

Consumer's Behavior of Gift Giving in Westernization Process in Turkey

Yasemin Ozkan

Department of Family and Consumer Science, School of Home Economics,
 University of Ankara, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract: In the social life started with gathering of two people, the wish of impressing each other and being seen nice by others led people to the behavior of gift giving. When historical studies are examined it is seen that fundamental religious days and ritual days based on cultures have turned into "holidays, festivals, carnivals and other social rituals" today and particularly celebrations in Christianity and other fundamental religions have become a marketing movement. In Turkey spouses, relatives and friends have converted giving gifts to each other on special days into a tradition now as a result of driving force of openness to foreign countries, experienced as a result of support of market economy application of which was started particularly in 1980s and replacement of import substitute policy by export policies. Most of international companies have applied their marketing campaigns in our country mostly as they are in their countries and have been successful in such campaigns as they have seen Turkey of 70 million of population as an important market and started to deal with activities in the country. The wish to imitate "western type of life" existing in our community has considerably facilitated the dream of marketers. The behavior of consumers to give gifts having economic, social and personal aspect corresponds to more than about 4% of budget of householders and it has become focus for consumer researchers and marketers. This study has been showed that consumer's behavior of gift-giving in Westernization process in Turkey.

Key words: Gift giving, consumer gift giving, westernization in Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Although gift-giving is commonly described as "a volunteer act of kindness without expecting anything in return," many social researchers beg to differ. Researcher Marcel Mauss argues that the nature of gift-giving is based on a ritual of "give and take." There is a social relation in gift-giving. The person who receives the gift starts to reflect upon how to return this favor (Mauss, 1990; Pin and Turndorf, 1985).

Social life is based on the desire to establish relationship with other people and to make a good impression. Social instincts make people use the tradition of gift-giving. When we look down through world history, we come across this gift-giving tradition in many civilizations. There are many emperors and kings who used to give gifts to their people, just as their "subjects" also gave gifts or made sacrifices to be loved by the ultimate ruler. Gift-giving is sometimes used as a tribute, sometimes as gratitude and sometimes as the expression of emotions.

Ancient civilizations used to give their gods sacrifices to free their souls from sin, to escape from drought and hunger and to win wars. The Persians used to exchange gifts for the New Year long before Christians

adopted this tradition to mark the birth of Jesus. Persians used to give each other eggs on New Year's as a symbol of fertility (Anon, 2000).

When we turn to ancient Turkish civilizations which believed in sky goods and the one which converted to Islam, we still come across the tradition of gift-giving. The tradition of giving a gift on weddings is a very old tradition still practiced in modern Turkey.

In the social life started with gathering of two people, the wish of impressing each other and being seen nice by others led people to the behavior of gift giving. When historical studies are examined it is seen that fundamental religious days and ritual days based on cultures have turned into "holidays, festivals, carnivals and other social rituals" today and particularly celebrations in Christianity and other fundamental religions have become a marketing movement.

Giving gifts is conceptualized in the literature as spontaneous choosing and transferring concrete or abstract entities on a large scale in order to perform a social obligation (Park, 1998).

Giving gifts is a behavior of social and economic exchange which provides the transfer of a source (commodity, service or cash) between a giver and a receiver through social interaction.

An individual, household member or organization may be the one that carries out this exchange (Sherry, 1983).

Researchers view gift-giving as a form of economic exchange, in which the giver transfers an item of value to a recipient, who in turn is somehow obligated to reciprocate. However, gift giving also can involve symbolic exchange, when a giver like Wendy wants to acknowledge her friend Michelle's intangible support and companionship. Some research indicates that gift giving evolves as a form of social expression (Solomon, 2004).

Typologies of gift: Some researchers found that gift-giving is done in line with hierarchical status. Gifts are chosen in accordance with their aim, in line with society's socialization process. For example, people give toy soldiers to little boys and dolls to little girls.

Some gifts may be seen as rude and some even as immoral. Researchers Douglas and Isherwood (1979) argue that there's a thin line between giving a gift and giving cash instead. A gift given in the form of cash can be seen as rude and insulting on many occasions. However, cash is seen as a completely normal gift from a boss to employees (Davis, 1972).

Eye of the beholder: Gift-giving also indicates the social relationship between the giver and the recipient. People who give gift may personalize themselves through the gift they choose. For example, they may select a very practical gift. The effects of objects on thought and emotions have been given short shrift by researchers. Some studies have found that the property of an individual represents their culture and class in society. Gifts can represent the social expectations of classes or the reflection of social values. For example, toys and diamond rings fulfill this function. People are expected to give specific toys to boys and girls', toy cars and soldiers for boys and dolls and play makeup for girls. When we consider the diamond ring as a traditional gift, by giving it one expects the recipient to be loyal (Mowen, 1990; Odabapy, 1999).

SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF GIFT GIVING

Some researchers argue that gift-giving plays an important role in creating a bond of love. Some also say that the gift-giving action is based on gender. For gift-giving, women carry the biggest responsibility (Caplow, 1982; Cheal, 1987).

The behaviour of giving and receiving (exchanging) gifts mostly takes place among family members. However the social network which is supported by giving or receiving gifts is not limited to family members. About one

third of all gift-giving behaviours are towards individuals other than family members and relatives (Belk, 1979). There can also be some differences in gift-giving between cultures. For example, the Chinese are more inclined to give gifts to individuals other than their family members, that is, to their friends and even to strangers than the English. Likewise, when compared to American consumers, Japanese consumers feel more obliged to give gifts to relatives and strangers during the gift-giving periods (New Year, Valentine's Day, Women's Day etc) (Solomon, 2004).

Gift-giving may be seen as a call to friendship. It is used to express membership in a group or social distance and level within society. Women, who are considered the social directors of society, are responsible for forming bonds of social communication. Most gifts are presented by women. Women are the ones who most often make decisions about Christmas gifts. Although women are the ones who give gifts the most, men are the ones who usually receive these gifts.

In the researches conducted on the products which are bought as a gift, it has been found that the most popular group is clothing and it is followed by jewellery, sporting goods, homemade goods, cameras and devices to play music in order (Mowen, 1990).

Gifts, which constitute the extra and important part of expenditure in family budget, are given for several reasons. Gifts are given for compelling reasons such as obeying social rules and keeping relations good or for some reasons such as showing one's existence and being ostentatious as well as for the promises expected to be fulfilled. They are also given to express generous feelings such as affection, compassion, loyalty and friendship (Gordon and Lee, 1977).

In another research conducted in England, people's reasons for giving gifts were investigated and the consumers' answers in order are as follows: "Taking pleasure," "showing friendship and fondness," "performing the expected behaviour," "giving satisfaction" and "showing affection and emotions" (Mowen, 1990).

ECONOMICAL DIMENSION OF GIFT GIVING

The tradition of gift-giving leads to economic wealth in Western cultures. Some researchers state that 10 % of all the retail sales in North America come through gifts. One study found that 4% of an American family budget is spent on gifts and that nearly \$78 billion is spent on gifts in the U.S. every year. Since this amount is so huge, this tradition is also important economically.

In a typical family budget, expenditure on gifts constitutes more than 4% of total expenditure (Davis, 1972). It is supposed that expenditure on gifts bought for individuals other than family members constitutes at least one third of this amount (Belk, 1979). It is estimated that charitable donations or contributions constitute 2% of household budget.

The behavior of consumers to give gifts having economic, social and personal aspect corresponds to more than about 4% of budget of householders and it has become focus for consumer researchers and marketers.

Every culture prescribes certain occasions and ceremonies for giving gifts, whether for personal or professional reasons. The giving of birthday presents alone is a major undertaking. For example each American on average buys about six birthday gifts a year-about one billion gifts in total. Business gifts are an important component in defining professional relationships. Expenditures on business gifts exceed \$ 1.5 billion per year and givers take great care to ensure that the appropriate gifts are purchased (Solomon, 2004).

The most important day of the west to give gifts:

Christmas is considered the most important day to give gifts in Western cultures. The importance of Christmas for the market is huge. Some 30% of all sales in the market are made during Christmas season. Some studies say many retailers make half of their yearly profit during the Christmas season.

In agrarian societies, practices like wassailing served as a critical safety valve, giving people at the bottom of the social ladder a release that would keep them in line during the rest of the year. But with the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, factory owners didn't want their employees wandering off for weeks of drunken merriment. During the 1820s, after a series of particularly raucous holiday seasons in New York, the cities elite began campaigning for a more restrained, domestic Christmas. Central to that campaign was the tradition of purchasing gifts, especially for children.

Christmas and America's consumer culture have fed off one another every since, said Russell Belk. His research has shown that the more materialistic people are about Christmas, the less satisfaction they derive from the holiday.

There's no doubt people especially Americans are materialistic about Christmas. In surveys well over 90 percent of Americans say they celebrate Christmas. A study performed in the 1990s concluded that average person buys 36 gifts for 14 recipients, though the number is likely to have increased since then (Anon, 2006).

Gifts also indicate the social relations of individuals. The market imposes specific messages to society through ads and promotions. In Japan, winter holiday ads emphasize a family atmosphere. They paint a picture of friends, family, relatives or neighbors, with only young couples shown in romantic atmospheres. On the other hand, Western Christmas ads are based on romantic couples rather than family or relatives.

Turkish holidays and gifts: The two religious feast holidays in Turkey also create a huge market for gift sales. Parents buy new clothes for their children and give money to them during these two holidays. People also buy small gifts for their relatives, families and friends. They donate food and non-food products to those in need. As a result of these traditions, they spend a huge amount of money on presents.

Both of these holidays also cause a major jump in tourism. Many people go on trips to visit their friends and relatives, so some chose to give their loved ones a holiday as a present. Such an attitude towards gifts makes Turks move towards the Western living traditions instead of staying loyal to Turkish festival traditions. This trend gets stronger each year.

Deloitte interviewed more than ten thousand consumers from fourteen European and developing countries including Turkey and tried to find out the consumer profile in these countries. In Turkey, this research was conducted on 821 consumers, who were mostly chosen from the Western parts and who mostly represented the middle or upper-middle class in terms of education and income level. The research results show that 48% of the Turkish participants stated they had less purchasing power than the previous year. Also, it is determined that Turkish men have difficulty finding gifts which will meet women's expectations. Turkish women expect different gifts like a journey as well as jewellery, clothing, perfume and the like, but the men can not consider presenting a journey as a gift. Some men prefer presenting a mobile phone to their wives as well as clothing, jewellery and perfume and many men present gifts which can not meet their wives' expectations.

Nine to eighteen gifts per capita are bought in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, whereas this rate is 11 gifts in Turkey. In Europe, due to the low birth rate, most of the gifts are bought for adults. The most expensive gifts are presented to spouses and mothers and children receive almost the same number of gifts in Europe.

In Turkey, most of the gifts are presented to friends and next, to children. According to the research, Turkey is one of the two countries, where children receive gifts

the most. In Europe, children under 12 years of age expect to receive video games the most, whereas in Turkey, children want to be presented books as gifts the most. Video games come after books as gifts (Anon, 2006).

Giving and taking gifts has become an important tradition in many societies. Some certain periods of the year are focused on gift-giving behaviour.

In the recent years, especially Christmas advertisements have served like a "handbook of consumerism" in the Western World (Zukin and Maguir, 2004).

New Year celebrations in our country have been very similar to the ones in the Western World in shape recently. Although the Turkish society turned to the west through "Tanzimat Fermanı" (the Administrative Reform Edict) of 1839, it was not affected by the models of consumer behaviours exhibited at Christmas because the Muslim calendar was used in the pre-republic period. When in accordance with the "Reform Laws," which were passed after the foundation of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 23rd April 1920, the Turkish society started to use the Gregorian calendar, the yearly calendar became the same as the Western one. However our society started to get influenced by Christmas celebrations much later than this arrangement. Because the accumulation of capital gradually reached a certain level starting from the 1950s, during the process of imitating the models of American style living, which started in those years, the behaviour model exhibited by Westerners while they were entering New Year (at Christmas) was introduced in Turkey. With the driving force of opening to the world, which was the outcome of supporting market economy which was applied especially from the first half of the 1980s onwards and replacing the importation substitute policies with the exportation policies, giving gifts to family members, relatives and friends, while entering New Year, became a tradition for Turkish people, too. The amount of consumption during this period has reached important rates in Turkey, too. However it is important to note that our society is not interested in the religious dimension of these celebrations, which the Western societies have. In our society, these days are not linked to Christianity and Christ and the only spiritual dimension is the excitement obtained from the ending of a year and the beginning of a new year.

THE EFFECT OF THE WESTERNIZATION MOVEMENT

Turkey has been under American influence since the '50s, like many other countries. Parallel to the rising living

standards, Turkey also started to accept American support. Thus the material expectation of people has risen and the Turkish modernization process has started to change the society radically. Due to its rising market strength, the U.S. tried to make other countries adopt its own popular culture. The Americanization process has become a part of Turkey's social structure (Büken, 2001; Mücen, 2001).

"The westernization movement" as a thought first started among intellectuals and administrators in the last period of the Ottoman State. Tanzimat Fermanı of 1839 first started the westernization movement in the state's juridical order. With this edict, some Western institutions and rules were incorporated into the state administration. This movement continued along with the movements of Islahat Fermanı (the Edict of Reform) of 1856, the First Constitutional Monarchy of 1876 and the Second Constitutional Monarchy of 1908.

The movement in the juridical order of the state also continued with the establishment of modern Turkish Republic by the great leader Atatürk after the collapse of the Ottoman State. Atatürk achieved this goal largely by the "Reform Laws" and summed up the social goal as "rising above the contemporary civilizations."

However, the "westernization," which mainly aimed at replacing the old and obsolete institutions with the new ones in the method of state administration and thus providing a more efficient and democratic administration and the scientific, economic and technological development, also affected the social area and helped the models of individual living to change (sometimes to get distorted) in the later periods.

The winds of change blowing through the world and our country in the 20th century took us to the consumption-based values comprising radical changes especially in the culture. Our cultural identity is very different than it was one hundred and a half years or two hundred years ago.

The modern consumption society has its own logic, dynamics, ethics, myth and universe and they are all defined differently than they were in other places and times (Bauman, 2000).

Turkish consumers, who are undergoing the westernization process, have been largely affected by the "universal culture" or the "modern global culture," which are introduced in the cultural transformation. In fact, the consumption culture in Turkey did not appear in a "rich society" as experienced in the West; on the contrary it started in an environment of highly unequal income distribution. In this atmosphere, especially in the period following 1980, the majority dreamed of luxurious life

despite the fact that they did not find any opportunity to be rich. Urbanization reached its peak and the urban population surpassed the rural population for the first time in this period. This rapid urbanization also had an important impact on the westernization because the westernization suits the urban life style rather than the rural.

Today, everywhere in the world, there is an effort to explain the factors of this new consumption culture, which is conceptualised as accepting the similar consumption patterns, tendencies and actions and which can also be defined as the “global consumption culture.” The main characteristic of this culture in the sense that it is experienced in Turkey is an individual’s blindly accepting and practicing it without establishing a relation between his/her own personality and culture and the culture he/she is imitating. Bourdeu describes the ostentatious class, which is created in this way, as a class which has economic capital, but lacks cultural capital. In short, the westernization process in our country has progressed through unisons and separations resulting from the conflict between the different forms of the social and cultural structures. When the fact that the westernization is based on the dynamics of social transformation is analysed, it is evident that the westernization, as a plan, starts from the “top” on a large scale. This plan of transformation has been imposed on people who can’t even see the need for such a “Western culture” in their daily lives.

Because the westernization, which in essence means taking the positive juridical and democratic values of the West and interpreting and applying them in terms of our own cultural characteristic, has been experienced due to the factor of intellectuals and some certain groups rather than the driving force of the society and economy, it has brought various defects along. The most important one is the wish to obtain something without deserving it, that is, the wish to spend without producing. Another defect is the consumption for ostentation in an effort to show one self to belong to a group.

The process of marketing and special days: Due to the effects of marketing, ads and the media, more and more culture is based on consumerism. Consumerism is mostly encouraged through gifts. Special days such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day and New Year's are some of the most important gift-giving occasions (Odabaşı, 1999).

The market is constantly trying to expand the variety of gifts and these efforts are growing more successful. People who live in Western countries often feel lonely and have grown more interested in outside factors to

strengthen their social relations. Such special days can also be considered marketing days and they successfully cement social relations. The Western lifestyle, which is adopted by many families in Turkey, is making the market's work much easier.

This factor is very effective in our country, which is in “process of westernization,” as it is in the Western countries. A marketing way which has been developed in the Western countries also becomes operative quickly in our country with the help of the mass media. Because most of the international companies see Turkey with its population of 70 million as an important market and operate in Turkey, they generally conduct the same marketing campaigns here and succeed in them. Our society’s desire to imitate the “Western life style” helps these marketers a lot.

In fact, gift exchange is linked to the cultural calendar and also various periods have been designated so far. The periods of giving gifts, as a format, are determined according to rituals and religious ceremonies (religious celebrations). Anniversary celebrations of wedding, birthday, engagement, first meeting day etc come next. Moreover, the days and customs which are accepted as a noticeable expression of the behaviour of donation or hospitality are among the important opportunities to give gifts.

Many special commemoration and celebration days of the West to give gifts have been imposed on Turkey before long and our society has rapidly accepted them under the influence of the “westernization.” Several special days originating in the West which the society had not known or whose names they had not heard of by 1980 have begun to be perceived in the last twenty five years as if they had been the days assimilated and internalized by our social culture for many long years. On those days, like in the West, individuals expect gifts from their families, relatives and friends and if it does not happen (or does not happen as they want), they feel deeply hurt by them. In the following tables, the traditional days of gift giving and some of the days which have been generally accepted under the influence of the westernization especially since 1980 in Turkey are shown (Table 1 and 2).

Because of the profit from the various declared occasions of gift giving, the companies try to increase the number of them and make them common each day. For example, in the USA, a company tried to declare 9th September pregnant women’s day. When the mayor of Los Angeles declared this day “Pregnancy Day” in 1982, this company achieved its goal and increased its sales considerably (Mowen, 1990).

Table 1: The traditionally accepted periods of gift giving in Turkey

A. Various religious days	B. Days concerning marriage
1. Ramadan Feast	1. Agreement to Marry
2. Sacrifice Feast	2. Engagement
3. Islamic Holy Nights	3. Wedding
4. Pilgrimage to Mecca	
C. Going on a Journey	D. Other Reasons
1. Doing Military Service	1. Congratulatory visit for a newly bought home
2. Coming back from a journey inside the country or abroad	2. Birth of a Child
	3. For the First tooth of a Baby
	4. Circumcision Ceremony
	5. Funeral
	6. Visiting a Patient
	7. Promotion at Work
	8. Retirement

Table 2: The periods of gift giving accepted under the influence of the westernization

1.	New Year's Day
2.	Birthday
3.	Anniversaries (Engagement, Wedding etc)
4.	Mother's Day
5.	Father's Day
6.	Valentine's Day
7.	Women's Day
8.	Graduation

CONCLUSION

In the consumer society, it is seen that new needs are created increasingly as well as the products to meet the current needs. In other words, first goods are produced and then demand is created (supply creates demand). Thus “marketing” becomes an indispensable factor of the economic cycle. When we take into account the fact that the consumption-based values produced by the marketing process directly affect the behaviour of gift giving, the message, “if you do not possess some things, you are useless,” which is pumped out by the mass culture, which gives priority to individualism, is always forced on consumers. In today’s created consumption societies, it is believed that happiness is obtained through possessing objects. Friendship, satisfaction and fraternity are important only if they accommodate consumption. The only way to show love and compassion for others is to buy them something. According to this logic, all the rich should be happy and all the poor should be unhappy. However life proves that some individuals who are economically very rich are emotionally poor and some individuals who are economically very poor are emotionally rich.

As a matter of fact, gift-giving is useful for strengthening people's social and emotional ties. However, the market is making this tradition mandatory on special days through ads and various psychological,

techniques. As a result of this, gift-giving has become a source of stress for many people, rather than a joyful event.

The pleasure of giving gifts can be derived from a product made by an individual’s own labour as well as from a product bought. Most of the time, a gift can be an object which is not economically very valuable and which is produced by an individual’s own hands. Unfortunately, the misperception in the consumption societies and Turkey, which is under the influence of the westernization, prevents individuals from developing their human resources by using their time and skills. However gifts individuals themselves produce are much more important and valuable because they are more personal and special.

When we consider that the main goal in life should be happiness, consumer values, ideals and implementation are clearly in need of new interpretations and values. It's time to shift the gift-giving tradition to another direction and create new ideals for its practice.

As a result of marketing efforts, the number and variety of special gift-giving days are increasing day by day. Now that these special days are foreign to consumers’ own culture, it is not a wholesome model of social behaviour to internalize them for ostentation just because they are celebrated in the Western societies or they are popular. Certainly, in today’s modern era, in which the communication channels function so fast, the interaction between cultures is inevitable. It is not correct to exclude all the other cultures and create a model of life which is shut in it self just for the sake of an “honourable social behaviour.” Moreover, this effort is very unlikely to succeed. The interaction between the cultures is as old as humanity. It is very natural for us to get influenced by and influence the cultures we are in communication with. However the behaviour criticized is that a foreign culture is taken as a reference, “looking from the bottom.” It should not be forgotten that a culture which “emulates” other societies can not live and inevitably in future, that culture will be dominated by the society it emulates.

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