Abstract

Through a critical ethnography, how religious ideology (Islamism) informs consumers’ attitudes towards global brands is investigated in the developing country context of Turkey. Three discourses that construct global brands as infidel brands are identified. Islamists use these discourses of modesty, halal-haram, and tyranny to not only determine what constitutes infidel brands, but also characterize the modern market society as devoid of social equality, morality, and justice, respectively. The Islamist critique culminates in a consumer jihad against global brands. Performing the consumer jihad allows Islamists to accommodate and protest the social crises posed by modernity and globalization as they seek to recreate the mythical Golden Age of Islam in the contemporary marketplace. The findings compel us to explore the intricate links among religion, ideology, and the market.
“Infidel! Infidel!” cries the six-year-old boy upon hearing his mother mention Nestlé during our interview. The father, who has just returned from evening prayer at the local mosque, tries to change the subject quickly. He appears to be acutely aware of the symbolic meaning of my unveiled attire and our likely ideological differences. Despite the pro-Islamist government’s renewal of power and the relaxed attitudes toward expressing religious identity in Turkey, the father avoids commenting on the “infidel” remark, carefully weighing his words to prevent an ideological clash. The mother, on the other hand, who volunteers as a Quran instructor for the shantytown’s young girls, could care less about political correctness. As passionate as her son, she believes that Nestlé, McDonald’s, Coca-Cola, and Disney are “infidels” because “they are killing Muslims in Palestine, Africa, and now Iraq.”

As the above excerpt from field notes demonstrates, transnational corporations’ associations with powerful nation states, coupled with their immense financial resources and cultural influence, tangle global brands in a complex web of socio-political dynamics, subjecting these brands to religiously charged interpretations such as “infidels.” The excerpt also speaks to the importance of religious ideology on consumer behavior. Religion and ideology intertwine in complex ways in the marketplace, often informing consumer identity and attitudes toward brands (Miller 2009; Pink 2009).

This interaction is noticeable in developing countries (hereon DCs) where, in general, means of civic engagement are limited and political representation is uneven. Lack of access to resources and power, coupled with eroding faith in modern institutions leaves some consumers seeking meaning in religious ideology to cope with growing resentment to daily socio-economic problems (Thomas 2000). For instance, it has been argued that Islamism, which is defined as the re-articulation of Islamic teachings for ideological purposes (Denoeux 2002; Tibi 1983), finds a particularly fertile ground in DCs as a soothing rhetoric to locals’ discontent with uneven economic globalization, IMF and World Bank’s influence on national matters, internal political conflicts, and class hierarchies (Ahmed 2007; Ayoob 2008; Saktanber 1997; White 2002). Scholars suggest that the Marxist undertones of Islamism have been fostering a resentment to the ideals of ‘market society’ (Slater and Tonkiss 2001) and a global consumer culture in these locales (Ahmed 2004), which often culminates in antagonistic attitudes to global brands. The vandalization of McDonald’s, KFC, and HSBC stores in Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, and Palestine, where Islamism has been on the rise represent telling examples of the important role religious ideology can play in the marketplace (Economist, 2000 and 2002; O’Keefe 2001; Schmetzer, 2000; Smith 2003). Yet, in consumer research, there is little theorizing on how theological teachings and religious myths can provide compelling ideological resources, particularly for the disenfranchised and the poor, to contest hegemonic forces such as globalization, market, and state. This gap is concerning considering that the poor represent the most adversely impacted by globalization and the most likely to be susceptible to religious rhetoric (Bandarage 2004; Davis 2004; Kaplinsky 2005).

Consumer research on Islamism has focused on veiling practices (Sandıkçı and Ger 2005) and the transformation of the veil from a sacred to a fashionable practice (Kılıçbay and Binark 2002; Sandıkçı and Ger 2010 White 2002b). Although outside the domain of consumer research there is a significant body of literature on Islamism (Ayoob 2008; Esposito 1983; Tibi 1983, 1999), the work on the link between Islamism and consumption is limited. Particularly in sociology and political science, Islamism has been interpreted as a critique of modernization, capitalism, and consumerism (Barber 1996; Huntington 1993, 1996; Ray 1993) and therefore has been characterized as an ideology with an anti-market, anti-consumerist, anti-Western ethos
(Ahmed 2004; Gellner 1992; Turner 1994). As a result, there is a growing discourse on Islam, often focusing on the perceived threat Islam poses to Western values and ideals, including capitalism. However, little is known about how Islamist sentiments actually materialize in everyday life in transitional economies (for notable exceptions see Sandıkçı and Ger 2005, 2010 on veiling practices).

To redress this gap, I take a critical ethnographic approach (Penaloza 1994) to examine how Islamism informs consumption discourses and practices in the developing country context of Turkey. As a transitional country with a rising Islamist class, Turkey presents an excellent opportunity to investigate the discursive processes through which Islamism can cast certain global brands as infidels. By tracing the socio-historical construction of the infidel brand, I explicate how consumers draw from religious myths, local ideological tensions, global events, and historical conflicts to construe global brands as ideological threats to Islam. The findings suggest that characterizing particular brands as a menace to the virtues of the ideal Islamic society, as inscribed in the Islamic myth of the Golden Age, propels informants to forge a ‘consumer jihad’ against these antagonist brands.

Although the notion of consumer jihad may appear consistent with conventional interpretations of Islamism as an anti-Western, anti-market, anticonsumption ideology (Ahmed 2004; Gellner 1992; Huntington 1993, 1996; Ray 1993; Turner 1994), unpacking of the infidel construct calls for theoretical modifications to such prior conceptualizations. By demonstrating that the derogatory label of infidel includes not just global brands but also certain Turkish brands, this study redresses previous conceptualizations of Islamism as merely an anti-Western ideology. The findings further suggest that Islamism is not an anti-market ideology, either. On the contrary, informants are firmly situated within the logics of the market since they seek to moralize the marketplace by embracing Islamized products as the antidote to the immorality, injustice, and inequality that infidel brands represent in their minds. As such, this research advances our understanding of the dialogical relationships among religion, ideology, and consumption by accounting for a complex ideoscape of religious ideology in consumer culture.

By creating new ‘opportunity spaces’ (Yavuz 2004), markets, and products while contesting existing ones, religious ideology works in consumer culture rather than against it. Highlighting these nuances allows this research to extend the research streams on ideology (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Hirschman 1993; Luedicke et al. 2010; Varman and Belk 2009) and religiosity (Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Kozinets and Sherry 2004; Muñiz Jr. and Schau 2005) in consumer research.

There are a few caveats, however, that set the theoretical boundaries of this ethnography. First, this is not a study of Islam. As such, it does not claim to provide a cohesive and global account of Muslim behavior. This is not a study of religion, either. Rather, this research seeks to explore a rich theoretical area at the intersection of religion, ideology, and consumption by examining the role of religious ideology on consumption discourses and practices, specifically unpacking the social construction of “infidel brands” as understood among the Turkish Islamist participants of this study.

**IDEOLOGY, RELIGION, AND CONSUMPTION**

Despite repeated calls for a critical assessment of ideology in consumer research (Belk 1986; Firat 1987; Hirschman 1993), scholars have only recently turned their attention to this important topic. These studies focused on the role of political (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004;
Zhao and Belk (2008), nationalist (Varman and Belk 2009), technology (Kozinets 2008), and competing marketplace (Luedicke et al. 2010) ideologies in structuring consumer choice and identity works. In addition, ideology is also an overriding theme in studies investigating ethical consumerism, anti-consumerism, and critiques of corporate capitalism (Dobscha and Ozanne 2001; Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Thompson 2003; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). Yet, these works do not address how religious ideology might influence consumption practices, discourses, and consumer identity work, pointing to an important theoretical gap.

Sandıkçı and Ger’s (2010) notable study of veiling practices helps to bridge this gap. By tracing veiling practices, the authors demonstrate how religious beliefs intertwine with political tensions and historical structures, first, to render veiling a stigmatized, deviant practice, and then transform it into a fashionable clothing choice. Other research either focuses on the commercialization of the sacred (O’Guinn and Belk 1989) or the sacralization of the profane (Kozinets and Sherry 2004; Muñiz Jr. and Schau 2005). Particularly the latter stream examines religion as a market-mediated experience. Studies of brand communities (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Kozinets 2001; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Muñiz Jr. and Schau 2005), for example, find that religiosity is not confined to faithfulness to a divine being. Rather befitting postmodern times, religiosity includes adherence to a consumption object that has become a sacred totem in the eyes of loyal consumers. Such new, market-mediated practices of religion are illustrated in the spiritual experiences of members of Jeep, Macintosh, Newton, Saab, and Star Trek brand communities. Because of this contextual emphasis however, religiosity in consumer research is increasingly understood as a totemic expression of extreme brand loyalty.

Yet, religiosity permeates the marketplace in much more complex ways. For example, coupled with political dispositions, religious teachings can be appropriated to construct powerful narratives to maintain or contest marketplace ideologies, brand meanings, and class structures. Consider the ideological kinships among Christianity, colonialism, and capitalism; Stambach (2000) finds that evangelist missionaries played a key role in spreading the ideals of capitalism among Africans by encouraging them to wear ‘civilized’ European clothing. Or consider the parallels among the rise of the evangelical prosperity doctrine, neoliberalism, and economic globalization (Roberts 2002). Bonsu and Belk (2010, 313) find that the prosperity gospel and its ‘earthly wealth’ message have fueled consumerism in the Global South by posing consumption as “a salvation oriented religious tool,” ironically contributing to the economic impoverishment of DCs. In the Global North, critics blame the prosperity gospel for propelling a ‘name it, claim it’ mentality, resulting in the recent housing bubble and the financial crisis (Rosin 2009). While these examples illustrate how religious ideology can be used to legitimize prominent ideologies and institutions, other cases illuminate situations where it may serve to challenge dominant ideologies such as capitalism. For example, the Pentecostal in Ghana view consumption as a threat to eternal salvation and use prayer to neutralize the ‘evil’ in goods (Meyer 1998).

In these and other ways, religious ideology is frequently interwoven with consumption, marketplace ideologies, and identity. Islamism in particular has been a recent influence, changing not only the façade of the global marketplace (e.g., the proliferation of Islamic mortgages, bathing suits, and toys in US and Europe), but also production methods thanks to a booming halal industry (Power 2009). Yet, to understand how Islamism has become a potent force informing consumer choice, we need to examine its historic, economic, and politic roots first.
ISLAMISM: A CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY

It is important to distinguish Islamism from Islam as a religion (Ayoob 2004; Gülalp 1997; Tibi 1983). Islamism involves the instrumentalization of the teachings and principles of Islam by individuals and organizations that seek social change. Denoeux (2002) points out that even though Islam is a belief system with a rich history, Islamism is a modern phenomenon that largely emerged as a reaction to colonization, modernization, and globalization. Similarly, Esposito (1983) and Tibi (1983) argue that Islamism appropriates religious doctrines to justify militant and cultural resistance to modernization and Westernization.

The rise of Islamism cannot be understood in isolation from the dynamics of the Cold War and the subsequent wave of decolonization (Ayoob 2004; Esposito 1983; Roy 1994; Tibi 1983). Islam played a crucial role in colonized countries’ independence movement, providing “a strong moral force and source of identity” (Moinuddin 1987, 69), thereby serving as a mobilizing ideology (Ayoob 2004; Esposito 1983; Rodinson 1966; Tibi 1983). Following the independence movements in Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, however, it was the Western educated nationalists, not the Islamists, who came to power (Bromley 1994). These ruling elites selectively adopted Western ideas and institutions to build democracies and achieve economic prosperity. Yet, without Westernization – adoption of modern normative systems- (Habermas 1987, Tibi 1983), most of these modernization projects failed. They could neither follow the same democratization trajectory as in Europe nor sustain the economic progress that the elites had promised. Rather, in many instances, postcolonial modernization efforts ironically produced authoritarianism, patrimonialism, and corruption (Thomas 2000). Collectively, these failures triggered public resentment toward the merits of Western style modernization.

The establishment of Israel in the Middle East was largely interpreted as a sign of Western imperialism and fueled existing distrust in Western ideals. Nations with a prominent Muslim population experienced a sense of disgrace and loss of dignity, which only intensified after the 1967 Egyptian defeat, further weakening pious Muslims’ trust in Western developmental discourses. As the ruling classes “failed to deliver on their promises of economic progress, political participation, and personal dignity” (Ayoob 2004, 3), the postcolonial period inadvertently reinforced the appeal of Islamism for the masses. It is in this conjuncture of “cultural anomie,” political legitimacy crisis, and economic turmoil, which generally plagues DCs, that Islam assumes a “renewed role” (Tibi 1983, 7) as a religious ideology and as a significant discourse of identity for many disenfranchised consumers in the Third World.

THE ISLAMIST FANTASY: THE GOLDEN AGE OF ISLAM

For those who have lost faith in modernist and secularist models of developmentalism, Islamism provides an alternative model of social and economic governance. By allowing Islamists to envision an impeccable and venerable future based on “readings of the fundamental scriptural texts” (Ayoob 2008, 2) and “reappropriated concepts borrowed from the Islamic tradition” (Denoeux 2002, 61), this religious ideology offers a road map to an ideal social order that is believed to have existed during the Golden Age of Islam (asr al-sa’ada). This mythical narrative refers to the time of the Prophet and the first four caliphs during 610 – 661 AD. The period is significant for believers because it represents the onset of peace in a war-torn Arab region with the unification of fractioned tribes under Mohammad’s leadership (Lapidus 1992). Yet, the symbolic significance of Golden Age can only be understood in the backdrop of its
ideological rival: Age of Ignorance. Also known as *Jahiliyyah*, this narrative depicts the pre-Islamic Arab culture as pagan and barbarian, plagued with debauchery, corruption, and promiscuousness. By spreading the ‘light and knowledge’ of Islam, Mohammed is believed to have ended this ‘fallen state’ of mankind and have founded a dignified life for Muslims.

Although many Muslims realize that the Golden Age represent a historical time that is unattainable in the present or future, Sayyid Qutb, a radical ideologue, argued that deviating from Islamic principles would drag the Muslim community into a state of ignorance, signaling the omnipotent threat of ‘falling from grace.’ Noteworthy in Qutb’s writings is the way these mythical narratives are de-contextualized and de-historicized; Qutb describes them as a condition, rather than historical periods, that can exist at any time, any place (Ayoob 2008). Accordingly, a Muslim society that adopts Western ideals and drifts away from the Islamic norms, is viewed as vulnerable to the imminent threat of returning to the dark days before Islam, and therefore, has to be saved by emulating Golden Age practices. Tibi (1983) notes that, while primitivist, the Golden Age utopia has been instrumental for Islamists in mending past colonial wounds as well as dealing with recent sectarian violence and ideological conflicts.

More importantly, the Golden Age mythos closely informs Islamists’ quest for a ‘better’ society. Scholars agree that Islamist movements seek to resurrect the Golden Age by unifying Muslims and recapturing the political power of past Islamic empires (Ayoob 2004, 2008; Dabashi 2005; Denoeux 2002; Lapidus 1992; Roy 1994). In the same breath, however, these scholars point out that the idea of re-creating the Golden Age is “an exercise in futility” because it does not appeal to the majority of Muslims “who remain rooted in reality and suspicious of millenarian movements” (Ayoob 2008, 3). While resurrecting Golden Age may be infeasible in the political sense (i.e., overthrowing the existing political structures in predominantly Muslim nation-states and unifying them within an Islamic state a la the Ottoman Empire), performing this mythical narrative in the marketplace can be quite possible.

Although there is considerable work on political Islam, marketplace articulations of Islam are scarcely explored (Rudnyckyj 2009; Wong 2007). Particularly absent in discussions on Islamism is how ordinary Islamists may pursue the Golden Age myth through consumption. Past research shows that mundane consumption practices embody diverse meanings and purposes (Holt 2002, Luedicke et al. 2010) and mythical narratives “enable consumers to dramatically enact their ideological beliefs” (Luedicke et al. 2010, 1017). To what extent, then, is the Islamist construal of ‘infidel brands’ informed by the Golden Age myth? How might religiously-charged mythical narratives shape consumers’ discourses and practices, while informing their quest for a nuanced social order to the one that the market society offers? And to what extent contesting infidel brands is an endeavor to negotiate Golden Age values with capitalism? The present study attends to these questions by unpacking Turkish-Islamist consumers’ discourses of infidel brands in light of key social structures and historical circumstances.

**RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY**

Research Site Background

Turkey presents an opportunity to examine Islamist discourses of global brands as individuals from various strata have recently been drawn to this religious ideology. This interest is rather intriguing in a nation that is eagerly seeking EU membership and has been founded on Western principles of secularism, democracy, and modernization. Modern Turkey was
established as a secular republic upon the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Secularism was most notably instituted through reforms that included the abolishment of the Sultanate and the Caliphate (political and spiritual leader of world’s Muslims), the annulment of religious shrines, and the centralization of religious education under a governmental institution (Zürcher 2001). Today, secularism is primarily understood as a ban on religious dress codes in public institutions. Also known as the ‘headscarf ban,’ the ferociously debated policy has become the symbolic center of tensions between the secular, pro-Western elites and the pro-Islamist ruling AK party (Justice and Development Party), along with its constituencies.

The rise of Islamism is closely tied to 1980s neoliberal policies (Öniş 1997), which ‘opened’ the country to world markets, leading to a rapid influx of foreign brands, privatization of state-controlled media, and a growing middle class. However, the transition to market economy has been difficult. Lacking knowledge about interest rates, credit cards, and currency fluctuations, many individuals have been filing bankruptcy, facing jail time, or committing suicide (Aysan and Yıldız 2007). This, in turn, has triggered resentment toward market ideology. Both the rise in Islamist sentiments and its brief experience with consumer culture render Turkey an appropriate context to investigate the social construction of infidel brands.

Research Design

This ethnography draws from participant observation, in-depth interviews, field notes, and textual material analysis. Participants include 45 individuals from diverse backgrounds; this paper, however, focuses on 15 informants with explicit Islamist dispositions (Table 1). I collected the data over a three-month fieldwork. I also visited Turkey for another six weeks to observe changes in Islamists attitudes proceeding AKP’s electoral victory in 2007. The data were collected at informants’ homes and during shopping trips, allowing for triangulation between informants’ discourses and practices (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). I also reviewed Islamist newspapers such as Zaman, Yeni Şafak, and Vakit for a holistic view of the discourses informing Islamist sentiments. I took pictures of informants’ home décors and belongings for a rich perspective of Islamist lifestyles and tastes. The data were analyzed following the procedures described in Penaloza (1994) and Arnould and Wallendorf (1994).

The identification of informants was initially driven by their distinctive physical appearance. Islamism is perhaps best reflected in consumers’ apparel choice in modern Turkey, where Western attire is the adopted norm. I sought women who wear chador - a black garment that covers the entire body except the eyes (Saktanber 1997) - because they are among the most visible public displays of Islamism. As a female, I had easier access to these women, who generally live in close-knit communities. Despite a congenial government, Islamists suspiciously view outsiders as potential unsympathetic secularists who might “tarnish Islam” by exposing them to the secular media, which often stigmatizes Islamists. To establish rapport, I asked individuals from my social networks to introduce me to women they know who wore chador. These key individuals established the initial contacts with the informants. I then set up the interviews and shopping trips.
The informants resided in Küçükköy, Armutlu, Ambarlıdere, and Çeliktepe, all squatter neighborhoods in İstanbul. The participants served as gatekeepers and, upon approving of the study, allowed access to their husbands and other family members. Cognizant of my outsider status, I made my presence more acceptable by being respectful of Muslim dress codes and mannerism by wearing loose and long clothing, as well as avoiding makeup and heels, although I did not cover my hair. Being acceptable also meant, in some cases, forgoing the recording of interviews as some participants opposed the possibility of a strange male hearing their voices during transcription. Similar restrictions applied to taking photographs as some perceived that as religiously unacceptable. In those cases, I took extensive field notes to capture their comments, body language, and any relevant contextual information. The classification of participants as ‘Islamist’ was ultimately based on their life politics, consumption practices, and lifestyles, as reflected in the fieldwork.

**ISLAMIST DISCOURSES OF GLOBAL BRANDS**

The following analysis introduces three discourses that construe global brands as infidels. I label these discourses modesty, halal-haram, and tyranny. Informants refer to these discourses to hint at particular issues they find problematic with modern market societies. While this critique is greatly informed by macro-historical factors such as global events and political conflicts, it also emanates from particular microcultural meanings (Thompson and Troester 2002) that informants hold about an exemplary society. These microcultural frames of reference are fundamental to informants’ articulations of infidel brands. Each discourse, therefore, is followed by a brief discussion that illustrates how the infidel parable is narratively linked to particular motivating values and informants’ identity projects.

**Modesty**

Modesty refers to exercising moderation and humility in Muslim conduct such as observing modest dress codes and demonstrating humbleness through austere consumption practices. Popular Islamic beliefs praise the moral superiority of avoiding material ostentation (Arnould 1989; Gülalp 1997). Indeed, informants perceive consumption as contaminating one’s soul, and thus, seek to minimize their participation in consumer culture as illustrated below in Hanife’s remarks. While these sentiments are reminiscent of the high-minded consumer moralism often observed in developed countries (Elgin 1981; Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011), the religious ideology and rhetoric underlying informants’ accounts set them apart from the latter:

I used to enjoy window shopping. I’ve come to realize that those things are so meaningless and such a waste of time…Now my husband brings me everything I need; he buys the groceries and even fabric and I sew pants and dresses for all of us [cheerfully]! …This gives me more time to dedicate myself to Allah; I have time to do my prayers, hold sohbets (Quran studies), and share the beauty of Islam with others.

Like other informants, Hanife seeks spiritual refinement by refraining from material indulgences and even the practice of shopping. To make more time for their prayers, Hanife’s family sold their TV more than a decade ago. A key religious duty for Hanife is holding Quran studies. These gatherings are indeed important events for shantytown women as a collective practice through which ‘God’s word’ is interpreted in light of modern day issues to construct a
contemporary Islamist way of life. Covering a range of issues from finding a ‘true’ Muslim spouse, raising children according to Islamic principles, tactics to deal with the headscarf ban at universities, to the brands that Islamists should purchase, these gatherings serve as platforms where Islamist consciousness, or what it means to be a ‘true’ Muslim, is socially constructed (Saktanber 2002; White 2002a).

Also in these gatherings, consumerism is often identified as the underlying cause of numerous social problems. For example, Perihan shares how one family’s mounting credit card debt led to a downward spiral of depression, alcoholism, and domestic violence. At a weekly gathering, she urges the attendees to fight against their *nefs*, the temptation to give in to temporal desires, as she ties credit cards and women’s weaknesses for alluring consumer goods to the growing media exposés of divorce, substance abuse, and crime:

> All these social ills, the poverty our people face today, the broken families, everything is because of this consumption craze… We all possess *nefs*, but some of us have a hard time controlling it. Especially some women are very weak; when they see showy things on others, they ask of their husbands things that they can’t afford… The ill of *nefs* causes the credit card debt, all the marital and social problems. *Nefs* is a test of our will; if it weren’t for such a test, what would be the meaning of our faith?

Perihan’s comments reflect the parallels that many informants draw between consumption and tragic outcomes. Her remarks reveal the dark side of Turkey’s recent experience with consumer culture, and resonate deeply with the women attending the Quran study. For example, Saliha believes that consumption is a “trap,” against which her family is protected by their faith. Indeed, according to Saliha, being a conscientious Muslim means upholding the Islamic principles that praise modest demeanor, which, in turn, guards the believer against the perils of consumerism (Table 2, 1.1).

Global brands are at the center of the informants’ critique of consumerism as these are not only the most conspicuous symbols of a lavish lifestyle, but also the primary means through which class distinctions are forged in DCs like Turkey (Dong and Tian 2009; Ger and Belk 1996). Global brands are essential to enacting a “Western Lifestyle myth,” an idealized Turkish view of “middle-class consumption in the West, particularly the US,” (Üstüner and Holt 2010, 52) and as such, the most visible form of expressing “a particular modernist ideal of being Turkish” (Üstüner and Holt 2007, 46). While many middle income consumers embrace consuming transnational brands to construct a ‘modern,’ ‘civilized’ identity (Belk et al. 2003; Üstüner and Holt 2010), this ‘modern Turk’ image is rather contested by the informants. Lacking the economic and cultural capital to participate in this identity project, they view Western consumption patterns as a deviation from the Islamic norm, fostering envy, social rivalry and self-interest. One participant, Übeydullah, comments on the tug of war played through brands as individuals compete for higher status:

> …the uniform is mandatory but students find a way to show off with Tommy [Hilfiger] shoes and backpacks. I sometimes tell myself not to blame the kids because…well, we can’t really blame the kids when the parents are flaunting their Rolex watches and Jeeps all the time! I don’t understand how people can do that [show off] when there’s so much misery around. Obviously, these people don’t know anything about what our faith says on *büğz* [jealousy and hatred]. You just can’t make others envy what you got, that’s torture!
This comment suggests that pretentiously consuming global brands poses a more serious problem than simply some individuals’ deviance from modesty. Buğz is an important concept for the pious; it represents ill-will and weakening of the affectionate ties in the Muslim community. Übeydullah believes that “show(ing) off with Tommy, Rolex and Jeeps” would inflict jealousy and bitterness on others, particularly among the poor, leading to social rivalry among the believers. Such protective claims over the brotherhood of faith are consistent with Tonnies’ (1957) “Gemeinschaft” notion and are an overriding theme across informant comments, as evinced in Saliha’s remarks:

And why would a true Muslim buy more than she needs? To make envy what she has? …Of course God wants to see the blessings he’s bestowed on us, whether it’s decent clothing or house, but not before we attend to those in need first… that’s what good Muslims with a clean spirit do [help the needy]. Otherwise, we continue to ponder what kind of a society we’ve become like those secular intellectuals on TV forums discussing where all this pocket picking and car snatching came from. But they don’t stop to think that it’s because of their high-society style consumerism and the Polos and the Nikes they’re so obsessed with!

Saliha echoes Übeydullah’s concern about social dissolution within the Muslim community as she identifies the indulgence of some segments of society in “high-style consumerism” as a trigger of social conflict, which she reasons, is manifest in increased occurrences of petty theft. Instead of self-interested acts of showy consumerism, she suggests, being a “true” Muslim involves practicing modesty and benevolence. Alluding to pro-seculars’ Western-style consumerism, Saliha associates global brand consumption and the socio-economic problems in Turkey with secular ideology.

Such inferences are frequently made in the Islamist media, which plays a significant role in characterizing consumerism as a godless ideology that impoverishes the spirituality of believers and erodes the communal nature of early Islamic societies (Caner 2007; Gürdoğan 2008). For example, Gürdoğan (2011) writes: “Secular culture is about one’s breaking off all his connections with Allah. Because it does not recognize Allah, anything is legitimate in the name of winning and more profits… Today’s culture is a disposable culture. You’re not considered modern unless you use-and-throw away. It’s a culture that says ‘I consume therefore I am.’ Against this, our most powerful weapon is tasavvuf culture (Islamic mysticism). The most important thing is enriching our inner worlds.” The growing mimicking of Western lifestyles among some wealthy Muslims is, thus, alarming for Islamists. Most evident in the growing interest in fashionable veil (Sandıkçı and Ger 2010) Turkey has recently witnessed the rise of a new class of wealthy, urban Islamists. These people comfortably engage in status consumption (Ergu 2009) and acquire modern practices. For some, rising consumerism among the Islamist bourgeoisie represents a detour from the altruistic norms of the first, original Muslim community, heralding a moral crisis. This self-criticism is reflected in the following quotes from Taşgetiren and Eygi, Islamist columnists. As Taşgetiren (1996) bashes on the new vacationing habit of some Islamists, he hints at the conflict between Russia and Chechnya, and satirically asks: “Imagine that you just donned the haşema [Islamic bathing suit], and at that moment, you hear the voice of a Chechnyan mujahidin asking for a bullet; how are you supposed to enjoy the pool?...How much of the pain of starving Muslims, the misery of the tyrannized do you feel in your heart?” Eygi (2008) expresses a similar view as he criticizes the pro-Islamist AKP leaders. Referring to the $65,000 ring that the first lady has reportedly purchased, he writes: “There are 10 million unemployed in this country…Never mind the faithless [seculars], but is it acceptable
that those who claim to be pious are wasteful, plunge into a morass of luxury, and sink into the
filth of self-indulgence? How can they live like this when their brothers in faith starve?...Those
who live in luxury and excessively indulge are not exemplary Muslims, they’re mischief
makers…”

These comments resonate well with the shantytown informants. As the newly rich
Islamists, possessing sufficient economic capital and familiarity with global brands, seek to
construct a lifestyle that blends Islam and Western style consumerism (Ahuvia 2005), they clash
with the less affluent Islamists who accuse them of falsely representing Islam. In the following
quote, the condescending way Menşure speaks of fellow Muslims who wear brand name
headscarves illustrates the competing claims to speak in the name of Islam and the ongoing
ideological clashes among the Islamists.

What are those tags of Pierre Cardin, Hermés, Burberry, and Gucci supposed to mean
displayed like flags on the veils of these young women? It seems like they find every
excuse to invent new ways of tying their scarves just to showcase these brands. They
should know better that this is not how a conscientious Muslim would behave.

There is anger and sorrow in Menşure’s tone as she reluctantly acknowledges the
fragmentations within the Muslim community. The belief that modernism destroys the
communal ties of organic and authentic communities is an overriding motif in the interviews.
The legacy of the ‘lost community’ motivates informants to imagine a simpler time defined by
common mores and strong reciprocal ties. Menşure nostalgically reflects on the Ottoman ‘waqf’
system (Islamic network of religious charities) that sustained these communal ties and a ‘caring’
community.

I don’t know what happened to us, to our values. We come from a waqf culture that
provides housing even for birds [referring to the Ottoman architectural tradition of
building bird houses]...back then no one was left alone! But today, it’s all about...people
are so self-centered, you know? Even the ones that I thought I knew... they’re always
like ‘look at me! Look what I’ve got’!

In the face of disappearing traditions and disintegrating social networks, informants like
Menşure seek solace in a soothing reflection of the Ottoman past. This exemplary past allows
informants to imagine a more livable future, thus empowering them to deal with the harsh
everyday realities of squatter life. Other informants draw from an even more distant past that
they construe and animate through stories about Prophet’s life and legacy. Informants elaborate
upon Mohammed’s benevolence and modest demeanor, describing how he lived in poverty and
shared everything he had with the needy. Central to these stories is the care Mohammed showed
to emphasize that he shares the same social status with all in his flock. Anecdotes of him fetching
water, tending the animals, and even cleaning and cooking are interpreted more broadly than
simple gestures of humility to symbolize a reign of solidarity. Informants often use present tense
as they narrate these stories as if they have witnessed the unfolding of these events. Verses from
the Quran and Hadiths are also frequently recited to illustrate exemplary conduct during
Mohammed’s time. Such vivid imaginations of an untainted time closely inform informants’
vision of Turkish society. For example, as Vedat describes (Table 2, 1.7) what he envisions for
the economic wellbeing and happiness of “our people,” he refers to a tax and rent-free
marketplace, which Mohammed founded in Medina, in order to offset the tribal and economic
barriers that the powerful non-Muslim guilds enforced on Muslim tradesmen. According to
Kister (1965), Mohammed considered the market a charitable endowment and ensured that no
trader would have to pay rent or tax; traders were not allowed to claim a permanent stall or

This document is part of a JCR Manuscript Review History. It should be used for educational purposes only.
obstruct others’ visibility by pitching tents to secure equal trading opportunity for everyone. Today’s highly competitive, profit-driven global marketplace is a stark contrast to the ‘Medina Market,’ which is, seemingly, guided by a higher purpose to secure collective well-being. As Vedat laments on small, local businesses being replaced by retailers with European names and suggests “returning to our roots,” it becomes clear that this mythic market represents Vedat’s aspirations towards an intact Muslim community. Seen from this cultural perspective, the modesty ethos is a social norm that would impel the Turkish society in the aspired direction.

Modesty as a Trope for Social Equality. Informant narratives reveal that global brands are perceived as infidels for inflicting social rivalry and threatening Muslim solidarity whereas modesty serves as social glue, preventing social fragmentation. While modesty resembles a morally infused, neo-traditional gesture towards Gemeinshaft (Tonnies 1957), it is also as a discursive tool through which informants contest social hierarchies and mitigate class tensions.

Informants’ preoccupation with solidarity is deeply embedded in Islamic concepts of tawhid (oneness) and the related notion of umma (community of Muslims) as well as the Golden Age mythical narrative. Tawhid is the doctrine of ‘oneness’ and unity in Islam. Tawhid means ‘there is no God, but Allah,’ implying that Allah is one and “without associates” (Roy 1994, 40). Islamists extend this notion to society and hold that the ideal Islamic society should reflect this divine unity, and therefore, should not tolerate any kind of social or economic fragmentation (Dabashi 2005; Roy 1994). In other words, Islamists contend that only a classless society free of economic and social anxieties can represent the harmony implied in the notion of tawhid and allow Muslims to become a truly united community (Dabashi 2005; Roy 1994).

Informants strongly believe that a unified society is indeed attainable today because they believe this ideal to be manifest throughout the history of Islamic civilization. Drawing from anecdotes about Mohammad’s exemplary fairness and mythic conceptions such as the ‘Medina market’ that is believed to provide everyone an equal chance to make a living, informants view the Golden Age as the epitome of “a ruling classless society” (Dabashi 2005, 227). Informants also refer to the presumably egalitarian order during the Ottoman era, also known as the second Golden Age (Lapidus 1992). The Ottoman period is widely perceived as a resurrection of the original Golden Age not only because it represents the last pinnacle of Islamic civilization (Lewis 2002), but also the re-unification of Muslims under the Ottoman Sultan who is also the Caliph or “the shadow of God in the world” (Berkes, as cited in Tachau 1984:59). Like a benevolent father, the Caliph (read state) was the ultimate “protector and the patron…” (Lapidus 1992, 16). Indeed, in colloquial Turkish, it was the ‘father state’ (Delaney 1995) that provided the land, subsidized seed and machinery to the peasantry (Keyder and Tabak 1991), as well as facilitating social well-being by building mosques, schools, and hospitals in the Ottoman era.

Ideals like a “protector” state and classless society are understandably enticing to the shantytown dwellers, who, on the one hand, possibly suffer the most from losing welfare benefits post-1980s, and, on the other hand, feel the umbrage of not being able to afford the glamorous urban lifestyles they are exposed to on a daily basis. Research shows that the poor, due to limited opportunities to exercise choice, find modern market systems intimidating, thus, rely more on government provided services and consumer protection agencies than the wealthy (Ekici and Peterson 2009). It is not surprising then that informants, feeling vulnerable vis-à-vis a complex, and possibly a threatening market system, idealize the Ottoman past and the Golden Age for providing a compassionate, and thus, presumably an egalitarian socio-economic system.
Interestingly, this reconstructed past suitably lacks the acute class, race, ethnic, and gender inequalities that characterized ancient regimes. The informants fail to recognize, for example, that the Medina market privileged the believers by excluding non-Muslims from trading. Nor do they acknowledge that the waqf system, which is associated with the benevolence of Islamic state, heavily relied on endowments from the rich seeking to shelter their wealth from confiscation and circumvent taxes (Kuran 2001). Also absent in Islamist recollections of an egalitarian society is the Republican history, despite its welfarist policies and ‘paternal’ rhetoric. Informants view the republican development policies as disappointment, promising prosperity but failing to spread the beyond the bourgeois class. Thus, the Republican period is more reminiscent of a poor imitation of capitalist Western societies dominated by class confrontations, than a romanticized harmonious, Islamic society.

From the informants’ viewpoint, in lieu of the social hierarchies that market societies are bound with, Islam not only promises a classless and tension-free society, but also offers the vernacular (e.g., nefs, buğz) to discursively pursue this ideal. Drawing from the Golden Age myth, Islamists champion prudence as an antidote to the socio-economic problems of market societies. Naturally, this modesty rhetoric construes global brands -the most ubiquitous symbols of class-as infidels, threatening the wellbeing and solidarity of Muslims. However, in light of Turkey’s background and informants’ low socio-economic status, it is clear that modesty, disguised as a puritan calling, is actually a trope for social equality, which allows informants to mitigate class tensions.

Halal-Haram

The criteria of halal and haram, or religiously permissible and forbidden, has traditionally guided Muslims’ dietary restrictions. For instance, consuming pork and alcohol is banned (haram), while meat should be prepared according to Islamic slaughtering rules to be considered halal. Despite a predominantly Muslim population, halal was not a prominent force in shaping marketplace offerings in Turkey until the Islamist revivalism of the 1980s. While the revivalist discourse is a reflexive response to industrialization and the resulting alienation of consumers from producers (Izberk-Bilgin, 2011), it also represents an extended understanding of halal to include cosmetics, retailers, movies, and even toys.

Informants’ disapproving views of global cosmetics brands are particularly illustrative of this new conceptualization of halal. While respondents hold that women should refrain from attracting male gaze by avoiding makeup, revealing apparel, and showy jewelry, they agree that it is acceptable to adorn themselves to please their husbands as this might keep them at home. However, keeping up one’s appearance is quite challenging in the absence of acceptable products. Informants frown upon many of the Western cosmetics that became widely available in Turkey post-1980s. Although local alternatives exist, they too are not regarded as halal since informants remain distrustful of secular companies. For example, Hanife suspects that Eczacibasi, the local distributor of Nivea, adds lard to the formula and, thus, stocks on Nivea products when she travels to Saudi Arabia (where halal manufacturing is mandatory) for pilgrimage. Considering the difficulty of finding halal products, she pragmatically adds:

Allah has created you with such diligent care, just look at yourself! You don’t need any makeup to look nice to your husband; you’re beautiful as it is. Just like the Tin verse [Quran, verse 95] says, Allah has created all of us in the most beautiful form.
Such witty arguments not only reveal the discrepancy between Islamist discourse and practice, but also provide informants with a religious rationale to abstain from using global cosmetic brands. I ask Hanife what she thinks of Max Factor, L’Oréal, and Lancôme, which frequently appear on Islamist boycott lists (Appendix A):

No, no, not those… those are the real infidels! They tempt honorable women to be bad women [prostitutes] …don’t you see how seductively the models in the ads look with their painted faces and bare legs?

Other respondents demonstrate similar attitudes. For example, Vasfiye suggests that “Muslims should boycott these brands” because “these intend to distract us from our duties that our faith assigns us. I’m a Mumina, a mother, and a wife before I’m anything else… Little do these women [with makeup] know that they’re committing sin…because they’re disrespecting the blessed duties Allah has assigned us. They’re disrespecting the nature that Allah has bestowed on us! Allah created us, no?” Ulviye goes a step further and suggests that simply using these brands would render one an infidel because:

…dressing up and putting on makeup to attract others’ attention could only be an infidel’s act…it isn’t something a Muslim would do…Being a Mumina isn’t an either-or position, it’s a commitment for life. It means that you’ve got responsibilities…that you’d uphold the legacy of Hatice and Ayşe [Prophet’s wives], you’d be a good example to your children, and you wouldn’t concern with anything but inner beauty.

As these comments reveal, the modern woman image—independent, accomplished, and sexy—that many global cosmetic companies proudly portray in their commercials is at odds with the sacred role that Islam assigns to women as ‘virtuous Mumina,’ represented by Prophet’s wives. These ideological conflicts between competing notions of womanhood are further revealed in the informants’ perception of another global brand, Barbie. Saliha’s comments illustrate the perceived moralistic threat Barbie poses:

I don’t consider Barbie a toy to begin with. What could a Barbie teach to my little girl? To dress in a tempting way, put on makeup, and flirt with boys when she grows up? That isn’t the kind of woman image I’d like her to have.

With her flawless body and overt sexuality, Barbie has been described as a “perfect icon of late capitalist constructions of femininity” (Urla and Swedlund 1995, 281) and the symbol of über-consumer (Motz 1983) in critical Western literature. Advocating a similar view, informants hold that Barbie commoditizes the female body, parallel to the way cosmetic brands do. More problematically, however, Barbie represents a poor role model for young Muslim girls as she has no apparent parents or children—lacking the traditional domestic skills as a caregiver—and maintains a relationship with Ken out of marriage.

The Islamist solution to these contesting ideologies that they believe are embodied in global brands is to produce their doppelgängers (Thompson et al. 2006). Notable examples include the Muslim-Barbie and -colas (Parmar 2004). Indeed, the demand for these ideological rivaling products has given significant momentum to the emergence of a global Islamic consumptionscape, offering a diverse spread from alcohol-free perfumes to gender-segregated luxury resorts (Pink 2009). These competing offers present excellent examples of Islamists’ extended understanding of haram and their endeavor to carve out a lifestyle space through ideological consumption (Bernthal et al. 2005). For example, Elif doll is perceived as a superior role model to Western alternatives. In contrast to the flirtatious Barbie, she sings hymns, reads Quran verses, stands in praying pose, and is dressed in long and loose garments, offering parents
the opportunity to socialize their girls with Islamist virtues at an early age. The following reveals Saliha’s enthusiasm for this doll:

It is nothing like the Barbie; it is the size of a real baby, comes with her pacifier, and really cries... my daughter learns to feed her, change her, and become a mother... thanks to Elif doll she’s even learned to say the Fatiha (Quran, Verse 1).

Similarly, board games like ‘Garden of Paradise’ and ‘Silk Road’ are re-invented versions of Monopoly. They utilize a gyroscope instead of dice and allow players to earn the right to “go to heaven” by performing ritual prayers or answering questions with religious undertones (e.g., “Who is an infidel?”, “Where is Mecca?”). Übeydullah fondly talks about how this game allows him to pass down his values to his children:

Today’s kids aren’t happy with makeshift toys and there aren’t too many games nowadays that you can play together with the family. I heard about Garden of Paradise… We play it together, the whole family, on the weekends...It helps teach kids the right behaviors, like performing the ritual prayers or being virtuous instead of chasing after more money...if the kids can say the verses they earn the right to go to heaven...

Islamic offerings allow informants to negotiate the tensions of living in an ever-tempting and predominantly secular consumer society while upholding the aspiration to “live Islam” (Saktanber 1997, 146), or applying the precepts of Islam to all aspects of daily life. For example, in an effort to channel her young children’s interest in Disney movies, or what she calls “infidel’s traps,” to more suitable options, Menşure has bought a series of educational products. Titles like “Mecca’s Houses,” “Our Beloved Prophet,” “99 Pearls: Allah’s Beautiful Names,” and “Prophet’s Friends in 365 Days” give away the religious focus in these CDs, books, and movies. The emphasis on Islamic heritage renders these products acceptable substitutes to Disney, or in Menşure’s words, “Christian propaganda”:

[Disney movies]...nothing but Christian propaganda. It looks like they’re just a bunch of cute, harmless characters but there’s more to it. There’s nothing about our values, our lives, and our past in those films...as if we’ve no heroes and no good stories to tell our children...what about Fatih [Ottoman Sultan known for Constantinople’s conquest] or all the Islamic scholars and their wonderful stories? It’s all about the silly adventures of a pig [referring to the Piglet character in Winnie the Pooh], above all, a pig!

As Menşure’s comments illustrate, global brands are perceived as discreetly instilling Western views (Askegaard and Csaba 2000; Dong and Tian 2009; Varman and Belk 2009) in Muslim children, thereby undermining Islamic culture and history. Adopting an extended understanding of halal-haram allows informants to contest hegemonic cultural, political, and gender-based ideologies by constructing antagonistic brands as infidels. In an interesting twist, the halal-haram rhetoric also serves to render some infidel products acceptable, enabling informants to negotiate their propensity to global offerings with the Islamic coke or monopoly (Pink 2009).

Halal-Haram as a Trope for Morality. The extended view of halal-haram is likely a reflexive response to the turmoil of modernization, secularization, and globalization. Informants feel that the Western cultural codes and lifestyles embodied in global brands (and espoused by secular regimes) represent a growing departure from Islamic morals, threatening to undermine Islamic civilization. Thus, the re-appropriation of halal-haram reflects a strong desire to infuse the marketplace and its offerings with a moral order, that is, “distinctive set of beliefs, habits, and social bonds” (Fourcade and Healy 2007, 60; Parry and Bloch 1989) based on Islamic teachings.
This moralization project entails an elaborate effort of sorting out and embracing those market offerings that are amicable to Islamist ideology, while pushing back those that are not, in order to exert a morally impeccable Islamist identity.

At the core of this consumption-mediated virtue contest are two competing models of morality: that of the Golden Age and modernity, both of which inform the infidel brands. Despite marked differences, both models view women central to cultural reproduction of an “ideal” morality. The Golden Age view idealizes women as the keepers of home and family; thus, they are fundamental to the sustenance of Islamic life (Saktanber 2002). More importantly, women are the keepers of faith because home also symbolizes Ka'ba (house of God on earth) and Dar-al-Islam (Islamic territories). Accordingly, “a great part of a house’s sacrality depends on the reputation of its female occupants” (Campos as cited in Saktanber 2002).

Women are also fundamental to the Republican agenda but in a significantly different fashion; they are the storefront of Turkey’s modernization and Westernization efforts. To integrate women into civic life, the Kemalist reforms lifted the ban on gender segregation in public institutions, outlawed veiling, and legalized women’s voting and election among a host of other progressive policies. However, urging women to take on untraditional roles also meant initiating a new social conduct that would regulate the public interactions in a formerly gender-segregated society. This new ‘moral code,’ effectively sidelined many of the religious norms (Suman 2000). Therefore, the secular regime is believed to have jeopardized the “reputation” (or in the Islamic context ‘virtue’) of Muslim women by suggesting they take on more ‘civilized’ social roles, but not protecting their honor in the public sphere. Globalization seemed to further threaten Islamic morals. Post 1980’s, Kral TV (a local mock of MTV) and paparazzi shows created a new aesthetics that equates “modernity with indecency…links freedom with nudity and sexuality” (Sandıkçı and Ger 2010, 28), which significantly contested the sacrosanct values of conservative Muslims.

This perceived moral decline from an imagined Golden Age of virtue and piety has been instrumental in Islamist revivalism in Turkey (Saktanber 2002). Reflexively responding to reforms and modern values, the Islamist political rhetoric promised to return to original values, restore women’s honor by allowing them to veil, and reconstitute women’s sacred role as mothers. Covering of popular female fashion models created considerable media hype as the then leaders of the Welfare Party (later Virtue Party) glorified these formerly ‘secular’ women as a showcase of the merciful face of Islam, welcoming the repentant (Kozanoğlu 1995).

It is in this rich context of societal transformation that we should read the halal-haram discourse and the informants’ articulations of infidel brands as imperiling Islamic values. From the lenses of these low cultural and economic-capital informants, the secular regime has sidelined religion from everyday life in the name of modernization, which, in turn, produced faithless generations or at best pseudo-believers, who pay lip service to Islam. A growing departure from Islamic values is believed to have led to the increasing incidents of indecency, adultery, and the rising visibility of gays. The moral system of the secular order is believed to bring about a “satanic lifestyle,” which “promotes sexuality in the disguise of beauty contests, normalizes adultery in the name of friendship, and champions prostitution” (Demircan 2010). In Islamist imagination, such “satanic” lifestyles are reminiscent of the ‘Age of Ignorance’ that ensued before Muhammad revealed Islam. From this cultural stance, informants view global brands as ‘accomplices’ in these seemingly decadent, modern lifestyles. Not only do global brands ideologically foster ‘satanic’ lifestyles by advocating hedonism and commodification of women, but also, with their ubiquity, they help spread these lifestyles. As such, condemning
global brands as infidels becomes a normative practice aimed at recapturing the lost virtues of Golden Age, thus counteracting the threat of returning to the dark days before Islam. This, in turn, renders the extended conceptualization of halal-haram an Islamist trope for morality.

**Tyranny**

This discourse portrays global brands as tyrants who seek to oppress Muslim faith and the greater Islamic community. This perception is deeply entwined with the same socio-historical conditions that triggered the emergence of Islamism as a resistance ideology (Ayoob 2008; Dabashi 2005, 2008; Tibi 1983). In Islamist cultural memory, the colonial past, the Israeli presence on Islamic holy lands, the perceived Western indifference to Muslims’ suffering in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Iraq (Ahmed 2007; Ayoob 2008; Dabashi 2008), as well as the perceived cultural degradation of Islam in Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* and Danish cartoons, all contribute to the image of the U.S. and European countries as ‘unjust’ superpowers. This history plays a central role in the way some Islamists perceive and discursively construe global brands as tyrants who seek to oppress Muslim faith, and thus, infidels.

Today, the prominent forces fueling this perception are the Iraq war and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Informants strongly believe that multinational corporations (MNCs) financially support both the Iraq War and Israel’s interests in the conflict. Consider the comments of Übeydullah and Vedat, respectively, which illustrate MNCs’ perceived ties to the war:

This isn’t a secret; everybody knows this…It’s been on the news, in the papers, the fact that the multinational corporations provided all kinds of support, not just financial, to the Iraq War. I don’t want to get too specific but the Evangelicals who are running the multinationals have a certain perspective on and objectives in the Middle East…They’re [MNCs] dragging the geography I live in into war, and it’s not just the well-known ones like McDonald’s or Coca-Cola but all of them are tooting the battle horn.

You can call this a conspiracy but it’s MNCs that are ruling the world. You can’t do anything against their will or interests. Take Coca-Cola, it isn’t just an ordinary American company; it represents the collective interests of a group of arm dealers and oil giants whose job is to create conflict, sell more weapons, and rub people out of their natural resources. This isn’t something that Bush and a couple of his people created alone.

As these comments illustrate, informants feel disempowered and subjugated vis-à-vis global brands. Similar to their counterparts in other DCs like India (Varman and Belk 2009) and China (Dong and Tian 2009), participants construe these powerful icons of consumer culture as the new agents of Western oppression. Fueling this perception and thereby nourishing the tyranny discourse are the Islamist opinion leaders. The following quote from Dilipak (2010) illustrates the bitterness conjured up in the Islamist collective memory as he calls to the Western countries: “Confess the truth; say that you came to loot Iraq; that you were going to invade Iran next. Say ‘We had Saddam invade Kuwait, we made false accusations, …’ We saw these ugly faces [America and Britain] before, and not only in Baghdad, but also in Kabul and in Srebrenica…We know what they did to the Negros, Native Americans, and the yellow race …What justice, what peace, what freedom? There, this is their democracy!” Similar comments appear on Islamist media on a daily basis and are accentuated by dramatic pictures of infant corpses or striking animations to construe global brands as ‘baby killers,’ ‘vampires that feed on
innocent Muslims’ blood,’ and ‘rapists’ (Appendix A). Such rhetoric renders boycotting global brands a religious duty (farz) as noted in religious scholars’ opinions: “Boycotting the products of invader countries is a duty of Muslims…Quran orders us to do good deeds and help one another. One way of helping one another is to boycott the brands that have become the symbols of globalization and donate a part of their profits to the Israeli army” (Vakit, 2009).

An excellent example of how informants weave global brands into this complex web of ideological conflicts, and thus, construe them as a threat to Islam is a pamphlet, with the headline “Don’t participate in tyranny” (Appendix B). Pointing to it, Menşure proudly says: “We know all the infidel brands and stay away from them. Our religious leaders inform us about those brands when we meet for Quran studies… The pamphlet is also a handy list that you can keep in the kitchen or in your purse when you go shopping.” She adds that similar flyers have been distributed at her daughter’s elementary school and published in Islamist newspapers since the Afghan and Iraq wars began. She is visibly excited and actually reads out a short poem surrounded by the logos of McDonald’s and Nokia: “They are going to put your sun out. Every product you buy will come back to your sisters and brothers as blood, bombs, and bullets. What do you say, will it be your turn someday? We’re not partaking in injustice and oppression. We’re reacting as a nation. We’ve had enough.”

Accentuated by notorious graphic images from Abu Ghraib and Palestine on the back, the pamphlet is laden with potent Islamist rhetoric. Urging consumers “not to participate in the violence,” the narrative construes global brands as a threat to Islam that finance the killings of Muslim “brothers and sisters” in order to “put your sun out,” or figuratively, eradicate Islamic civilization. These claims are also semiotically reinforced through the caricaturized dialogue between an American and a Jew (identified by a cowboy hat and a kippah, respectively), where the American asks the Jew if the ammunition supply is sufficient, and the latter answers: “as long as our products are sold, the supplies are guaranteed.” The cartoon implies not only that the profits from American and Western brands are used to kill Muslims, but also that there exists a strong alliance between the U.S. and Israel in the Arab-Israel conflict. A similar message is conveyed in another flyer (Appendix C), which goes a step further by promising salvation to those who boycott global brands. Legitimizing its message through a verse from the Quran (Verse 16: “Listen, obey, and spend for your best interest. Whoever safeguards himself from nefs, is the one who attains salvation.”), the narrative invites Muslims to “be sensitive to the blood flow.” The provoking script, “the ammunition is not on us” at the bottom, instructs consumers to end the killings in Palestine by boycotting global brands.

Such potent rhetoric resonates deeply with the informants. Although Turkey, unlike Iraq and Palestine, has never been formally colonized, the idea of umma (community of believers), allows informants to empathize with their Muslim ‘brothers and sisters’. Consider the respective comments of Ulviye and Menşure illustrating how informants not only spiritually bond with the greater community of Muslims through their critique, but also pass on to their children the ideological threat of global brands:

It’s not easy to explain to a five-year-old why he shouldn’t drink Nestea because of what Nestlé’s doing in Palestine. But I try… I explain to him that the people who make Nestea are using our money to kill our brothers and sisters in Palestine. I tell him that every Nestea we buy will become a bullet shot at Muslims.

I tell them that the owners of McDonald’s, KFC, Pizza Hut, and all those other infidel brands, aren’t Muslim and that we don’t know what they do with our money. I ask if
they’d like our money to be used to kill our Muslim siblings in other countries. They don’t ask for these things ever again.

Interestingly, the discourse of tyranny and the concomitant derogatory infidel characterization extend beyond global brands to include some Turkish brands such as Eti, Mis, Sek, and Koç. Despite a long heritage and a favorable reputation, these brands are disowned by the informants due to their support of secularist ideology. In particular, companies that enforce the headscarf ban are enwrapped in the tyranny discourse for oppressing the faithful and, thus, provide an excellent example of these local-local tensions. One such company is Koç Holding. The company became the lightning rod of Islamist criticism when its honorary Chairman announced that he would not hire men wearing a mustache or beard (considered by some seculars as typical signs of Islamist identity) (Arman 2008). Koç Holding also came under fire when one of its joint ventures with Ford (Otosan) made headlines in Islamist media for refusing to build prayer rooms and expelling workers who performed prayers at work. Islamist newspapers like Vakit and columnists (Dilipak 2009) rapidly mobilized a boycott against all Koç products. Likewise, a boycott was issued by the pro-Islamist Felicity Party on Sabancı Holding when veiled students were not allowed to visit a Sabancı factory (Milli Gazete 2006). Other reputable local brands have become key targets of the Islamist boycott as a response to Turkish Armed Forces’ (TAF is known as the guardian of the secular regime) counter-boycott of pro-Islamist companies. Shortly after TAF accused some pro-Islamist businesses for undermining the regime and called for an embargo on Ülker and a host of others (Özkan 1997), Islamists started boycotting Eti, a secular company and a key rival of Ülker. The TAF’s counter-boycott only fueled Islamist activism. Since then, Islamist boycott lists have become ubiquitous, being distributed at schools, mosques, and Quran studies. They can also be found on Islamist blogs and social networking sites like Facebook.

The boycotts contributed to Islamist informants’ strong reservations against these companies. For example, Vedat claims to know “a few people who asked for prayer rooms and got fired” by the Koç Automotive Group and therefore protests all the brands that the company represents in Turkey including Ford, Fiat, Alfa Romeo, and Budget. Hanife summarizes her feelings as she recites a proverb: “It is impossible to make pelt from swine and friends with infidels,” firmly identifying all pro-secular establishments as infidels. Likewise, Menşure refrains from purchasing all Koç branded consumer goods. This is noteworthy considering that Arçelik and Beko (both owned by Koç) appliances are a staple in most Turkish households. Particularly for budget-conscious consumers like Menşure, these are logical alternatives to expensive and highly-taxed global brands such as Sony, Samsung, Bosch, and Philips, which informants either buy on installment (often against their religious beliefs) or acquire through immigrant relatives in the EU.

Informants’ preference for foreign over local brands brings up an interesting question: ‘which one is more infidel?’ It seems that informants perceive local pro-secular brands as the greater offender for having succumbed to secular ideology and forgetting their Muslim roots. This noticeably counters previous scholarly assertions that the ‘localness’ alongside the historical legacies of these companies should render Turkish brands as rational alternatives to the ‘imperialist’ global brands (Askegaard et al. 2005; Askegaard and Csaba 2000; Ger 1999; Thompson and Arsel 2004). Local brands, despite many strategic advantages (Ger 1999), are as vulnerable as global brands and can just easily become tangled in ideological conflicts.
Tyrrany as a Trope for Justice. The tyranny discourse is as much a reflexive response to the ‘othering’ (Riggins 1997) of Muslim identity as it is a collective introspection, an Islamist soul searching, in the face of the declining trajectory of the Islamic civilization. For many centuries, Muslims perceived their faith as synonymous with civilization, identifying those beyond their borders as barbarians and infidels (Lewis 2002). Yet, the modernization movement coupled with global flows of technology, ideas, and capital significantly altered this self-perception. Facing a crisis of political and cultural authority, Muslim actors have long been urging to make sense of global developments and their national histories. This reflexive meaning making exercise is most notably documented in the rise of Islamist movements as well as its cultural reflections (e.g. Muslim hip-hop or Islamic novels) and entails a questioning of why Islam failed to keep pace with the developments in the West and how it should respond to the modern world. In other words, the tyranny narrative is not only a countervailing rhetoric to colonial ‘othering’, but also a discursive tool through which Muslims introspect in an effort to negotiate Islam with modernity and capitalism.

Perhaps most noteworthy of this negotiation process is how the tyrant rhetoric semantically portrays Muslims as the mazlum (s/he who was wronged), as the mirror-image of a tyrant. This characterization draws from the Quran, which describes mazlum as a helpless victim of injustice (Verses 16, 17, 22, 26, 31) whose misery summons the moral to rescue. Açıkel (1996) points out that victimization narratives are common in Abrahamic religions as suffering is a testament to one’s devotion to God. He also notes that these widely appealing stories can even be mobilizing because they assure that suffering will ultimately be rewarded by the good’s triumph over evil. Dabashi (2008) argues that the victim motif is significant in folk Islam and notes that ‘delivering earthly justice to the oppressed’ has been a keynote of Islamic political rhetoric.

In Islamic culture, the victimization narrative is epitomized in the suffering that Mohammed and the Golden Age community endured spreading the faith. The humiliation and torture that the first converts are said to have born in the name of protecting Islam against infidels, render these first Muslims ‘true’ mazlums. Notably, Mohammed and his community transform from victim to hero as the story progresses; through their suffering, they are believed to have ended the atrocities that plagued the Arabian Peninsula, building a righteous, just society.

A more contemporary version of this narrative is found in recent Turkish political rhetoric. Inspired by the Islamist movements in the Middle East, pro-Islamist parties have embraced a rhetoric that portrays a history of Muslim victimization reaching back to the colonial history in the Middle East and the Kemalist period at home. Particularly post 1980s, this narrative, which connoted suffering at the hands of infidels, strongly resonated with the masses “who, in the face of belated capitalism and rapid modernization, have been subject to social and cultural deterritorialization and those who rapidly became impoverished” (Açıkel 1996). Indeed, the IMF structural adjustment programs implemented by the government that most dramatically affected the poor (Öniş 1997), when combined with the images of Muslim suffering abroad, reinforced the victimization narrative. Following the 1990s, with the growth of Islamist media, the martyr image was bolstered through an intermixing of local and global stories of veiled girls denied higher education with dead Palestinian babies and the imprisoned at Abu Gharib.

Against these atrocities, Golden Age and Ottoman years are upheld as exemplary periods that brought justice and peace to the oppressed as prominent Islamists treat the past as a model for future. For example, Ergun (2010) promises a better future to those who brave the secular oppression at home and the Western occupation on Muslim lands, and he reminds the suffering
Mohammed endured against the infidels in the early days of his prophecy. Likewise, Duralı (1999) suggests that Turkey can cure the economic and cultural exploitation that globalization brings about by reviving the Ottoman system. Portraying the Ottoman Empire as the ultimate symbol of a just society, Duralı urges fellow Turks not “to leave the world of Islam orphaned.” He argues that it is Turkish Muslims’ historical responsibility to the world’s oppressed to resurrect the Ottoman heritage. Such uplifting rhetoric directly speaks to Islamists wounded psyche and is deemed instrumental in pro-Islamist parties’ march to power (White 2002a).

In the backdrop of these ideological views, the informants employ the tyranny discourse to construe the Muslim consumer as victimized by infidel brands. This helps the informants to blame the other (e.g., colonizers, Kemalists, Jews, global corporations) for the decline of Islam and subjugation of Muslim identity, which in turn, legitimize their quest for a righteous, just society. Identifying an ideological foe also affords informants the opportunity to play the protagonist in this crusade, who would restore the justice and dignity Muslims used to enjoy during the Golden Age. Using the tyranny discourse as a trope for justice and avoiding the stigmatized infidel brands allow informants to pursue this goal.

**CONSUMER JIHAD**

Islamist informants employ three discourses, namely, modesty, halal-haram, and tyranny, to construct global brands as infidels. Each discourse identifies global brands as a threat to Islam, and thus as ‘infidels,’ in a unique manner. While the modesty and halal discourses construct infidel brands as imperiling Islamic solidarity and norms, the tyranny discourses implies that infidel brands seek to cause direct harm to Muslims and eradicate Islamist identity.

Underlying these bitter articulations of infidel brands is, to a great extent, the ostracized socio-economic position of Islamists as a class of distaste in Turkish society. As noted earlier, the culture war between the seculars and the conservatives can be traced back to the Kemalist reforms that curtailed the role of religious capital (Iannaccone 1990) and traditional wisdom in everyday life, significantly undermining the cultural authority of orthodox Muslims. Compounding this cultural conflict was the migration of rural populations with traditional values to the cities in the 1950s, which brought the ‘backward’ into contact with more liberal and wealthier urbanites.

Recent fragmentations within the Islamist community add another layer of intergroup conflict to Turkish society. As the Islamist identity become more normalized in Turkey, some actors in the movement no longer feel the need to stand united against a common ideological foe by adhering to a scripted, normative set of Islamist behavior. Particularly, the middle-class Islamists, equipped with higher cultural and economic capital, seek to de-stigmatize their social standing by switching to more fashionable veiling styles (Sandıkçı and Ger 2010). Ironically, this contributes to the stigmatization of the traditionalist Islamists as ‘radical’.

Such ostracization, when combined with global events that are perceived to victimize Muslims, propel informants to formulate the infidel brand parable. As mapped out in the theoretical model, informants draw from a constellation of resources (see fig. 1 – outer circle) such as macro-historical factors (e.g., colonial history, Iraq War), global consumer culture, and local structures (e.g., institutionalization of modernization, Islamist-secular tension), as well as religious teachings, ideology, and the mythical narratives of original Muslims (fig. 1 – inner circle) to develop the three discourses that cast infidel brands as a threat to Islam. This perceived
threat, in turn, motivates them to defend sacrosanct Islamic values and ideals by performing, what I call, a consumer jihad.

Jihad is a widely spectacularized concept that has recently become synonymous with Islamist fanaticism (Huntington 1996). However, jihad holds multiple meanings from self-rejuvenation, spiritual struggle, to self-defense (Ahmed 2007; Ayoob 2008). Informant narratives reveal that resistance to infidel brands is reminiscent of jihad’s latter meaning as self-defense. In the Islamist imagination, avoiding infidel brands very much resembles an economic jihad, a non-violent way of defending the ‘true’ Muslim way of life against Western and secular influences.

More importantly, however, performing the consumer jihad gives the informants license to correct the flawed aspects of modern market societies and construct a marketplace that is consistent with their religious ideology. Taming the marketplace, however, requires a counter-narrative to the market society, or a morally impeccable blueprint that would serve as the foundation for the ideal society informants envision. Given their ostracized status, informants seek this blueprint by ‘looking back’ to find a dignifying past. Informants reflect on a time when Islam was ‘pure,’ with the hope that emulating such a flawless past would help construct an amicable marketplace for all. Blending Islamic teachings and mythical narratives with their worldview (fig 1. – inner circle), they find this idealized past, first and foremost, in the myth of ‘Golden Age’ as evinced in informants’ reference to Mohammad’s exemplary practice and the original community of Muslims. The Ottoman past, known as the ‘second Golden Age,’ also provides an inspirational model for an ideal Islamic society.

These mythologized periods are fundamental to Islamist identity and critique of infidel brands. Not only do they represent a nostalgic period in which being faithful had some currency, but also serve as archetypal templates against which informants can evaluate today’s market society and envision a ‘better’ world. The elaborate critique of infidel brands embodied in the three discourses of modesty, halal, and tyranny reveals informants’ perceptions of modern capitalist societies as bound with social inequalities, moral decay, and injustices. The infidel parable allows informants to contest what they perceive to be the ill-effects of modernization and globalization, while performing the consumer jihad provides them the opportunity to pursue an idealized Islamic society by instilling Islamic mores in modern marketplace.

The consumer jihad, then, is a process of accommodation and protest. While protesting infidel brands is a way of ‘defending’ an Islamic way of life against Western ideologies and perceived subjugation, trying to moralize the market (Fourcade and Heally 2007; Parry and Bloch 1989) and embracing Islamized products are means through which informants habituate consumerism and market economy. The extent to which informants accommodate or protest is closely tied to the socio-economic status of individuals. For example, some lower-cultural and economic capital informants perform the consumer jihad by withdrawing from the marketplace as much as possible (e.g., not frequenting the weekly street markets and malls, assigning grocery shopping to others, and in some cases shunning TV and radio) for purposes of spiritual purification. These informants prefer to devote majority of their time to praying, holding Quran studies, fasting, and charity work. They feel that the less they participate in the earthly affairs and the mundane functioning of the market system, the better they would be able to preserve
(and pass down to future generations) an authentic Islamic culture that would pose a viable alternative to modern market society. This type of passive, but highly pious, activism is a way of contesting the inequalities, social hierarchies, and erosion of morals the informants perceive to be embedded in contemporary society. For those informants with a relatively higher economic and cultural means, however, waging the consumer jihad means actively participating in the market by following both the secular and Islamist media, keeping current with the boycott websites, knowing the pro-Islamist companies, putting pressure on retailers to carry halal goods, and seeking out Islamic alternatives to everyday consumption choices.

These varying degrees of accommodation and protest embodied in consumer jihad are also consistent with Yavuz’s (2004) typology of Islamist movements. He distinguishes between society and state-centric movements. Yavuz argues that society-centric movements aim to transform society (rather than state) in two-ways: everyday life-based movements are concerned with “utilizing new opportunity spaces in the market, education, and media to change social relations,” while inward-oriented movements “disengage from what they view as illegitimate sociopolitical systems…and focus on cultivating the inner self as the inner space to construct reinvigorated Islamic consciousness along very traditional lines” (Yavuz 2004, 276). Referring to the fragmentation within the movement, Yavuz (2004, 277) also distinguishes between the “losers” and “winners”. Losers are those who “have suffered the dislocations of modernity without the attendant economic benefits and have maintained an authoritarian and socially rigid view of Islam, which favors a strong welfare state…they are very suspicious of the relativism fostered by the market and economy”. The winners are the pro-Islamist businesses, which “used the marketplace” and “through the reproduction and commodification of Islamic symbols, have effectively exploited the new opportunity spaces created by economic reform” (278).

Accordingly, Yavuz suggests that the winners would pursue a society-centric orientation, while losers would seek to take control of the state either through political or violent means.

In Yavuz’s terminology, the informants of this study would be the losers due to their limited economic means and their dislocated immigrant position. Yet, interestingly, the consumer jihad they perform exhibits both the integrative (everyday life-based) and withdrawal (inward, contemplative) strategies, which Yavuz finds characteristic of society-centered movements. While further research is needed to address the myriad ways in which socio-economic status interacts with Islamist ideology to inform market orientation, this study offers a nuanced account of how low-income Islamists both accommodate and protest market ideology in various ways. As such, consumer jihad bridges accounts of accommodation found among the upper-middle class (Sandıkçı and Ger 2010, Yavuz 2004) and protest observed among the poor (Yavuz 2004).

**DISCUSSION**

This study offers an account of Islamist critique of infidel brands in the developing country context of Turkey. The study’s focus on adherents of Islam allows us to understand the Islamist stance toward market society in light of the complex relationships among ideology, religion, class, and the market. The infidel is a theologically informed parable that the informants construe by drawing from a collage of historical and cultural referents to demonize ideologically antagonist brands. The discourses of modesty, halal-haram, and tyranny that the informants use to cast brands as infidels, at a deeper level of analysis, reflect the religiously imbued microcultural meanings (Thompson and Troester 2002) that the informants hold about an
exemplary society, which, in turn, shapes their critical interpretation of modern market societies. Informants’ microcultural frames of reference regarding issues of social equality, morality, and justice that are rooted in Islamic teachings propels them to mobilize mythical narratives (Luedicke et al. 2010) such as the Age of Ignorance, Golden Age, and the second Golden Age to understand contemporary societal issues and sociopolitical crises. In the backdrop of countermemories (Thompson and Tian 2008) of Islamist encounters with modernization and global powers, infidel brands are identified as those threatening the fundamental values, which are enshrined in these mythical formations and are essential to Islamist identity. Such an affront summons the moralist to defend Islamist values through a consumer jihad. The fact that performing this jihad involves not only punishing infidel brands, but also embracing its antithetical in the form of Islamized brands, suggests that the consumer jihad is not simply about renouncing Western market-based models. Rather, it is a more complex and nuanced endeavor to negotiate Islam and Islamist identity with market society. Informants seek to transform the marketplace by rectifying the flawed aspects of modern capitalist systems, using the blueprints of an impeccable society believed to have existed in the mythical formations of Golden Age. Such punitive, yet remedial, efforts as informed by a religious ideology represent an unexplored challenge to global brands that most powerfully reveals itself in DCs where Islamism is on the rise and global-local encounters most potently materialize. And as such, the Islamist discourses of infidel brands present a complement to the ideological contradictions in Western consumer culture (Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002; Thompson and Arsel 2004). The findings contribute and advance theorization on the intermingling of religion, ideology, and consumption, brands’ symbolic role, and consumer resistance.

Religion, Ideology, and Consumption

Various views have been forwarded about religion’s role in modern society. Classical scholars have argued that religion, in the wake of modernization and secularization, would gradually lose the pivotal role it once played in traditional societies (Weber 1930). Other scholars in postmodern milieu have argued that modernity paradoxically fosters the quest for religious affiliation as the disenchanted and alienated modern individual desperately seeks for meaning in life (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Following this viewpoint, studies show that the quest for meaning manifests itself in ordinary consumption experiences being imbued with magical or mythical qualities (Arnould et al. 1999, Luedicke et al. 2010). Befitting our times, consumers often mobilize modern and even commercial myths (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008, Holt and Thompson 2004, Penaloza 2001, Thompson and Tian 2008) with temporal inflections reflective of contemporary identity anxieties or sociohistorical crises; mountain men rendezvousing to reenact the mythical American West (Belk and Costa 1998), everyday men performing masculinity myths (Holt and Thompson 2004), consumers recreating western cultural meanings at a stock show (Penaloza 2001), Indians reenacting the Swadeshi movement to construct a sovereign country (Varman and Belk 2009), Turks performing the Western lifestyle myth (Üstüner and Holt 2010), or Hummer enthusiasts playing the moral protagonist to defend American values (Luedicke et al. 2010) are all examples of consumers embracing modern myths to pursue various identity and lifestyle goals through consumption. The present study advances this stream of research on consumer mythology (Levy 1981) by illuminating the powerful role that religion can play in forging consumer myths, and in turn, identity projects. While many contemporary consumption narratives might have religious undertones (Luedicke et al. 2010,
Muniz and Schau 2005), existing studies (Belk and Costa 1998, Holt and Thompson 2004, Penaloza 2001, Üstüner and Holt 2010, Varman and Belk 2009) do not explicitly address religion as a rich source of consumer mythology. Rather, religion is often assumed to be an underlying motif in consumer narratives as passionate, fanatical consumption experiences often have overtones of religiosity (Kozinets 2001, Luedicke et al. 2010, Muniz and Schau 2005). By showing that the Islamic background and life politics of the informants render the Golden Age myth resonant (out of many epic, nationalist, and genesis narratives abundant in the pre- and post-Islamic Turkish history) and illustrating how this myth informs the infidel parable and the Consumer Jihad, this study illustrates the powerful role that religion, when intertwined with ideology, plays in the mobilization of consumer myths, the formation of consumer goals, and eventually consumption choices. As such, this study addresses religious nuances not articulated by previous conceptions of myth (Levy 1981, Stern 1995).

The findings also suggest that religion not only informs consumption experiences, but also mobilizes consumers to pursue social change. The transformative aspects of consumer jihad that seek to negotiate Islam with capitalism and modern market society in light of Golden Age values, contrast with Marxist accounts of religion as an opiate. As Marx sees it “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (as quoted in McKown 1975, 52). As such, Marxist position on religion has emphasized its palliative and consolatory function, arguing that religion numbs political consciousness by “deflecting temporal concerns toward other worldly pursuits, offering oppressed groups no more than pacification to their subordinated status in society” (Harris 1994, 43). As an example, African-American political apathy has been attributed to ‘black religion’, which was viewed as the culprit for lulling African-Americans by providing an “otherworldly solace for temporal ills” (Lane 1959, 250). Yet, religious rhetoric, while soothing, may also serve as a catalyst for mobilization and social change. As Wald (1987, 29-30) observes, religion can become a political resource as “human beings will make enormous sacrifices if they believe themselves to be driven by a divine force.” Particularly, religious vernacular, symbols, and myths can serve as significant cultural resources that mobilize individuals as a civil right activist notes: “Nobody could have ever argued segregation and gotten people convinced to do anything about that. But when Martin [Luther King] would talk about leaving the slavery of Egypt and wondering into a promised land, somehow that made sense to folks…it was their grass roots ideology. It was their faith; it was the thing they had been nurtured on” (as quoted in Harris 1994, 50). Akin to the way MLK evokes a promised land, informants seek a promised space and time for the marginalized Islamist identity and politics through the Golden Age myth and the Islamic vernacular (i.e., nefs, buğz etc.). These religious resources are instrumental in shaping the infidel parable and mobilizing the consumer jihad. The informants’ restorative and reformative efforts embodied in consumer jihad reflect Islamist agency, thereby attesting to religion's important role in consumer culture as a catalyst for social change, in addition to its palliative function.

Informants’ endeavor to forge the golden age myth in the market also allows us to enrich previous conceptualizations of Islamism as a paramilitary movement that hopelessly pursues a lost grand past, and thus, is doomed to fail in an increasingly globalized world. In contrast, considering pro-Islamist AK Party's ambition to make Turkey the leader of the Muslim world (e.g., brokering peace deals between Palestine and Israel, engaging in nuclear negotiations with Iran), Turkey’s recent role as a key cultural intermediary in Middle East (e.g., exporting TV dramas and music), and the timely emergence of Turkish Islamic brands, the infidel parable is a
forward-looking rhetoric that not only firmly entrenches the Islamist identity in the global community, but also helps demonize the competition in an odd, nonetheless, market-savvy way. As Thompson and Tian (2008, 609) suggests, the past that the Islamists uphold in the golden age myth is not just "a repository of displaced meaning for valued ideals but also an invaluable cultural resource for creating a more desirable future". By demonstrating that the ideal of golden age can actually be pursued through everyday consumption choices, this study illuminates market articulations of Islam, advancing prior conceptualizations of Islamist ideology.

Consumer Resistance and Anticonsumerism

This research extends theories of consumer resistance and anticonsumerism in several important ways. First, this paper contrasts conventional interpretations of Islamism as a rhetorical tool that naturally breeds an anticonsumerist ideology, thereby posing a threat to consumer culture and the contemporary social order in Western societies (Gellner 1992; Turner 1994; Webb 2005). Particularly, Barber (1996) views Islam in clash with 'McWorld', or the global consumer world, while Kozinets and Handelman (2004, 702) suggest that Islamic fundamentalism is “one of the most powerful threats to global consumerist ideology today.” The implications of these interpretations are twofold: (1) Islam(ism) is the ideological archenemy of and seeks to undermine Western civilization as most elaborately articulated in the “clash of civilizations” theory (Huntington 1993), and (2) Islam(ism) is essentially antimarket. A latent implication of these views is the way they inevitably portray the Islamic consumer, in an Orientalist fashion, as an exotic breed with fundamentally different life views and projects. This paper addresses all of these implications respectively.

First of all, from the essentialist and reductionist perspective of the clash of civilizations theory, this study can be interpreted as an example of consumer behavior motivated by anti-American, anti-Zionist, and implicitly, anti-Western ideologies. However, as convenient as such explanations may be, they fail to illuminate the intermingling complexity of issues triggering the Islamist critique, particularly overshadowing the role of local-local dynamics. By demonstrating that the derogatory notion of infidel includes not just global brands but also local ones, this study helps us move beyond the popular clash of civilizations theory, indicating that such ideological tensions cannot be conveniently reduced to an East-West conflict, but rather include people of the same nationality and religious orientation.

Second, this study counters assumptions that Islam is antimarket and contributes to a burgeoning stream of research that empirically investigates market reflections of Islam (Rudnyckyj 2009; Sandıkçı and Ger 2010; Wong 2007). While informants may criticize consumerism and capitalism at the discursive level, in practice they are well versed in the consumptionscape, exhibiting knowledge of brands and producers. The Islamic doppelgänger brands, along with the modern marketing strategies Islamists use to institutionalize halal in Turkey (Izberk-Bilgin, 2011), suggest that rather than dethroning market capitalism and consumer culture, Islamists seek to be firmly embedded in a market society so that they may transform it to be congruent with Islamist mores. This market-bound activism may be attributable to the fact that informants are ‘products’ of the modern, secular system. Growing up with the modernist rhetoric and secular education system, informants seek a resolution to their sidelined ideological status, stagnation in the lower steps of social hierarchies, and perceived victimization in the hands of global powers within the marketplace. By highlighting the dialogical links (Holt 2002) among Islam, market,
and consumerism, this study agrees with Sandıkçı and Ger (2010) that what we observe is ‘Jihad via McWorld,’ rather than Jihad versus McWorld.

Together, these findings also challenge exoticization of the Muslim consumer. Most popular perceptions of Islam are shaped by the colonial accounts of the eroticism of the harem, the mysticism of splendid mosques and palaces, as well as oppression of women or the despotism of Muslim rulers (Pinn 2000). The latter view of Islam as barbaric and anti-Western understandably resonates with many individuals in a post-9/11 world, inadvertently reinforcing the ‘otherness’ of Muslims. Yet, the Islamist critique we see in this study is quiet reminiscent of the consumer moralism found in a closer reading of the research on sustainability, green movements, voluntary simplicity, ethical consumerism, and consumer resistance (Elgin 1981; Kozinets 2002; Simon 2011; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007; Ulver-Sneistrup et al. 2011). Likewise, Islamist rhetoric of victimization and moral decay echo the Swadeshi activists’ view of Coca-Cola as subordinating India (Varman and Belk, 2009), the Chinese perceptions of domination by Western brands (Dong and Tian 2009), and the Televangelists’ take on America’s economic problems as retribution for its amoral permissiveness (O’Guinn and Belk, 1989). Further, the Islamist quest to moralize the market based on Islamic principles is not unlike Christian activism that targets corporations like Disney and Home Depot for promoting Paganism and homosexuality. The pursuit of a romantic past is not peculiar to Islamists, either. Indeed, at times of significant social change, searching for comfort and inspiration in an idealized past has been a recuperating practice recurrent in history. For example, Lears (1994) notes that the American antimodernists, just like Islamists, embarked on a quest for an authentic past; trying to escape from the ‘unrealness’ of secular life and driven by a deep religious longing to restore meaning, the fin-de-siècle elites adopted the pre-modern roles of medieval craftsman, saint, and warrior for modern ends, interestingly resulting in a consumer culture of therapeutic and intense experiences as well as a quest for foreign markets. Meyer (1998) finds that modern Ghanaians try to connect with their past by revitalizing certain rituals and traditions to restore ‘national heritage’ in the face of Westernization and globalization. Likewise, Americans, at troublous points in nation’s history like 9/11, have sought solace in an idealized past and hoped to return to ‘City on a Hill’ (Murphy 2009). Restoring meaning in a material world by seeking a community or a lost past via market-mediated experiences has also been noted as a significant pattern in CCT research (Arnould and Thompson 2005). These similarities illustrate how the Islamist critique is dialectically linked to global criticism of modernization, globalization, and market society, reinforcing Wilk’s (1995) concept of ‘global structures of common difference’.

While the infidel critique parallels consumer moralism, the Islamist discursive agenda differs from some of the key concerns expressed in the ‘jeremiad against consumerism’ cultural viewpoint (Luedicke et al. 2010). Interestingly, most informants are indifferent to and even unaware of the many postmodern tropes of anticorporate and anticonsumerist criticism such as sweatshop labor, genetically-modified organisms, pollution, and fair trade. Rather, the core of the infidel critique represents a culmination of Islamist reflexivity to and perceptions of historical global-local (e.g., colonial history, Israel-Palestine conflict) as well as local-local (e.g., class and ideological tensions) dynamics. Consequently, the Islamist discourses, perhaps as a result of the low-cultural capital of informants, are reflective of these more imminent and ‘closer to home, closer to heart’ issues. Given the accelerated flows of information in our globalized age, other issues (e.g., fair-trade) may trickle down gradually through Islamist media and intellectuals to low-cultural and economic capital individuals.
Also noteworthy is the zealous activism informants display, even though they do not formally belong to an activist organization. For example, some informants diligent monitor acquisition and merger news and quickly renounce acquired local brands as infidels. Others monitor their friends’ and neighbors’ consumption and warn them about infidel brands. Such a devout commitment and policing others’ consumption distinguish informants from critical consumers (Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002; Thompson and Arsel 2004). This suggests that the Islamist critical stance demonstrates a unique caliber of consumer commitment, encouraging us to rethink Thompson’s (2004, 174) assertion that social change within the marketplace can only be achieved by “organized, grassroots political movement(s) spearheaded by a network of activist organizations” such as Organic Consumers Association, Greenpeace, or Adbusters. In addition to political forms of organization, we see that religious ideology can help build a common platform and offer a compelling, unifying vision, upon which consumers can develop critical views of the market and pursue social change. The power of a religious ideology to provide such a persuasive calling is noteworthy; unlike the fragmented postmodern resistance discourses (e.g., fair-trade, organic, green, local food, small business) with this worldly goals (e.g., support local economy to create jobs), Islamism, in this case, not only offers a grand narrative complete with its myths, vernacular, and symbols to motivate consumers to push for social change, but also promises salvation. This characteristic of religious ideologies—Islamist, Christian, or other—may promise a higher likelihood of achieving social change, rendering religion an attractive source of counter-market ideology to more critical consumers.

Lastly, this study demonstrates that market skepticism and consumer morality are not exclusive to middle-class individuals with cultural capital and economic privileges (Arnould 2007; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Thompson 2003; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007; Thompson and Troester 2002); rather, positions of disadvantage and disempowerment, like in the case of shantytown residents of this study, are equally, if not more, instrumental in fostering a criticism of consumer culture and market capitalism.

Infidel Brands as Symbolic Devices

The growing literature on the symbolic aspects of brands suggest that brand stories, whether generated by consumers or marketers, increasingly structure the way we understand our identity, relationships, social conflicts, and global events. Brands present “horizons of conceivable action, feeling, and thought” (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869) that allow consumers to frame their identity and understand the world around them. In a similar vein, Askegaard (2006, 84) suggests that brands are significant ideoscapes in the globalization process: Brand is “a central metaphor for understanding marketplace actors and practices in the modern game of identity formation.” In this sense, brands serve as vehicles for identity construction both at the individual and collective level. Indeed, Cayla and Eckhardt (2008) demonstrate how marketers, through powerful storytelling, build brands that create a transnational Asian identity and consciousness. Building on Cayla and Eckhardt’s study, we see that the infidel brand parable facilitates informants’ pursuit of ‘Islamist’ identity both at an individual and a collective level. Performing the consumer jihad is not only an assertion of religious identity, but also a way of connecting with the global Muslim community and constructing a pan-Islamic identity. By demonstrating how infidel brands help informants understand others (seculars, global companies), think of themselves as ‘better’ Muslims, and forge spiritual connections with the umma, this study contributes to a growing literature on the
symbolic aspects and social linking value of brands (Askegaard 2006; Holt 2002; Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Muniz and Schau 2005).

This research also highlights the important role that brands play in the articulation of the time and space dimensions of ideological consumption (Varman and Belk 2009). Recently, there has been a growing interest in how consumption mediates consumers’ understanding of past, present, and future. For example, Dong and Tian (2009) illustrate how the Chinese selectively draw from past moments and historical referents to construct Western brands as liberators or oppressors. These brand meanings tied to perceptions of past, in turn, mediate consumers’ view of East-West relations and national identity formation. Similarly, Varman and Belk (2009) show that rejection of Coca-Cola is a vehicle for construing an authentic Indian past and an Indian identity that remains unsullied in the face of globalization. This interest in the symbolic value of brands in discursive construction of ‘time’ as an imagined entity coincides with increasing attention to the role of brands in mediating construction of space. For example, Sherry (1994) and Kozinets et al. (2004) illustrate the central role that brands play in creating commercial spaces, while more recent studies offer examples of how brands facilitate construction of national and regional space making practices within global power hierarchies (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Varman and Belk 2009). This research builds on these studies by illustrating how invented past, or what Hobsbawm (1983) calls, ‘invented tradition,’ motivates informants to construct a time and space for the marginalized Islamist identity. Hobsbawm (1983, 1) defines invented tradition as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.... they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations (emphasis added).” Like Hobsbawm suggests, informants selectively draw from recent and remote past references to piece together the Golden Age narrative, a “suitable past” in response to a deterritorialized Muslim identity (Üstüner and Holt 2007) in the wake of modernization, secularization, and globalization. This reading of the Golden Age denotes a particular moment and space when Islam was ‘pure’ and being Muslim signaled a privileged social status. As such, performing the consumer jihad is a practice that is aimed at creating the Islamist ‘moment’ and ‘space’ within a secular culture; and infidel brands are integral to this exercise.

Lastly, this research contributes to brand communities literature by illustrating the importance of religious identity in facilitating market-mediated community formation. It is important to note that it is not an Islamist antagonism toward a particular brand or even an antimarket stance that unites the informants. Rather, the Islamist solidarity vis-à-vis infidel brands is founded on a shared religious identity and ideological appropriations of Islam. The consumer jihad reinforces this solidarity by allowing informants to imagine, create, and sustain a spiritual bondage to a community of wronged Muslims, similar to the way members of brand communities form social unity. Yet, unlike the postmodern brand communities or evanescent hypercommunities, the Islamist community represents a kind of social solidarity organized around a religious identity where membership cannot be established in an ad hoc fashion (Kozinets 2002; McAlexander et al. 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Muñiz Jr. and Schau 2005), purchased (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007), or easily terminated. Whether these types of market-mediated communities, in which religious identity offers a staunch form of affiliation in addition to shared feelings for a brand, are more sustainable or successful in
transforming the market than other types of brand communities is an interesting question for future empirical research.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several limitations. First, this study captures a particular interpretation of Islam that has been informed by the unique historicity of the Turkish context, and therefore, is not fully reflective of how Islamic teachings are diversely understood within the global Muslim community due to sectarian and ethnic differences. Turkish informants’ socio-historically constructed and mainly Sunni interpretations of Islam, in turn, influence a similarly peculiar interpretation of Islamism among the informants. While some elements of the Turkish Islamist critique can be expected to be common throughout the Islamic world, this remains an empirical question. Particularly, the lack of a formal colonial experience in Turkey may suggest that Islamist reactions to global brands can be more pronounced in countries with a colonial past. Future research should explore if the consumer discourses identified in this study are prevalent in other parts of the Muslim world.

Secondly, the informants’ low socio-economic class status does not allow us to fully explore how middle-class or affluent Islamists perceive global brands and practice different consumption ideologies. Therefore, it is very likely that some of the discourses identified in this study will appeal to Islamists from different class positions while others will not. For example, we can expect that the classification of some global brands as “infidels” as reflected in the halal-haram and tyranny discourses will resonate with many Islamists from various socio-economic strata. Yet, the normative decrees of modesty, as examined in this study, would probably not be shared among the middle-class Islamists who indeed use fashionable veiling to disassociate themselves from the likes of the Islamists in this study (Sandıkçı and Ger, 2010). The same could also be said of Islamist nouveau riche, who reportedly splurges on gold faucets engraved with Swarovski crystals or elaborate satellite systems and plasma screens continuously streaming live views of the Great Mosque of Mecca (Ergu 2009). Seeking to negotiate their religiosity with consumerism, this affluent class of Islamists has even developed a doctrine of prosperity, akin to its Evangelical counterpart, to counter the modesty ethos. Wealthy Islamists seek to legitimate their class-based dispositions to consumerism by combating the “mistaken views about Islam being against wealth,” which are “created and disseminated precisely by the enemies of Islam” to perpetuate the “economic backwardness of the Muslim world” (Buğra 1998, 531). Clearly, different class positions within the Muslim community reproduce different consumption ideologies and practices. Just like other consumers, Islamists rely on their class-based, sociocultural resources to negotiate ideologies and practices in everyday life (Holt 1997; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006).

Rather interesting from a theoretical perspective is how contesting interpretations of Islamism would contribute to the utopia of Islamic solidarity. The unity of Muslims is not just a sacrosanct goal, but also a pragmatic one. This ideal has served, particularly during the early years of the movement in Turkey and elsewhere, to create a strong front against secular ideology, thereby helping Muslim actors to make space for Islamist identity (e.g., Islamist schools, resorts, business associations, NGOs, and political parties) in predominantly secular countries (Göle 2000; Öncü and Weyland 1997; Pink 2009). Coupled with their increasing integration into market society, Turkish Islamists’ new found visibility and power will perhaps undermine the utopia of solidarity as some no longer feel the need to enact a consistent Islamist identity.
Investigating the new discourses of consumerism that emerge within the Muslim community and exploring what these new interpretations may mean for the appeal of Islamism – particularly for the world’s poor - would prove to be an interesting interdisciplinary avenue of future research.
Appendix A

Israel Boykot malları listesi

(Heading on the picture reads: “Baby killer Israel;” Footer reads: “Israel Boycott Products List”)
Appendix B

(Heading reads: “People, do not participate in tyranny!”)
Appendix C

(Header reads: “Boycott Israel: Be Sensitive to the Blood Flow,” Middle of the picture, Verse 16 from Quran reads: “Listen, obey, and spend for your best interest. Whoever safeguards himself from nefs, is the one who attains salvation.”), Footer reads: “Ammunition is not on us! Think twice where your money goes because you are Muslim.)
REFERENCES


——— (2008), Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire, Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
Duralı, Teoman (1999), “Osmanlı Adalet Timsali” (Ottoman -The epitome of Justice), Yeni Şafak, November 23.


Ergu, Elif (2009), "İslami Kurumlarının Şafaatkızı Ev Hayatı" (The Pompous Domestic Life of Islamic Bourgeoisie) in *Tempo*, April 12.


Gürdoğan, Nazif (2008), "Seküler Kültürlərin Önlenemeyen Krizi (The Unavoidable Crisis of Secular Culture)," October 26.

——— (2011), "Tüketime Karşı En Büyük Silahımız Tasavvuf (Islamic Mysticism is our best weapon against Consumption)," *Yeni Şafak*, September 12.


This document is part of a JCR Manuscript Review History. It should be used for educational purposes only.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fehmiye</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Hanife – Hacı</td>
<td>40-43</td>
<td>F (M)</td>
<td>Housewife and self-proclaimed Qur’an instructor – Mechanic</td>
<td>Elementary – High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Perihan - Abdullah</td>
<td>42-45</td>
<td>F (M)</td>
<td>Qur’an instructor - Imam</td>
<td>Middle School – High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menşure</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saliha</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevginur</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Ulviye - Ahmet</td>
<td>36-41</td>
<td>F (M)</td>
<td>Housewife – Night Guard</td>
<td>Elementary – High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Üneydullah</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High-school Teacher</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Vasfiye - Dursun</td>
<td>43-47</td>
<td>F (M)</td>
<td>Maid – Doorman</td>
<td>Middle school – Middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedat</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>High-school Teacher</td>
<td>BA/MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasemin</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>High School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Married couples are indicated with an asterisk (*).
TABLE 2
SELECTED INFORMANT QUOTES AND FIELD NOTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modesty</th>
<th>Halal-Haram</th>
<th>Tyranny</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Consumption is a trap meant to addict us to European and American culture and their products. It’s a trap that would swallow you if you were to fall prey to temptations and, god forbid, yield to your nefs…Nowadays credit card applications are even handed out at street corners, subway stations. But then we hear about those people setting themselves on fire in front of everyone, jumping from the bridge [Bosphorus] because they can’t pay their debt. It’s a trap that makes you fail the test of nefs and take your own life; isn’t that the greatest sin of all?</td>
<td>2.1 Our compass is Allah. Everything we eat and drink has to be halal and clean…I don’t shop at retailers that carry alcoholic beverages. Once there’s alcohol somewhere, nothing remains halal there.</td>
<td>3.1 The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are actually information wars. We don’t know if what we’re seeing or hearing is real because it’s CNN’s reality. Al-Jazeera took their (CNN’s) mask off. Global brands are involved in the same game; they’re the cast in this play. And this play is about the money and global powers’ interests. Global brands fit this scenario as long as they funnel their exorbitant profits to (American) Republican aims.</td>
<td>1. The story about Huzeyfe (?) that Vedat told today might be a hadith (double-check). We were talking about Islam as a religion that encourages spiritual refinement and he gave an example from this Huzeyfe character. Huzeyfe wants water and his water arrives in a gold cup. He throws the cup away immediately and reminds everyone present that the Prophet forbid believers to eat and drink from gold cups and wear silk. Vedat adds that Prophet said infidels used these luxury goods in this world, whereas only believers would have these in the afterlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 We didn’t buy salami or sausage before Aytac and Ikbal came along (pro-Islamist brands). You never know, we even heard that others have horse meat in them. And we only had Pinar and Maret (local brands) before. One belongs to Koç, the other Sabancı (local companies perceived to be pro-secular), can you trust them?</td>
<td>2.3 We ate at KFC when we were visiting Saudi Arabia. We don’t go there here though.</td>
<td>3.2 Ariel (P&amp;G detergent), for example, supports the war. The corporate group Ariel belongs to is a monopoly that is dangerous to world peace. It’s Evangelicals’ greatest supporter.</td>
<td>2. Perihan mentioned that they too, like Hanife, sold their TV when private stations emerged. She said she was most concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The first letter our son wrote down was ‘M’ and it looked a lot like McDonald’s logo. I was really upset. We try to educate him, “If a son of man had</td>
<td>3.3 I don’t prefer Koç (local pro-secular company), I won’t deal with anyone who offends Muslims.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This document is part of a JCR Manuscript Review History. It should be used for educational purposes only.
a valley full of gold, he would desire to have two. Nothing can fill his mouth except the earth (of the grave). Allah turns with mercy to him who turns to Him in repentance.” People foolishly think that there is no more an economic crisis, but they don’t realized that it’s just postponed thanks to all the credit cards [critically]. But it’ll eventually hit us. If more people were to control their nefs, however, we wouldn’t be in this situation to begin with. What we need to do is to think about how a real Muslim should live. If we lived to the principles like a true Muslim, we, as a society, wouldn’t be in this mess.

1.3 Bir lokma, bir hirka (getting by with very little) is our philosophy. I see Muslim and consumption as a paradox. It’s ok to have the necessities but we don’t have anything to do with the “what can I buy new today?” mentality.

teach him that it isn’t halal, but he’s too young to understand. When McDonald’s commercials are everywhere, speaking so loud, I wonder if he’d be able to hear us.

2.5 There’s nothing for us in those fast food restaurants. We can’t trust them to uphold our Islamic values.

2.6 Disney and Hollywood, I think they impose incredulity and that’s all. That’s the value they represent.

2.7 (explaining why P&G’s sanitary pad brand Orkid is haram) Don’t you know how they produce Orkid? They make those pads out of wheat so that it absorbs better. Out of wheat!!! [with anger] How could they expect us to sit on God’s blessing? They are literally forcing Muslims to sin.

3.4 Max Factor is one of those who offend Muslims. I have antipathy to all cosmetics products anyway. They’re one of those products where the cost is really minimal, but the profit margin is incredibly high. Then, the proceeds go to armament.

3.5 Let me give you an example. Microsoft began a promotion for teachers recently. But you had to open a credit card at Vakıf Bank. Bill Gates came to Turkey to promote this campaign. But turns out he wasn’t here to help us improve our education system or help with our development, but to force us into debt. He wants to dump his outdated products that way and enslave us to paying installments for a life time. That’s economic zulm (tyranny) indeed.

3.6 Nestle, Coca-Cola, and Fanta collaborate with Jews and kill Palestinians. Muslim media has been exposing these; if it weren’t any truth to the news, these brands would sue about liberal programming in Kral TV and commercials with inappropriate materials. She mentioned the Nestea commercials with half-naked teenagers kissing on the beach. She said she was offended. She complained about the ‘loose’ behavior among youth, and added that most young women lacked the virtues, piety, and spirituality of the sahabe (first converts).

3. Übeydullah and his family were invited to a wedding recently. They’re showing me the pictures. Übeydullah tells me how he’s not fond of today’s weddings. He goes into the details of the old, traditional wedding ceremonies they used to have in
1.4 Our faith forbids us to consume more than what we need. Because that is waste. People use brands in a wrong way. Instead of being a certificate of trust or reliability, people use brands to distinguish their status. That’s not a good thing, though, to stand out like that...

1.5 Consumption isn’t a part of our culture but the more we become Westernized, the more it infiltrates into our lives. I find consumption culture a bit offending human dignity; it reduces us to the carnal: a body. But humans aren’t just body and soul, there is also nefs. Our prophet (saw) said it so well when he said that nefs is our greatest enemy. We get further away from our true selves and our true culture, when we forget about these things.

1.6 God bless you that you’re veiled. But why would you have a Pierre Cardin or Aker [local

3.7 I won’t let Nestle products into our home. We stay away from these brands, particularly Nestle and American brands, because they stream their profits to oppress the poor Muslims in Iraq. We also heard that Sana (margarine brand by Unilever) has been supporting the war.

We don’t buy Arçelik (consumer electronics brand by Koç) even though we know of and trust its high quality. We didn’t have a TV for a long time. We had it earlier, but sold it after private stations mushroomed. But we bought a new one recently after we heard from friends about the valuable, educational programs on Muslim channels.

I stay away from anything that is going to offend my faith. My criteria, when I shop, is not the brand name but where its proceedings go, what kind of causes they use their profits...

4. Haci, Hanife’s husband, summarizes the
headscarf brand] tag showing on your shoulder? There are people who have the means, and there are those who can’t afford it. There’s something called kul hakki [Muslims’ responsibilities to other Muslims]. Why would you tempt the poor’s nefs?

1.7 Local businesses are either bankrupt or taken over by foreign companies. Who can blame them? How could they withstand the competition when everybody is so interested in buying foreign brands? How can they compete when foreign companies are given so many incentives and advantages thanks to some group’s obsession with the West... We say we have poverty, well, no surprise there! The only thing that is going to help with the welfare and happiness of our people is going back to our roots. If we had kept the Medina market tradition, we wouldn’t be in this situation today.

Friday sermon to us while we’re sipping our teas. He says that the imam warned people about credit cards and getting into debt by spending beyond their means. Haci says that the imam also recommended those attending the sermon to follow the Sunna, as they would do with everything else, in this manner too. Accordingly, only following the example of Mohammed can save the people and the country from the ‘debt disgrace’ that we’re in. Haci touts about the strong economy of the Ottoman Empire and reasons that the Ottomans were create an undefeatable empire and a strong economy because they followed the example set forward by Islam Caliphat like the Abbasids.
FIGURE 1

This document is part of a JCR Manuscript Review History. It should be used for educational purposes only.