being in life.

Materialism – status consumption

The discussion on the materialism-status consumption relationship primarily requires distinguishing the two phenomena from one another. Status consumption, which is defined as the motivational process by which individuals strive to improve their social standing through the conspicuous consumption of consumer products that confer and symbolize status both for the individual and surrounding significant others,³⁰ is argued to be different than materialism. Status consumers place importance only on products they feel have status qualities.³¹ Materialistic individuals, however, place more importance on the ownership of products. Kasser and Shaffer suggest that materialism is associated with status consumption. Additionally, Eastman, Goldsmith and Flynn show that materialism and status consumption are related but dissimilar phenomena with a .49 correlation between status consumption³² and Richins and Dawson’s materialism scale. Having established that the two phenomena are related and dissimilar, the remainder of this section, therefore, will examine the mediating role of status consumption tendencies on the relationship of materialism and its outcome: impulsive buying.

Materialism - impulsive buying

Impulsive buying, defined as the tendency of a consumer to purchase spontaneously, immediately, and unreflectively³³ has become an eminent phenomenon for marketers as it accounts for nearly 80% of all purchases³⁴ and as it makes up a higher percentage of all total purchases than planned purchases.³⁵ Additionally, according to Kacen and Lee the total volume of impulsive purchase has reached as high as 4 billion USD by 1997 in the United States.³⁶ In an environment where marketing novelties such as credit cards, online shopping websites and telemarketing which enables consumers to make a purchase anywhere and anytime,³⁷ the likelihood of individuals purchasing on impulse has become higher than ever before. Considering the high materialism score in Turkey and the impulse purchases account for a large fraction of total purchases, understanding whether and how materialistic values translate into impulsive purchasing becomes essential.

Materialism is often associated with negative outcomes such as high debt loads³⁸ and life dissatisfaction.³⁹ Another stream of research pertinent to the examination of impulsive buying behaviour dates back to the 1950's and investigates the purchase decisions made after the consumer enters a retail environment.⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, the relationship between impulsive buying and materialism has been scrutinized in previous studies where materialism is considered to be a predictor of impulsive buying behaviour.⁴¹ Accordingly, the following hypothesis was constructed for the general Turkish population:

H1: Materialism positively, and directly affects impulsive buying for the general public.

Izberk-Bilgin's suggestion that Turks with explicit Islamist dispositions cannot participate in middle-class consumption because of their low economic and cultural capital⁴² implies that they would not be practicing impulsive buying. Sandikci and Ger and Ustuner and Holt argue otherwise and suggest that those with explicit Islamist dispositions oppose consumerism at a discursive level but in practice they are well invested in consuming.⁴³ Although Islam, is often related to an anti-consumption, anti-capitalistic, anti-Western ethos⁴⁴ and anti-consumerism⁴⁵, other studies have found that newly affluent Muslim middle classes often construct their identities through commodities and consumption.⁴⁶ In addition, considering the rapidly developing education centres, halal markets, restaurants, posh gated communities, holiday resorts, supermarkets with Islamic connotations in Turkey⁴⁷ the following is hypothesized:

H2: Materialism positively, and directly affects impulsive buying for those with explicit Islamist dispositions.

Materialism-status consumption-impulsive buying association

Previous studies have mostly employed consumer's mood⁴⁸, self-identity,⁴⁹ cultural and demographic differences⁵⁰, and emotional intelligence to explain impulsive buying tendencies. Studies that have segmented the customers in terms of impulsiveness have largely neglected a possible status-seeking impulsive buyer category by segmenting customers as: choice optimizers, economizers, pre-meditators, recreationists, low information seekers, support seekers;⁵¹ socializers, disloyals, independent perfectionist shoppers, apathetic shoppers, budget conscious shoppers, escapist shoppers;⁵² recreational, full experience seekers, browsers and mission shoppers.⁵³

The Turkish consumptionscape is being remodelled via the socio-economic empowerment of those with explicitly Islamist dispositions who have recently de-stigmatized consumption. Economic and sociological power is being granted to the new elite who are emerging from the periphery⁵⁴ by the AKP government in Turkey. Therefore, suggesting that

the emerging economic elite with explicit Islamist disposition are the segment that makes up the AKP electorate (50% of all actual votes in Turkey) would not be far-fetched. The CEO of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, Can Peker, stated in an interview he gave to the New York Times that the new class shares these habits with the ex-elite, like driving a Mercedes, but they are also keeping their religious clothing which explicitly reflects their Islamist dispositions.⁵⁵ This inference shows that there is a high degree of involvement of those with explicit Islamist dispositions in status consumption and also provides evidence of a new consumption practice which they have crafted for themselves to reflect their status. Considering that the new elite with an explicit Islamist disposition want to reinforce their new found status, this paper suggests that their desire of status consumption would translate their materialistic values into impulsive buying which would not be observed for the ex-elites. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is constructed:

H3: Status consumption tendencies indirectly, and positively mediate the relationship of materialism to impulsive buying for those with explicit Islamist dispositions.

Islamist politics in Turkey are well rooted in consumer culture. The Islamist movement is using the consumerist ideology to redesign the public as a whole reinforced by and combined with intensified political, economic and moral relationships. Although the ex-periphery is being supported by the AKP government since 2002, to argue that the centralist, Kemalist and secular segment of the country that has been considered to be the centre (economic elite) since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, has lost its economic power altogether would not be far-sighted. A class struggle, therefore, is being experienced in Turkey where those with explicit Islamist dispositions are replacing the centralist, Kemalist, and secular Turks. Given that this class struggle is between two separate and distinct segments one would not expect to observe a mediating effect of status consumption tendencies on the relationship of materialism to impulsive buying for the general public. Accordingly the following is hypothesized:

H4: Status consumption tendencies do not indirectly mediate the relationship of materialism to impulsive buying for the general public.

Research Methodology

Research context

Turkey, especially Istanbul is an ideal context for this study. The social class concept of the country is being reshaped under the AKP's continuing thirteen year government where the ex-periphery (the Islamists) are gradually moving up the class system to become the urban elites of the country. Considering that the Turkish consumer spent \$39billion on Islamic fashion alone provides evidence of Islamist's

destigmatization of consumption. To establish an understanding of the outcomes of this changing structure of the social class system as it pertains to consumption practices are important. In order to compare the behaviour of those with explicit Islamist dispositions from the general public, two sets of data were collected via face-to-face structured interviews. The first data set were collected from a judgmental sample of 267 (126 males and 141 females) with explicit Islamist dispositions (e.g. *çarşaf, turban, gown, shalwar, and religious hats*) in Fatih, a municipality in the old town Istanbul known to be devout. The second set of data was collected from a stratified sample of 413 (206 male and 207 females) from five randomly selected municipalities of Istanbul.

Pretests and measures

The scales that were used were drawn from the relevant literature. Materialism which is defined as the meaning attached to owning and acquiring material goods, in attaining major life goals or attaining desired states⁵⁶ was assessed by Richins’ three dimensional materialism scale⁵⁷ that encapsulates the success, centrality, and happiness components (18 items). The individuals’ tendency to establish their position within social classes via consumption practices has been measured by Eastman et al’s single-factor status consumption tendencies (5 items).⁵⁸ The tendency of consumers from both samples to purchase spontaneously, immediately, and unreflectively was assessed by Sprotles and Kendall’s single-factor impulsive buying scale (5 items).⁵⁹ All items are measured on a 5-point Likert-scale. To eliminate Table 1 provides the details of the scales that were employed. The structure of the questionnaire for both data collection procedures was identical in order to compare both groups. The details of all the measures employed including some exemplary items for each scale are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Measures employed

Materialism	Richins and Dawson (1992) (e.g. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes; buying things gives me a lot of pleasure; I have all the things I really need to enjoy life)	Ranging from 1 to 5 1= Completely disagree 5= Completely agree
Impulsive buying scale	Sprotles and Kendall (1986) (e.g. I should plan my shopping more carefully than I do; I am impulsive when purchasing; I carefully watch how much I spend)	Ranging from 1 to 5 1= Completely disagree 5= Completely agree
Status consumption tendencies	Eastman et al. (1999) (e.g. I would buy a product just because it has a status; I would pay more for a product if it had more status; a product is more valuable to me if it had snob appeal)	Ranging from 1 to 5 1= Completely disagree 5= Completely agree

Monthly net income	On this card is an income scale on which 1 indicates 0-1500TL per month 6 the 5000TL+ per month. We would like to know in what group you are. Please, specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in	Ranging from 1 to 6 1= 0-1500TL 5= 5000TL+
Age	On this card is an age scale on which 1 indicates "18 and below" and 6 indicates "60 and above". We would like to know in what group you are. Please, specify the appropriate number	Ranging from 1 to 6 1= 18 and below 6= 60+
Gender	By observation	1=Female 0=Male
Education	On this card is an education scale on which 1 indicates "do not know how to read and write" 7 indicates "has a PhD". We would like to know in what group you are. Please, specify the appropriate number	Ranging from 1 to 7 1= Do not know how to read and write 7=Has a PhD
Number of children	On this card is a number that indicates the number of children that you have. 1 indicates "do not have any children" and" 6 indicates "have 3+children. We would like to know in what group you are. Please, specify the appropriate number	Ranging from 1 to 6 1= I do not have any children 6= 3+ children
Marital status	On this card is a number that indicates your current marital status. 0 indicates "single" and 1 indicates "married". We would like to know what group you are. Please, specify the appropriate number	Ranging from 0 to 1 0= Single 1= Married

A series of pretests were led prior to data collection. First a randomly selected 20 non-student adults evaluated the content and meaningfulness of the items. Next, five academics were contacted for their comments on the utility of the scale items to revise the questionnaire accordingly. To eliminate any possible standard omitted variable bias questionnaires also included demographic questions on age, education level, income, marital status, monthly net income, number of children that respondents have and sex. These variables were regressed on impulsive buying to see whether the relationships of status consumption tendencies and materialism to impulsive buying were affected by them.

Sample and data collection

This study empirically tested the direct effect of materialism on impulsive buying tendencies as well as the mediating effect of status consumption tendencies on materialism-impulsive buying association for the general public and for the explicitly Islamists. To this end, two waves of data collection were made use of. First 267 questionnaires were collected from a judgmental sample of individuals who are over 18 years

old with explicit Islamist dispositions in Fatih, a municipality in the old town Istanbul known to be religious, via face-to-face interviews. The questionnaires were only collected from 126 males and 141 females carrying explicit religious symbols such as *çarşaf*, *turban*, *gown*, *shalwar*, and *religious hats*. Forty-three percent of respondents are over 40 years old while 57 percent is younger than that. While thirty-nine percent of the sample makes over 1500TL a month sixty-one percent makes above that amount. Forty-five percent of respondents holds at least a high-school degree. Thirty-five percent of the sample is single and thirty-nine percent does not have any children. Fifty-eight percent of respondents are either retired or currently working while twenty-five percent identifies them as a house-wife.

During the second wave of data collection 413 (206 males and 207 females) questionnaires were collected from five randomly selected municipalities of Istanbul (Kadikoy: 87; Uskudar: 90; Bahcelievler: 80; Bayrampasa: 80; Gaziosmanpasa: 80). Fifty-eight percent of the sample was aged between eighteen and forty-nine. Sixty-two percent of the respondents held at least a high-school degree or higher. Thirty-two percent of respondents had a monthly net income higher than 3.000TL or higher (an approximate amount of 1.000€ or higher) while sixty-two percent was making below that amount a month. Further, forty-one percent of the sample was single while fifty-nine percent was married. Finally, thirty-nine percent of respondents had no children while forty-six percent had more than two. The detailed demographic statistics of the sample were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	Fatih	Istanbul
Age	3.34*	3.41
Education	(1.59)**	(1.41)
Monthly net income	3.47	3.81
Number of children	(.83)	(.82)
Marital status	2.34	3.03
	(1.03)	(1.49)
	2.53	2.34
	(1.44)	(1.36)
	.65	.61
	(.47)	(.48)

*= mean

**= std. deviation

Method of analysis

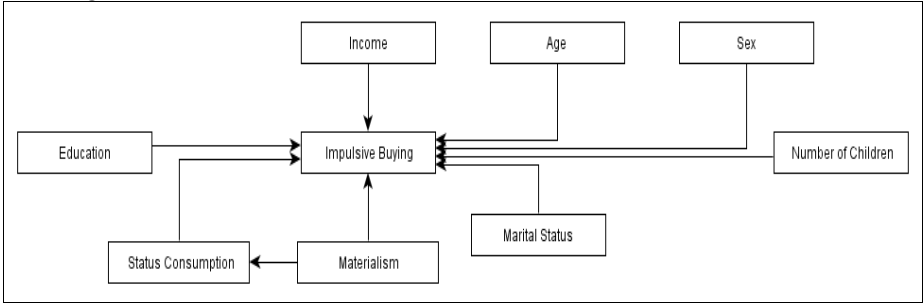
The relationship between materialism, status consumption, and impulsive buying was analysed using mediation analysis. Impulsive buying

is estimated directly by status consumption tendencies and materialism and indirectly by materialism through status consumption tendencies while controlling for the demographic variables listed previously. The control variables were included into the model as independent variables that directly affect impulsive buying only. The mediation analysis technique is commonly used in the consumer research domain to decompose and analyse the linear relationships among a theoretically justified set of variables.⁶⁰ The relationships are estimated employing maximum-likelihood estimation and the magnitudes of the relationships decide whether the hypotheses are justified. The one-dimensional mediation technique which is introduced to the literature by Baron and Kenny was further improved by Zhao, Lynch, and Chen that offered a two-dimensional approach.⁶¹

Zhao, Lynch, and Chen, technique is based on a two-dimensional approach consists of three patterns that are consistent with mediation and two patterns that are consistent with non-mediation. These are: (1) complementary mediation (present when both the mediated effect and the direct effect exist and have the same relational direction), (2) competitive mediation (present when the mediated effect and the direct effect both exist but have opposite relational directions), (3) indirect-only mediation (present when there is a mediated effect), (4) direct-only non-mediation (present when there is no mediation effect but a direct effect exists), and (5) no-effect non-mediation (neither a direct effect nor an indirect effect exist).

Furthermore, to assess the indirect effect, the study used an empirically derived bootstrapped sampling distribution to examine bias-corrected confidence intervals as suggested by Preacher and Hayes.⁶² This approach makes no assumptions about the shape of the distribution of the variables and avoids the power problem caused by non-normality in the sample distribution.⁶³ To test whether the model fits the data, the absolute fit of the overall model was assessed employing goodness-of-fit index (GFI). GFI presents evidence of how well the theoretical model reproduces the observed correlation. A GFI value larger than .90 represents a good fit to the data.⁶⁴ The analyses were conducted with Amos v.19. The research model that is scrutinized via the use of Zhao et al.'s mediation technique⁶⁵ is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Research model



Results

To test the direct effect of status consumption and dimensions of materialism to impulsive buying as well as the indirect effect of materialism to impulsive buying the mediation analysis that employs maximum-likelihood estimation. Two separate models were tested for both samples: (1) those with explicit Islamist dispositions and (2) the sample that represents the general public and provided good fit with respective GFI values of .970 and .933. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics, intercorrelations and reliabilities of the constructs that were included to the structural model.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations and reliabilities

Variables		1	2	3
FATİH	1.Materialism	-		
	2.Status consumption tendencies	.595*	-	
	3.Impulsive buying	.434*	.422*	-
	Mean	2.594	2.498	2.2869
	S.D.	.505	.827	.662
	Cronbach's alpha	.766	.754	.648
	1. Materialism	-		
İSTANBUL	2. Status consumption tendencies	.701*	-	
	3. Impulsive buying	.390*	.363*	-
	Mean	2.951	2.751	2.192
	S.D.	.513	.846	.4792
	Cronbach's alpha	.810	.597	.522
	*All intercorrelations significant at .05 level.			

The hypothesized positive, direct effect of materialism to impulsive buying for the general public (H1) and for those with explicit Islamist dispositions (H2) was rejected at the .05 bias-corrected confidence level. The results showed that the *success* and *happiness* factors were insignificant both for those with explicit Islamist dispositions ($\beta = .086$, $p > .05$ and $\beta = .086$, $p > .05$) and for the general public ($\beta = .104$, $p > .05$ and $\beta = .106$, $p > .05$). The results, however, presented empirical evidence to suggest that *centrality* factor of Richins and Dawson's (1992) materialism scale positively and directly affects impulsive buying for those with explicitly Islamist dispositions ($\beta = .175$, $p < .05$) and the general public ($\beta = .353$, $p < .05$). Although H1 and H2 was both rejected at .05 level, discovering that the heightened importance given to possessions and their acquisitions translate into impulsive buying for both samples provides empirical evidence that the argument of Islamic religiosity being a threat to consumerist ideology may be falsified in the Turkish case.⁶⁶

The testing of H3 showed that status consumption positively and indirectly mediates the relationship of all three factors of materialism to impulsive buying for those with explicit Islamist dispositions. Status consumption was found to fully mediate the *success*-impulsive buying and *happiness*-impulsive buying associations with respective indirect effects of .055 and .047 both significant at the bias-corrected .05 confidence level. Complementary mediation was found for the relationship of *centrality* to impulsive buying as mediated by status consumption with an indirect effect of .091 significant at a bias-corrected .05 confidence level. H3 was therefore failed to be rejected, providing empirical evidence of status consumption augmenting the relationship between materialism to impulsive buying for those with explicit Islamist dispositions.

The analysis that scrutinized the mediating effect of status consumption for the general public failed to reject H4. The results showed that the indirect effects of *success* ($\beta = .044$, $p > .05$), *happiness* ($\beta = .021$, $p > .05$), and *centrality* ($\beta = .027$, $p > .05$) were insignificant. The results provided further evidence of differentiation between those with explicit Islamist dispositions and the general public with a significant direct and positive relationship between status consumption and impulsive buying for the sample pertinent to those with explicit Islamist dispositions ($\beta = .256$, $p < .05$). The analysis conducted on the data pertinent to the general public, however, provided an insignificant direct relationship of status consumption to impulsive buying ($\beta = .108$, $p > .05$). From a Veblenesque perspective, this finding strengthens the argument that the group that is becoming the new elite of the country may be purchasing impulsively to reflect their new found economic status making them a distinct group with separate impulsive buying motives despite their explicit Islamist dispositions.

Table 4. Summary of direct and indirect effects

	Fatih (explicitly Islamist dispositions)		Mediation type	Istanbul (General public)		Mediation type
	<u>Direct effects</u>	<u>Indirect effects</u>		<u>Direct effects</u>	<u>Indirect effects</u>	
Success → Impulsive buying	.086 (p>.05)	.055 (p<.05)	Indirect only	.104 (p>.05)	.044 (p>.05)	No effect non- mediation
Centrality→ Impulsive buying	.175 (p<.05)	.091 (p<.05)	Complementary	.353 (p<.05)	.027 (p>.05)	Direct only non- mediation
Happiness→ Impulsive buying	.086 (p>.05)	.047 (p<.05)	Indirect only	.106 (p>.05)	.021 (p>.05)	No effect non- mediation

The results pertinent to the scrutiny of both samples are summarized in Table 4. The analyses showed that the Islamists may not be distinguished from the general public in terms of their impulsive buying triggered by their materialistic values. However the indirect only mediation effects for the *success*-impulsive buying and *happiness*-impulsive buying relationships as well as the complementary mediation effect for *centrality*-impulsive buying association were present for the Islamists. This means that the status consumption tendencies serve to clarify the nature of the casual relationship of *success* and *happiness* to impulsive buying. Any empirical finding and/or theoretical framework that would overlook the status consumption tendencies when scrutinizing the relationship between materialism and impulsive buying for those with Islamist dispositions (e.g. extrinsic religiosity elements) would be making a deviant inference. The non-mediations found for the relationships of all three sub-dimensions of materialism to impulsive buying from the general public sample showed that the status consumption tendencies do not play any role in governing these relationships. In other words, status consumption tendencies appear to be a mediator only for the Islamists, in accordance with Baudrillard's arguments pertinent to consumption as discussed previously.

The examination of control variables that were included into the model to control that the casual relationships between independent variables and impulsive buying was free of spurious demographic factors showed that only the age variable positively affects impulsive buying with a direct effect of $\beta=.240$ significant at the .05 level for the sample from those with explicitly Islamist dispositions. The analyses that were run on the sample from the general public showed that females are %8.8 more

likely to engage in impulsive buying. No other demographic control variable was found to be significantly related to impulsive buying at the .05 significance level.

General discussion and concluding remarks

Previous studies have shown that the Islamists embrace the consumerist ideology and may be enacting a Western Lifestyle myth, an idealized Turkish view of middle class consumption in the West.⁶⁷ The previously highlighted studies, however, are ethnographic by nature and mostly do not make any attempts to discover the shape of the behaviours that these materialistic values take. This study, by incorporating the societal change and its effect on consumer behaviour, discovers that the Islamists with high status consumption tendencies, different from the general public, tend to purchase impulsively. The statistical insignificance of the same association for the general public further validates Baudrillard's, Douglas and Isherwood's and Bourdieu's arguments on status consumption and societal change.⁶⁸

Islam is often argued to be a powerful threat to global consumerist ideology. The findings of this study have shown that this assumption may be falsified. The full mediation effect of status consumption tendencies on the relationship of two dimensions of materialism (*success and happiness*) to impulsive buying presented empirical evidence to suggest that those with Islamist dispositions invest in consumption and consuming impulsively because of their status consumption inclination. Also, this study provides empirical evidence to support Sandikci and Ger, Ustuner and Holt's arguments⁶⁹ that suggest that Islamists oppose consumerism only in discursive level, when in actuality they are well invested in consuming to the degree that they are likely to consume impulsively for status.

To discover that the importance assigned to possession-defined success and accumulation of physical objects for well-being in life translate into impulsive buying for the Islamists only if they have status consumption adds to the extant literature which scrutinizes the relationship between religious adherence and consumption.⁷⁰

Once at the periphery, the explicitly Islamists appear to be gradually replacing the ex-elite by economically benefiting from the AKP's thirteen year-long government. Although some recent research has shown that the Islamists are no longer clashing with the consumerist ideology, they are still vastly outnumbered by their counterparts who take Islam to be a global threat to consumerism. This research contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence that Islamism may embrace the consumerist ideology as Islamists increase their social class within a society. The scrutiny of the consumption behaviour of second or third generation Muslim immigrants living in Europe, Australia or the United States appears to be an interesting and pristine avenue for future

research. To see whether their materialistic values translate into impulsive purchases because of their increasing status consumption tendencies stemming from their heightened social class would provide important implications. Accordingly, we hope to incite those scholars who are in the domain pertinent to the examination of religiosity and consumption preferences to explore and clarify the web of relationships which are currently untouched.

Notes

¹ *Acknowledgments*: We acknowledge the financial support provided by Kadir Has University (no. 2014-BAP-08).

² Gul Ozcan and Hasan Turunc, "Economic Liberalization And Class Dynamics In Turkey: New Business Groups and Islamic Mobilization," *Insight Turkey* 13 (3) (2011): 63-86.

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