

Transformation in Consumption and Spending Practices in the Post-pandemic Period

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Abstract

In addition to the health problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the business processes of all small-medium-large enterprises and institutions in the global economy and certainly the lives of people/consumers have also deeply changed. We are going through a period during which many things that were not in our daily life in the past will be a part of a “new normal” life. Therefore, in order to understand changing consumers and their behaviours, it is necessary to benefit from the marketing discipline, which deals with the facts and perceptions that play a role in shaping people’s realities. The new normal will have short, medium, and long-term effects on consumer behaviour. In this study, the new behaviour patterns of consumers and businesses affected by the pandemic and their reflections in “the new normal” have been evaluated. In particular, consumption and spending patterns of consumers in the current market conditions, and whether the new normal indicates a revolutionary transformation for the actors in the market have been discussed. In addition, it has also been discussed how the consumption practices are shaped within the socioeconomic status groups with a particular reflection on consumption and spending practices in the context of consumer, business and legislators; and some predictions, estimates and inferences based on all these discussions have been revealed.

Keywords

New Normal, Coronavirus, Pandemic, Consumption Practices, Market Actors

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Introduction

Situations appearing abruptly, unexpectedly and unpredictably are called crisis (Sezgin, 2003) and it is possible to range the reason of these crises from natural disasters and political issues to economical and administrative causes. In this respect, it is of much importance in terms of crisis management both to define the COVID-19 as a natural disaster crisis which has been described as a pandemic by World Health Organisation and to make sense of the reflexes of parties (individuals and institutions) during the crisis period. Throughout history, disasters (earthquake, flood, pandemic, etc.) have affected the life of societies in many aspects, caused breakups and been experienced as the triggers of a crisis period. Among these disasters, pandemics have perhaps the biggest effect on health, national security, economy and therefore consumption of societies (Qui et al, 2017). Humanity fought against such crises caused by pandemics in the last century as Spanish Flu, Swine Influenza, Avian Influenza, SARS, and Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) (www.euro.who.int). It is an undeniable fact that while the cause of outbreaks and geographical domains vary, these pandemics have permanent and extensive effects on almost every aspect of societal life.

The year of 2020 has witnessed a breakup in the world caused by Coronavirus. Called Coronavirus crisis, this breakup has brought along the questions below:

- *How will the Coronavirus crisis affect the consumption expenditures of daily life?*
- *Within the period during which we try to make sense of extensive digital transformation efforts and existing spending practices, will the breakup caused by the Coronavirus crisis accelerate the digital transformation exercises or completely change current spending practices?*
- *What kind of a change is anticipated after Coronavirus crisis in the short, medium and long term?*

This study will evaluate the new and adopted behavioural patterns of consumers and businesses within the period affected by the Coronavirus crisis and the reflections of these patterns on the new societal life called 'new normal'. Besides, the consumption and spending patterns of consumers will be discussed within the current market conditions while it will be identified whether these patterns indicate a revolutionary transformation for the actors in the market within the 'new normal' era. When it is considered that the pandemic is still ongoing throughout the world and that each of us is affected and experienced this reality from the very first hand, it is of importance to emphasize that the evaluations to be made are only educated guess stemming from limited information.

Pandemics and Their Effects

As witnessed from earlier experiences, the major pandemics caused such structural, economic, social and political changes and transformations within the era they affected as population movements between rural and urban areas, use of time, efficiency issues in production and manufacturing, fluctuations in agricultural production, massive famines and poverty, and changes in religious and spiritual values (TÜBA, 2020).

The relationship between globalisation in the macro level and health has become of much significance. A virus breaking out in China has come to the fore of the world by spreading in a massive pace and caused all countries to face with the same but very serious problem. In its recent report overshadowed by the ongoing effects of the pandemic containing macroeconomic indicators such as the projected growth rate of countries, unemployment rate, and consumer prices, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) envisages 3% shrink in the global economy covering developed and developing countries, which is the worst recession since the Great Depression (IMF, 2020). This change, which is and will be felt in the macro level, will inevitably manifest itself in the micro level, more precisely in the consumption patterns of consumers since consumption is a complex phenomenon having economic, psychological, societal, and cultural aspects (Uiterkamp and Schoot, 2007).

The internet searches made by digitalised, modern consumers of today's world during pandemic period through Google with the aim of obtaining the most up-to-date official rules and regulations, accessing financial supports, finding the correct and suitable platforms for online education, protecting physical and mental health, and discovering new methods and leisure for spending time at home (Sinclair and Tolay, 2020) actually confirms this complexity. As understood from this summary of searches, consumption, already a complicated and multi-dimensional phenomenon, has become a more and more stratified issue. For instance, consumers, stimulated by limited access², have started to stockpile very different kinds of goods and products during the lockdown imposed within the fight against the pandemic throughout the world.

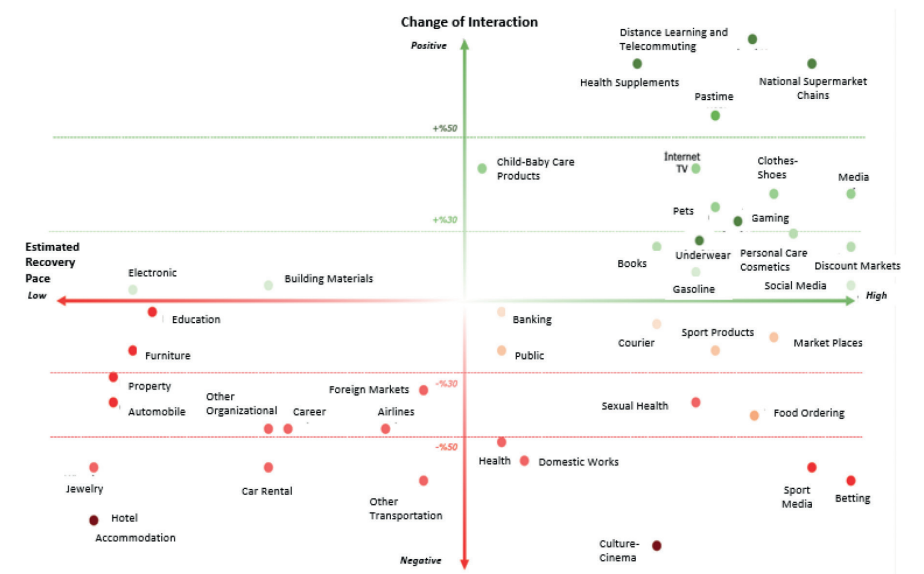
² Strong stimulation felt by individuals to purchase offers rapidly decreasing in number or whose purchasing gap is gradually closing (Varnali, 2020).

The Coronavirus crisis has, in a short span of time, transformed into a survival challenge of both humanity and society. People have radically started to be scared of death or live with this fear of death and this collective conscience, along with some restrictions imposed by the governments, has caused fundamental changes in consumption and spending practices. The recent effects of this transformation on economy could be summarised as follows (Baldwin and Weder di Mauro, 2020): Problems related with the delivery of the goods have arisen within the international supply-chain due to a “Chinese shock” resulting in the interruption of production and manufacturing and particularly electronic, pharmaceutical and logistics industries have had serious difficulties. Afterwards, transportation sector has had some interruptions owing to the slowing-down of tourist mobilities and both of these sectors have nearly ceased all their activities. With the purpose of effectively managing health services, the governments have had to impose such measures as lockdowns. Within these measures, all the such places and venues that people go in crowds as restaurants, cinemas, theatres, and gyms has been closed for a while. The fact that the economies have suffered due to an unexpected breakup has caused a massive uncertainty and gloom among consumers. While this uncertainty has disinclined insecure and nervous consumers from spending, the economic data has started to deteriorate along with descending demand (Chen et al., 2020). This situation has resulted in consumption deceleration and consumption expenditures which only spent on basic necessities. The fact that similar issues and restrictions have been experienced and imposed in Turkey requires the same questions to be asked specifically for Turkey.

Some research companies have started to evaluate the change in product sales in order to reveal the extent of change in consumption and spending practices. According to the research conducted by Deloitte (2020), sectors that are severely affected by the pandemic are cinema-culture, activity and entertainment, transportation, and hotel-accommodation services. On the contrary, such sectors, services and products as distance learning and telecommuting, health supplements, national supermarket chains, pastime products, and Internet TV have all experienced massive increase in demands. Figure 1 indicates which product groups have been affected most by the Coronavirus period.

Another research carried out by IAB TR (2020) indicates that according to the statements of data operators, internet usage has increased by 50% during daytime hours while there is an extra 30% load on usage during peak hours. This is a clear evidence of increasing digital consumption. According to the same research, it has been concluded that the interest for web sites containing content on tourism has decreased by 48% while there has been a surge in web sites broadcasting news and information on the pandemic.

Figure 1. Interaction changes and approximate recovery paces of analysed categories in Turkey after COVID-19



In order to better analyse the effects of the pandemic, it is of significance to make a comparison between the situation in Turkey and the results of similar studies carried out in other countries. In their study examining the consumption data of American households during the pandemic, Baker et al. (2020) have identified that families with children and female consumers have more tendency for stockpiling. The same study has analysed the spending patterns in terms of political orientation and concluded that demand for some product categories has differentiated due to the risk perception and differences in beliefs resulting from different political orientations. Similarly, it has been observed that there is an increase in the tendency to opt for online retail services instead of shopping physically in order to maintain social distancing. According to the data provided by Statista (Clement, 2020), 9% of consumers in the United States have indicated that this is first time they have done online shopping due to such reasons as social distancing and individual quarantining. This figure has risen to 27% in Turkey (McKinsey, 2020). Along with widespread digital practices resulting from social distancing and due to the negative effects of the pandemic on daily and working life, general economic activities have experienced a decrease and consumers have started to develop a propensity to save due to increasing uncertainty and gloom.

On the other hand, consumers, who have started to think more logically due to the pandemic crisis, have been anticipated to develop such behaviours as anti-consumerism or degrowth-activism against “the wrong and unsustainable needs” and supplies for these needs created by capitalism which is the prevalent global economic system. Within this context, during the new normal

era, a mass of new post-consumers will come into the picture who is concerned about the harm given to themselves, society and the nature caused by the time and effort they spend for consuming and who will adjust their consuming patterns with the goal of simplifying their lives (Mediacat, 2020). Therefore, it is expected from socially responsible brands to guide consumers' preferences during this period. According to a recent study (Sweeney, 2018), it has been identified that most of the consumers think some brands are much stronger than governments in solving social problems.

In a recent report released by GfK (2020), one of largest market research organisations, on shopping behaviours during the time of crises, the reactions of consumers during pandemic have been divided into three stages as panic, adaptation/orientation, and new normal. According to these indications, consumers have the fear of missing out, have the tendency to opt for compulsory and preventive measures and decide to halt and/or postpone some of their consumption preferences during the times of panic. During the adaptation stage, consumers assume a planner profile through which they revert to type both spiritually and physically along with starting to live at home, begin to delight in joy of missing out, renew their awareness about freedom of choice, become loyal for products, goods and providers which they want to survive, create new routines for their own and their family to reduce the stress they are exposed to, and start to make budget planning as the recession scenarios becomes more and more prevalent. As for the new normal era, a new type of consumer will emerge who will focus on economically surviving rather than just surviving, prioritise short term needs, is going to be in a fix among discussions on societal reforms related to digital gap, environmental concerns, data privacy; make more national and local scale decisions, has strengthened his/her consumerism performance, and has focused on improving himself/herself in every field after the pandemic.

In the following pages, the reactions of these type of consumers during the pandemic have been evaluated in terms of marketing and specific to individuals, businesses, and law-makers as decision-makers while short and medium term provisions have been provided for the new normal era.

Comprehending consumer behaviour in terms of marketing during the pandemic

Analysing the consumption and the nature of it through individual and organisational levels, marketing is identified as an applied and synthesised social science by many although there has not been a consensus yet due to its scientific status (Erdoğan, 2009). The synthesised feature of the marketing science comes from the fact that it interprets the consumption phenomenon by the help of other fundamental social sciences (sociology, economics, and psychology) while the fact that it carries out this interpretation through consumption practices gives the marketing science the applied science feature. The consumption patterns of individuals are subject to many psychometric measurements as learning, attitude, motivation, etc. and such societal references as social strata, statuses, roles, cultures and sub-cultures are taken

into consideration within these measurements. While identifying consumption motivations, instead of economic man typology focused on rationality and maximisation of satisfaction, the marketing discipline analyses consumers from the point of marketing man typology that handles the decisiveness of socio-psychologic factors and the typology of economic man together (Levy, 1959; Bagozzi, 1975). The same intellection is valid for the marketing science, a synthesised branch of social sciences analysing behaviours not at the level of principles but at the level of exceptions, in which economic man and marketing man constitute the two edges of the normal distribution curve. Within this regard, the average consumption pattern is evaluated through the assumption that individuals do not take care of such socio-psychologic factors as brand images and social messages conveyed via product ownership while making purchasing decisions as in the case that they do not look for functionality for the products subject to only utility maximisation.

Baker has formulated the relationship between marketing and other social sciences, the synthesised structure of marketing and the basic references of purchasing decisions of individuals as follows:

$$P=f[S/SP(FN, EC, IS, CBA, BR)] PPE]^3$$

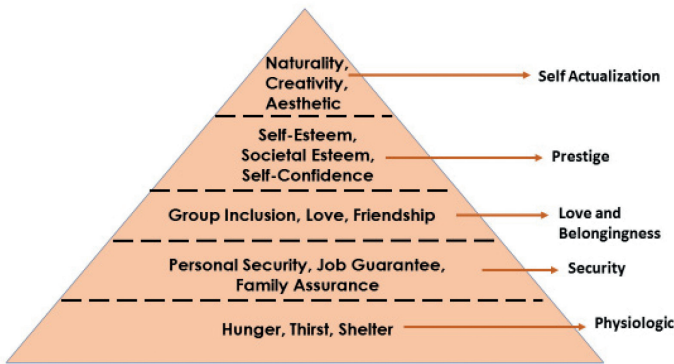
As understood from the formula, the purchasing decision is made by being impressed individual effects and environmental factors with reference to symbolic and utilitarian motivations to fulfil desires and meet needs. Being exposed to various stimuli, consumers reacts to them by being impressed by these factors. This exposure process that cannot be observed explicitly is called through 'black box' metaphor. The consumers could be affected by such psychological factors as learning, motivation, perception, attitude, and personality; socio-cultural factors as family, social class, culture, sub-culture, and group; demographic factors as age, gender, educational background, profession, and geographical location; and situational factors as time, setting, reason of purchasing, emotional state and financial condition (Odabaşı and Barış, 2010). As Baker has conceptualised, while the purchasing decision is the common product of both references (utilitarian and symbolic) at the two edges, it is inevitable that the weights of these references bear contingencies. Indeed, individuals are able to relatively minimise the symbolic justifications in extreme conditions as pandemics while they have the tendency to make purchases much through utilitarian motivations. We all have seen the manifestations of this fact during the pandemic. So much so that while the generation Z, the only representatives of hedonistic consumption, has the opportunity of fast-access to any product they need and the habit of consuming them in-a-lump, they have met the habit of stockpiling (Kişin, 2020a). The behavioural patterns of individuals having more tendency for utilitarian consumption have also undergone a change. Accordingly, consumers who were used to meet their needs by making a cost-benefit analysis and visiting several stores with

³ P= Purchase; f=function (unspecified); S=stimulus or stimuli; SP=selective perception; FN=felt need (Awareness); EC=enabling conditions; IS=information search; (Interest); CBA=cost-benefit analysis (Desire); BR=behavioural response (Action); PPE=post-purchase evaluation.

a reference to price-performance analysis before the pandemic are now in a tendency to increase their per-cart expenses by shopping from only one store to meet their basic necessities with the aim of not being exposed to the virus (Kışın, 2020a).

This propensity experienced in utilitarian consumption pattern could also be explained through Abraham Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' frequently used in administrative sciences and more specifically, in evaluating consumer behaviours. This hierarchy indicates that people satisfy their physical and social needs in a hierarchical way and the extent of satisfying a need in this hierarchy differentiate according to persons and conditions.

Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy of needs



When the consumption patterns during the pandemic are analysed with regard to Hierarchy of Needs, it has been concluded that the consumption tendency have considerably shifted to meet the physiological needs regardless of societal classes and while social needs such as self-actualisation, prestige, love and belongingness have relatively left aside. Within the societal evaluations about consumption made during the pandemic, it has been pronounced that the pandemic has removed the class discrimination between the people and it has made everyone equal; however, when the hierarchical classification presented above is examined, it could be easily observed that the equalised thing is actually not the social classes but the needs. Indeed, no matter which societal class individuals belong to, the priority is absolutely given to physiological needs such as eating, drinking, and sheltering since humans are a biological being and the needs at the upper steps will lose their significance when the physiological needs are in any kind of danger. Besides, it is of higher possibility that some differentiations stemming from class differences in satisfying basic necessities could be observed. It is impossible to put the consumption tendencies of individuals from higher classes when meeting their physiological needs in the same pot with those of people from the lower classes.

There is a direct proportion between the transformation of this consumption tendency into the acquired behaviour and the duration of the crisis; however, should the crisis continue, it is a bit complicated task to predict the consumption tendencies of people during the new normal era due to the lack of limited studies related to this issue. On the other hand, the outbreak time of the pandemic, the preventive measures of governments and the public acclaim of these measures has differed with regard to cultural diversities. The cultural-dimensions theory (individualism-collectivism; masculinity-femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance) taken into account while evaluating the differences between behavioural patterns and created by Hofstede (2001) having significant studies on cultural differences is among the most important references used to interpret the behaviour patterns during the pandemic. Even though behaviour patterns should be analysed in terms of individual level, persons from the same culture often and mostly have common behavioural patterns. When taken into consideration from this point of view, individuals from such Eastern countries as China, Singapore, and Korea, where the effects of collectivist structure are felt through strict rules, feminine tendency is more prevalent and perceived power-distance is dominant, have unexceptionally obeyed and complied with the measurements taken against the pandemic. On the other hand, there has been very serious difficulties in controlling the pandemic in Western countries as Italy, France, and Spain where individualistic and masculine tendencies are dominant features of the society and this issue has resulted in extremely serious problems.⁴

It has been observed that people in Turkey have mostly abided by the measures and guidance imposed by authorities by pursuing the interests and wellness of the society as well as those of themselves. While the societal reflexes against practices and measures have witnessed cultural differentiations, people have acted in a similar manner within the consumption practices in compliance with the 'uncertainty avoidance' dimension. As a matter of fact, studies carried out both in Turkey and other countries bear resemblances in terms of consumer behaviours. Within this context, it has been identified that as the uncertainty resulting from pandemic prolongs, the consumption trends have also increased (Deloitte, 2020).

In their study carried out in the USA, Nielsen and Suzy have found out that the consumption tendency has shifted towards food, personal care and household cleaning products and people have mostly focused on dry foods with the stimulation of stockpiling (Carufel, 2020; Nielsen, 2020b). As mentioned earlier, people in Turkey have had similar tendencies. When evaluating these behavioural patterns, it will be wrong to drift away from psychological references since the emotional effects caused by uncertainty and anxiety could be easily seen from behaviours. Recent studies have determined that individuals

⁴ The perception of risk is another factor having a strong reference in cultural differentiation. In a collectivist society like China, individuals are expected to adapt the group dynamics and specified behavioural codes and taking any risk within this type of society is not approved since it will give harm to the interest and existence of the group (Tse, 1996). Quite the contrary, in a typical individualist country like USA, risk-taking is seen as a merit and is strongly recommended (Triandis, 1995). Complying with the measures or opposing them has been very clearly observed in the USA during the pandemic.

have different levels of anxiety stemming from the pandemic so much so that besides the physiological and biological dimensions, the pandemic causes another pandemic due to the anxiety it creates (London, 2020). The reason of this anxiety stems from the fact that the Coronavirus pandemic do not bear any similarities with any of the natural disasters humanity has experienced so far; it is very hard to control it and it is unclear when it will be wiped out as it is not known when it has broken out. Individuals try to find ways to put up with the uncertainty instead of controlling and making predictions about it (Carleton, 2012). In a study carried out after the H1N1 pandemic, it has been concluded that unsuccessful persons have more anxieties in fighting with uncertainty (Taha et al., 2013). In order to manage their emotional balance during COVID-19 pandemic, people have gone through a transition process during which they have tried to accept that this a true pandemic, assume the institutional regulations and measures, and adapt their emotional and behavioural reactions. All of these efforts have reflected upon their consumption practices and indeed, individuals feeling much of the severity of COVID-19 pandemic have started to make excessive spending (Kışın, 2020a). As their level of knowledge about the pandemic and its pace of spread have increased, both their consumption patterns and products they consume have been gradually adapted in line with the process. The effects of the pandemic were not so evident during the first weeks of March while sharp changes were observed starting from the third week of the same month (Deloitte, 2020).

According to the results of a recent research carried out in the USA by Suzy research company, consumers postpone high-budget product purchasing such as high-interactive services, house, automobile, vacation, and luxury products while their demand have substantially increased for especially foods and beverages at first hand and then for basic necessities as personal care products, household cleaners, non-prescription drugs. Besides they have showed great interest in purchasing alcoholic beverages, entertainment, beauty, and electronic products which will all enable them to feel good, in other words 'to preserve their mental health'. The situation is the same in Europe. The consumption practices evolved and transformed during the pandemic have almost the same features in France, one of the countries where the most number of cases and deaths are observed. So much so that 'pasta and toilet paper' has also become the symbol of consumption during the pandemic by topping the most-purchased products chart in Turkey as of other countries including the USA (Deloitte, 2020; Nielsen, 2020b, Puget, 2020, Ugolini, 2020).

Avoiding physical contact due to the measures and regulations to maintain social distancing, consumers have tended towards e-retail services and created significant demand in household fast moving consumer goods (basic necessities). However, the individual differentiations of this increase should be separately analysed. According to the Research on Household Usage of Information Technologies carried out by Turkish Statistical Institute, the access to the internet is not a problem anymore while it is possible to conclude that the digital gap between individuals still remains at the socio-demographic

origins. As a matter of fact, such social inequalities and exclusions as the educational status, employment status (unemployment), gender (the fact that women have relatively lower level of digital competencies), age, and physical disabilities (technical incompetency of the elderly and disabled and the fact that these people could not adequately benefit from the economic, cultural, social, and personal advantages brought along by this technologies) could widen this gap (Taşdemir and Findık, 2017) and as a result could lead to inadequate digital literacy. The disadvantages stemming from these socio-demographic indicators have all been reflected upon the digital consumption patterns during the pandemic. The young already acclimatised to the digital era has not experienced any problems to use their digital competency within their consumption practices; however, having relatively lower level of digital integration, the elderly has had some serious problems in reflecting their limited digital competency to their consumption patterns that will facilitate their daily life (Nunan and Di Domenico, 2019).

Not to speak of the inequality created by digital literacy between the groups in terms of consumption, it has also been observed that Turkey, where media consumption has increased particularly during the pandemic (Deloitte, 2020), varies from other countries with regards to following frequency and media preference. While the rate of watching news in the world is 75%, this figure rises to 94% in Turkey. The most frequently used sources of news in the world is television news, social media and search motors, whereas these sources are television, social media, official accounts of the Minister of Health and official web-site of the Ministry of Health (Nielsen, 2020a)⁵. Concerning meeting the needs through one's own means which is a typical example in the literature related to consumers' participation to the creation of benefit, conceptualised as co-creation of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), the practices of Turkish citizens during the pandemic differentiate from that of citizens of other countries. Along with closing of such businesses where social interaction is at its highest as hairdressers, coiffeurs, restaurants, and cafés, people have had to meet their needs they used to satisfy from these places and have substantially shifted their demand into these categories. On the other hand, due to the increasing perception of risk during the pandemic, consumers have started to make even their basic needs at home as bread and therefore, there has been a considerable increase in the demand for devices to be used to satisfy these needs (www.milliyet.com.tr; www.hurriyet.com.tr).

Anticipations of new normal era and assumptions for practices

It would not be wrong to say that we are very competent in management of crises as individuals and institutions of the country which experienced many natural, political and economic crises in the past. However, due to fact that there has not been a similar disease since the beginning of the century as COVID-19, declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation, or Coronavirus, more common in Turkey, the world has undergone an unprecedented

⁵ The research carried out by GlobalWebIndex in the USA and the UK on April 2020 on Coronavirus and Media Consumption has also pointed out similar consumption practices and distinctions between generations.

crisis period. While people have started to worry about the health of both their own and their beloved, they, on the other hand, have had to think the financial burdens and difficulties in the case of becoming unemployed due to the economic slowdown. Besides, according to the report released by Lancet (2020), COVID-19, unlike earlier pandemics, have affected the society both psychologically and physically. The uncertainties, naturally, have affected the consumption patterns of consumers and the way they spend their money. Even the individuals that won't be negatively affected thanks to their Socio-Economic Status (A-B) have changed their consumption habits and started stockpiling basic necessities owing to fact that the social and traditional media contains the content related to the pandemic. The fact that people use social media as a source of information and that the information/rumours within these platforms spread fast has caused to emerge such emotional disorders as psychological stress, depression, anxiety, boredom, insomnia, and anger within the society (Vibha et al., 2020). It will be very usual that consumers behave more differently than they used to in the period after the crisis in the short and medium term. The change in the consumer habits could be expected to become permanent in the long-term when the vaccine against the disease has been found and most of the people has been vaccinated.

Besides the health problems it caused, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed both all the working processes of all small-medium-large sized enterprises and institutions within the global economy and the life of people/consumers. We are going through a period during which many things that were not in our daily life in the past will be a part of a "new normal" life. Therefore, to be able to understand the changed consumers and their behaviours, it is necessary to comprehend firstly the environmental uncertainty and perception of risk about the future, both of which are the factors based on the perceptions having a role in shaping the reality of people. Within this direction, the study carried out by Zhou et al. (2016) on the effects of Avian Flu has found out that the risks, fear, and insecurity perceived by consumers negatively affect their behaviours. Along with this affection, there has been significant downward changes in the consumer spending (Jung et al., 2016). According to the data related to the expenditures made through bank cards and credit cards published in the recent research conducted by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey about The Effect of COVID-19 on Consumer Spending, it could be stated that consumer spending has substantially decreased during the pandemic (Dündar, 2020).

The macroeconomic indicators emerged due to the pandemic and through which researchers are able to make some assumptions have also undergone significant changes. This situation negatively affects the gross national product of countries and therefore, there has been sharp decreases in the income of most consumers. Carlsson-Szlezak et al. (2020) indicate that gross national product is affected from these fractions in three ways, which they describe as V-U-L.

V-shaped: This scenario defines the classic economy shock in which there is a displacement of output while the growth ultimately rebounds. In this scenario, annual growth rates could completely absorb the shock.

U-shaped: The shock still persists and while the growth is maintained, there is some permanent loss in the output.

L-shaped: In order for this shape to be realised, the shock has to cause a significant structural and permanent damage. In other words, there must a breakup in the supply-side (labour market, capital formation, productivity, etc.) of the economy.

Even if the gross national product is expected to return to its formal state in macroeconomic terms, it is possible that a new economic reality will emerge. There is an economic shrinkage throughout the world and this shrinkage, along with the job losses, bring about steep declines in consumer spending (Andersen et al., 2020; Baker et al., 2020; Coibion et al., 2020). Therefore, businesses should correctly evaluate the needs and desires of consumers within the new normal era. When the effects of earlier pandemics (SARS, H₃N₂ (Hong Kong) flu, 1958 H₂N₂ (Asian) flu, 1918 Spanish flu) on gross national product are examined, it could be stated that the effect of all prior pandemics was in V-shaped (Carlsson-Szlezak et al., 2020). When it is thought that we will experience a renewal period after Coronavirus crisis in macroeconomic terms, it is investigated whether there will be a change in consumption spending and practices in behavioural terms.

Digitalisation, online shopping, and accordingly, electronic payment methods have gradually increased even before the Coronavirus crisis (Xu et al., 2019). With the aim of protecting themselves against the contagious virus, consumers have inclined towards online-shopping and e-retail services, accordingly, and have met with contactless and mobile payments. Having just met with these new payment methods, consumers are anticipated to continue to use them during the new normal era. Moreover, consumers have started to encounter with new types of shopping options due to the effects of Coronavirus. The rapid development of online shopping thanks to the improvements in internet technologies (Çelik and Yılmaz, 2011) have directed consumers to do even their grocery shopping online. Since consumers have started to carry out their sport activities at home during the lockdown periods, such novelties and concepts as virtual trainer and virtual fitness have stepped in their lives and it is questioned whether this type of consumption will enable customer loyalty (Baena-Arroyo et al., 2020). Apart from those of sport activities, the differentiations within entertainment, movie theatre and music industries have been analysed to find out that consumers have started to attend movies, theatres, and concerts online. Again, this type of consumption habit will be observed during the new normal era.

The “New Normal Era” will have short, medium- and long-term effects on consumer habits. It is clear that isolation and social distancing terms have

stepped in the social life as short- and medium-term effects of the pandemic. Within this context, the pandemic has undoubtedly and significantly affected the practices of individuals. The consumption aspect of these effects has been examined within this study by referencing other studies on consumers carried out within a limited context during the pandemic and an evaluation of the situation has been conducted along with some projections. Since the decisions about the pandemic affecting the consumption and consumers have been taken by three fundamental units as consumer's own, businesses and law-makers, the evaluations in this section have been summarised within the perspective of consumers, businesses and law-makers.

It has been mentioned earlier that the effects of the pandemic on consumption practices differentiates accordingly to the pace of spread of the pandemic. While the authorities predict that the complete end of the pandemic could be a few years away, this duration could be shortened only by a vaccine, let alone the possibility of a mutation of the virus. The first thing to be envisaged under these circumstances is that individuals should learn to live with COVID-19 and be able to manage the process. Although there has been many talks and discussions about the new normal era, since the lifestyles and daily routines of people has actually undergone a considerable change after the outbreak of the pandemic, the usual normal has already changed and it will be wiser to discuss after the internalisation period of the pandemic during this new normal era. In this respect, the period after the pandemic could be separately evaluated as short and medium terms and the projections about the consumption practices should be made within this context.

1. *The time starting from the slow-down of spread of the pandemic and returning to old normal era to the discovering of the vaccine (short term):*

The consumption behaviour of individuals is shaped to a great extent by learning. While it is hard to envision the permanence extent of the learnt consumption behaviours during the pandemic, it is anticipated people will behave as they do during the pandemic period and their consumption behaviours will be shaped accordingly. As a matter of fact, the perception of uncertainty related to the realisation of an event is a dimension of psychological distance perceived by individuals (Lieberman and Trope, 2008) and as the duration of realisation of the event extends, the individual will not behave accordingly since he/she thinks the possibility of realisation is low. Therefore, it is estimated that individuals will not maintain their consumption patterns they assumed along with the outbreak of the pandemic. It is of strong possibility that individuals heading towards satisfying their physiological needs during the pandemic will draw away the context and return to their prior and normal consumption practices (for instance, they will start to meet their luxury needs that they have restrained for less than a year). This comeback will certainly be related to the removal of structural obstacles created by restrictions and limitations. It is probable that people will re-adopt their old habits in a rapid and longing manner

along with the re-opening of shopping centres, restaurants, and cafés and cease of lockdowns.

2. ***12-36 months' time estimated for developing full immunity against the virus in case no vaccines are discovered within the provisioned time (medium term):*** It is anticipated that the effect of psychological distance observed during short term will be more prevalent during the medium term. This situation is generally explained through smoking metaphor. According to this, an individual thinks the risks in the distant future as having lower possibility and focuses on aspects they feel psychologically close to. For instance, the risk of developing lung cancer for a smoker, the abstract compensation, is the perceived representation of lower-possibility risk while the pleasure coming from satisfying the need for nicotine, the concrete delight, is prioritised as the benefit of now. If explained from the exact opposite point of view, the expectation of abstract benefit of being a healthy person in the long term by not smoking has lower behavioural effect as regards to the concrete compensation by renouncing nicotine pleasure (Zwickle and Wilson, 2013; Singh et al., 2017). Thus, individuals will perceive much lower risk stemming from the virus in the medium and especially in the long term, not be affected by these risks in their purchasing decisions and return to their prior routines. While the utilitarian consumption will lose its influence, the effect of hedonic consumption will again manifest itself.

So, what is the point of these anticipations? Directed substantially towards meeting physiological needs at the beginning of the pandemic, the consumption has later been headed for satisfying pastime needs and products. In the following months during which people will gradually return to their normal life in the “new normal” form, it is anticipated that the consumption of primary physiological needs will return to its normal course while the consumption of preferential or speciality products, secondary needs, is expected to increase. However, since no decrease is anticipated in the level of anxiety of the people, a relatively slow course is expected for the consumption of interactive services.

According to these identifications, consumers from different social classes and statues have found a middle ground in satisfying their physiological needs.

Figure 3. Product consumption weight at the beginning of the pandemic

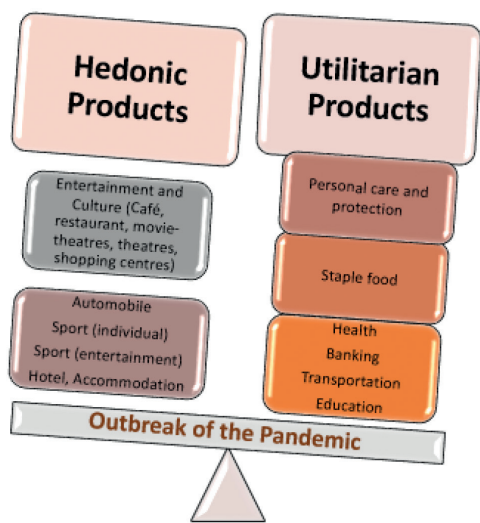
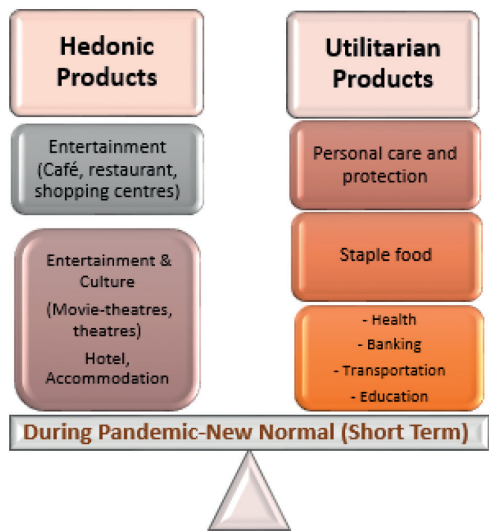


Figure 4. Product consumption weight during pandemic and new normal era



The consumption propensities presented above through representational products have been provided for an average consumer and it is anticipated in the long and short term that class differentiations and stratifications will be prevalent again. According to this anticipation, the significance of utilitarian products will decrease while the propensity to consume luxury products will increase in the A and B Socio-Economic Status (SES) groups which represents the two top layers in the Turkish SES Groups.⁶ The C1 group will be balanced through the consumption of preferential and luxury goods while other 3 SES groups will return to their old normal and will continue their tendency to consume utilitarian products. Moreover, the value attributed to the products before the pandemic may change and as a result, it should be considered consumers will pay attention to the criteria of cleanliness, hygienic, and compatibility with social distancing rules after the pandemic. When making evaluations about consumers, businesses should cautiously observe the possible changes in consumption and spending practices by considering the fact that these fractions may result in different outcomes in different socio-economic groups. Thus, the possible changes given in Table 1 may be observed within different socio-economic groups during the post-pandemic period.

Table 1. Possible Changes in Consumption Practices of SES Groups During the New Normal Era

High Socio-Economic Status (A – B)	It could be thought that they have not experienced a bigger-loss of income during the pandemic and as a result there won't be significant changes in their consumption practices. However, due to being kept away from various cultural activities, the individuals of this group may show a greater interest for the sectors of entertainment, culture, and movie after the normalisation period. Besides, there may be an increase in the consumption of luxury products within this group after lockdown period. In terms of hotel and accommodation, they may prefer the alternative choices which will enable social-distancing instead of crowded, luxury hotels.
Middle Socio-Economic Status (C1 – C2)	It is known that a majority of this group has experienced loss of income during the pandemic (Bostan vd., 2020). The individuals of this group have directed towards meeting their basic necessities during the period when the pandemic is effective. Differences in consumption practices may be observed along with economic recovery after the pandemic. There may be changes in the perception of which products meet basic needs and which products meet luxury needs for the members of this group.
Low Socio-Economic Status (D – E)	The individuals of this group have experienced loss of income along with loss of jobs; however, thanks to the financial supports, the extent of income losses is not thought to be significant. It could be stated that there will not be considerable changes in the consumption practices of this group. When it is thought that the majority of the income of these individuals are spent on meeting the basic necessities, the members of this group will experience the least extent of change during the new normal era, whereas they are prone to encounter serious problems since the flow of income has been interrupted.

One of the anticipated behaviours within the perspective of consumers is the difference between those who has experienced the pandemic by self or in the near proximity and those who has not experienced. The individuals having experienced the pandemic personally or within close proximity are expected to maintain their controlled attitude both in their social settings and consumption behaviours.

⁶ According to the latest research, there are 6 Socio-Economic Status (SES) Groups in Turkey ranging from A, b, C1 to C2, D, and E. (https://tuad.org.tr/upload/dosyalar/SES_Projesi.pdf)

Various evaluations **from the perspective of consumers** have been presented by this point. However, it is necessary to handle this period **from the perspective of businesses**. Such service businesses where social interaction is at its highest as hotels, catering firms as cafés, restaurants, beauty and care parlours, and cultural activity places as movie theatres and theatres are significantly and negatively affected by the pandemic period. Consumers have renounced or postponed their accommodation and travelling needs while they have substituted their coiffeur and care needs by making their personal care at home. Along with increasing time spent at home, not only physiological needs but also those of pastime activities have been and will be met through digital channels with the aim of minimising physical contact. This new trend has been a good opportunity for the businesses having an already set-up digital infrastructure while it has created a crisis for those having none. As a result, the fundamental teaching to be learnt from the crisis will be integrating the sales and delivery/distribution channels of businesses into digital ones and transforming into multi distribution/delivery channels called omnichannel⁷.

Another point to be considered by businesses is that the tendency of consumers towards sustainable and secure consumption will continue (Kişin, 2020b). The task of businesses here should be creating values matching these tendencies. According to this identification, it should be taken into consideration that omnichannel distribution/delivery will be the right strategy for the products in the market and service providers; propensity for stockpiling and e-retailing will increasingly persist; and while the prices will remain as an important purchasing decision factor, consumers will pay more attention to such factors as security, health, quality, and accessibility rather than lower prices.

Solomon (2020) proposes that businesses presenting such services and products as meditation/awareness/health, gaming and e-sport, goods for landscaping and home-design, online learning, subscribed streaming channels, online cultural activities (museum, theatre plays, concerts, etc.), telemedicine, autonomous vehicles, and personal applications will be successful in the post-pandemic new normal era. Moreover, Solomon anticipates that the winner of this new normal period will be socially responsible brands pledging public awareness and identity while taking care of the health of their staff.

Rees (2020) envisages that the demand for face masks, disinfectants and immune-enhancing health support products will continue to rise; solutions will be more appreciated that provides opportunity to drift away from home via augmented reality for consumers whose perception of space has changed due to telecommuting, and consumers will head towards budget-friendly staple and ready-to-eat food rather than snacks. Rees also points out that retail providers should inevitably increase their capacity and improve their services so much so that Amazon has added 100.000 new locations onto its distribution network during the pandemic.

⁷ A marketing practice by integrating all distribution and communication channels into physical and online stores through which higher customer experience and uninterrupted service is presented.

The product, in the final analysis, will move away from being 'a value' alone to, as supported by Vargo and Lusch (2011)'s service oriented perspective, a total experience wrapped in and by all the services needed. Good practices as contactless payment and delivery methods could only be developed by the feedbacks and comments from consumers. These improvements will strengthen the fact that consumers are not only consumers but also the common producers of values (Gummesson, 2004).

It is of good benefit to evaluate the pandemic crisis **from the perspective of lawmakers**. During the unprecedented pandemic crisis, the lawmakers have and will make decisions that will affect both the consumption practices and consumers. The lawmakers are especially expected to make decisions that will ease the period and consumption practices.

Even though the consumption needs of the elderly over 65 years of age have been met through public officers during the lockdown periods, the biggest threat for them is undoubtedly their unfamiliarity to the digital world. On the other hand, the phenomena of getting and being old should not only be evaluated within biological terms since it has to be assessed by considering psychological, social, and contextual conditions (Moschis, 2012). Indeed, it may be inevitable for an individual to have such physiological barriers as visual or audial handicaps while trying to get integrated into the digital world. The social perspective also changes along with the growing age and the phenomena such as migration increase their vulnerability since it also affects their physical setting. The law-makers should:

- *Categorise the digital necessities of different age groups and in terms of biological age and reveal digital differentiations between biological age groups,*
- *In terms of psychological age, reveal the psychological references of both digital differentiations and technology acceptance rates; assure that the elder consumers are excluded from digital channels and access to these, and provide the cognitive needs in terms of access to and usage of digital services,*
- *In terms of social perspective, put into effect social policies not only based on chronological age (this could be discriminatory in elderliness in terms of wellness); support policies that will enable them to communicate online more easily with service providers, friends and family members; prevent the elderly consumers from being discriminated against from digital channels and enable their access to these,*
- *Consider environmental conditions and make a decision about the necessary software and hardware to provide the basic services, and take into consideration the continuity of non-digital services or integrating them into digital ones in case of digitalisation of services (Nunan and Di Domenico, 2019).*
- *Another point to be considered by lawmakers is to establish the necessary infrastructure and legislative regulations for businesses in order for them to be integrated into digital services as in the case of consumers. Besides, sector-*

specific regulations should be made since service businesses are under more serious threat due to the fact that their created value is based on social interaction.

Conclusion

Since no vaccination against the Coronavirus has been developed, the pandemic is still a big threat for the humanity. Therefore, along with such measures as social distancing and lockdowns, governments impose several restrictions by closing universities, schools, and some businesses and restraining interurban travels. These regulations and measures actually show how big and real the disaster is. Causing devastating results, this situation has altered the consumption practices of consumers which they think as a significant tool to define themselves and created new attitudes that will be seen after the crisis. It is of much significance and necessity to understand these changes and novelties in terms of consumption practices for both such market actors as consumers and businesses and authorities as lawmakers and law-enforcers. Comprehending the new normal era will be much easier when considered from this point of view. The consumption and spending practices during the new normal era have been evaluated within this study from the perspective of marketing discipline with the aim of making some inferences about consumers, businesses, and law-makers. The consumers are going to make a transformation in their consumption practices by making a distinction between basic and non-basic needs. The consumption practices which were regarded as basic and necessary before the pandemic will evolve into luxury class and vice versa, those thought as unnecessary will evolve into basic practices. This evolution reveals that consumers could develop a significant adaptation after they have experienced an orientation period. Besides, consumers will develop and assume different behaviour and attitudes due to their different socio-economic status. Indeed, new consumption practices that have emerged during the pandemic bear changes with regard to different socio-economic status groups. Finally, the effects of the pandemic on businesses and sectors are quite visible. The transformative power of these effects indicates that some of these changes will be permanent.

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