

The Development of Consumer Desire in Marketizing and Developing Economies:

The Cases of Romania and Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Developing and marketizing economies in Romania and Turkey are examined in the present research in an effort to understand how consumption desires change with the rapid influx of consumer goods and services into economies of scarcity. Based on observations, interviews, and questionnaires tapping a range of consumers in both countries, we found and describe rapidly escalating consumer desires, confusions, and frustrations. A case study of cigarette consumption in Romania illustrates these developments and the unique image of Western products before and after Communism.

To contemporary Western consumers immersed in a world of excessive goods, excessive advertising, and excessive consumption it is difficult to imagine modern worlds in which scarcity, shortages, long lines, and lack of choice prevail. Yet such worlds are the dominant life experience for nearly all Romanians as they were for most Turks until recently as well. Romanians, along with other Eastern Europeans, and Turks a decade earlier, have also recently seen dramatic and sudden explosions in range and depth of available consumer goods and services. What happens to consumer desires nurtured under conditions of scarcity when this situation suddenly changes as it has with the political and economic revolutions of 1989? Slavenka Drakulić (1991) describes her experience as a recent immigrant from Yugoslavia on encountering New York's Bloomingdale's:

I recognize...the feeling that it is just absurd to look at so many things and so many kinds of one thing, as if one is enclosed in a room with mirrored walls that endlessly reflect each other. It has to stop somewhere — you think — this multiplying, this plentitude doesn't make any sense. Coming from the world of shortages, one's idea of plenty is mainly of fruit, meat, vegetables, or shampoo, soap, or toilet paper. Here, you are murdered by variations on each of these and by the impossibility of distinguishing the differences. First you discover an immense greed, a kind of fever, a wish to buy everything — the primordial hunger of consumerism. Then you discover powerlessness — and the very essence of it, poverty. Moreover, you start to realize that Bloomingdale's for you is a museum, not a real store where you can buy real things for your real self (p. 121).

Several conflicting reactions are evident in Drakulić's account: confusion, desire, and, due to relative poverty, ultimate despair and feelings of impotence. The present study uses recent Romanian experiences to better understand this range of reactions.

Because Turkey has gone through a somewhat similar shift from scarcity to market abundance a decade earlier than Romania, the experience of Turkish consumers offers a longer term perspective on what may possibly be ahead for Eastern European consumers and perhaps too for consumers in the less economically developed world (Belk 1988). Although their cultures, religion, recent political histories, and levels of education are different, Romanian and Turkish societies have a shared history — Ottoman — and

frequent current business relations. Many Romanians are now coming to Turkey for shopping or business transactions (including "suitcase trade"), and Turks are setting up businesses in Romania. In both countries there is rampant inflation which fuels consumption, or at least seems to rationalize it since currency will buy less tomorrow.

The authors are, respectively, a Turk who once spent 9 years in the United States and has recently supervised two Romanian graduate students researching Romanian consumption, an American who spent 1991-92 teaching and doing research in Romania, and a former Romanian who immigrated to the United States in 1982 and recently returned to conduct research in Romania. The present research is based on participant observation, focus groups, and several questionnaires administered in these two countries with both students and nonstudents (in several areas of each country), and depth interviews conducted in Romania. The Romanian data came from 110 survey respondents, 73 depth interviews (including 6 key informants), and 26 focus group participants. Depth interviews were conducted primarily in restaurants, coffee shops, and informants' homes, and focus groups as well as depth interviews were conducted in both urban and rural settings. The Turkish data included 357 student survey respondents from four cities and 24 focus group participants. Group discussions focused on consumer desires, attitudes toward having and spending money, and views of various consumer lifestyles. The several questionnaires focused on consumption aspirations, categorization of various products as necessities or luxuries, consumption experiences, and (not reported here) measures of materialism. And the depth interviews included these topics as well as a focus on cigarette brands among 23 of the informants in Bucharest.

BRIEF BACKGROUND

Romania spent almost 45 years under Communism before its short but bloody revolution during the 1989 Christmas season. A program of industrialization raised Romania's per capita GNP to 37th in the world by 1977 (Nelson 1990), but corruption, shoddy goods, mismanagement, and a large national debt precipitated a sharp economic downturn starting about this time. Markedly exacerbating these deteriorating economic conditions was Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu's drive to erase the national debt by exporting all possible industrial and consumer goods. This was in fact achieved just before the revolution, but at the expense of the Romanian people who suffered through severe shortages of such staples as food, clothing, fuel, heat, water, and electricity, with severe rationing of such goods as flour, sugar, meat, bread, and gasoline. Long lines for bread, milk, and gasoline were the rule and ubiquitous state apartments were heated and lighted at cave-like levels. Heat and water for the now predominantly urban Romanians were provided part of the day and hot water might be available a few hours per week. Although prices were controlled and inflation was virtually non-existent, the lack of goods in stores made their prices largely irrelevant. Under these conditions of shortages, clerks used their access to scarce goods to command "under the hand" extra payments from consumers who wanted such items as shoes, a good hair cut, or medical care. Shopping became a matter of connections,

hours in lines, and constant vigilance to find goods that might unexpectedly turn up in stores and markets. Televisions and automobiles were luxury purchases available to the elite, and were restricted to outdated Romanian models that depended upon a few hours of daily state television programming and rationed gasoline.

Although the Ceausescu years were years of extreme political scrutiny involving close monitoring by the secret police force (*securitate*), it does not exaggerate to say that the revolution in Romania was based more on economic rather than political frustration. Occasional glimpses of Western consumption through travel by the privileged few, a black market in expensive foreign goods, occasional Western television and films (the series "Dallas" was shown with the intent of portraying the decadence of capitalism), and broadcasts from Radio Free Europe, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and the Voice of America, helped foster dissatisfaction (Bar-Haim 1987). Western goods represented not only quality, abundance, and freedom, but modernity, status, and the good life. Since the revolution, many of these desired consumer goods have become available in Romania, but the income to buy them has not, with most Romanian incomes averaging \$20-\$40 (U.S.) per month. It is impossible to have a true consumption revolution without an accompanying economic revolution and the latter has hardly begun. Furthermore, inflation and unemployment, are now becoming rampant, even though still more contained than elsewhere in the former Communist Economic Community.

Although Turkey has always been an anti-communist country, it shares with Romania (and other Eastern European countries) the tradition of statism and isolation (even though the state control and political scrutiny were never as extreme as in Romania). Following the Ottoman Empire, Turkey had a protected economy and a closed sociocultural environment. A single-party regime reigned until 1950, followed by a multiple-party "democracy" with 3 military interruptions in 1960, 1972 and 1980, which preceded the current more open political environment. The late 1970's were characterized by economic downturn, social and political unrest, shortages, and long lines — very similar to the conditions in Romania. Since 1983, Turkey has been going through a transition from state controlled capitalism to privatized and liberalized market economy, and is increasingly opening itself to the world socioculturally as well as economically.

Turkey is one of the more developed of the developing countries. For instance, electricity reaches 99% of the homes, but only 77% have plumbing, and 8% have hot water (Yaş adigimiz Dünya 1992). Turkey's currently high economic growth rate, mostly driven by exports, is accompanied by very high inflation, unemployment, and high levels of imports, along with a budget deficit, very unequal income distribution, huge differences between urban and rural life (60% are urban, but there is also a new, recently-urban class of the impoverished/poor), high population growth, and relatively low levels of education and health. Its world rank in quality of life (54th based on education and health) is lower than its rank with respect to economic indicators, such as GNP/capita (43rd), GNP/capita growth (33rd), and industry as % of GDP (19th) (Austin 1990). Production (often involving licensing and assembly, and more recently joint ventures and foreign investment) and importing have created an abundance of foreign and domestic brands and products. Luxury imported cars, car phones, Rolex watches, electronics, brand name clothing and athletic shoes, as well as exotic fruits, candy bars and soft drinks are widely available for those who can afford them.

Consumption has increased accordingly. Eighty-three percent of the households have refrigerators, 78% have radios, 40% have color TVs, and 13% have cars (Yaş adigimiz Dünya 1992). Although the product availability and consumption have increased

tremendously, it is primarily for the privileged consumer (Ger 1992). Overall private consumption expenditures are still much lower than in the West and in the 22 industrialized economies among which Turkey is placed (World Economic Forum 1992).

RESULTS

Consumer Desires in Post-Revolution Romania

The consumer desire that helped precipitate the Romanian revolution showed first in a frenzy of buying. For instance oranges, unavailable in the markets for years, were liberated from the supplies intended for the nomenclatura and *securitate* (see Codrescu 1991). In the year following the revolution there was a rash of automobile buying. In our survey of student material desires in 1991, an automobile was the number one choice. The film "E.T." was shown on Romanian television during the revolution and there are now two hours a day of music video from Europe's Skychannel. Foreign stereos and televisions are also high on student wish lists, and in each of 22 Romanian homes visited, whether factory managers or peasants, the home had a television (often color) as a prominent possession. They are inevitably displayed in the main living/dining/bedroom and are proudly played throughout visits and dinners. Status-seeking is also evident on a smaller scale, as when foreign sunglasses are worn with the brand labels still prominently attached. Any t-shirt with foreign, especially English, brand names on it is a status symbol as well. Still, this abundance has not brought instant bliss to Romanians. One 20-year-old woman reflected on her current material lifestyle versus that of her parents, this way:

In terms of consumption, I think I have a larger field of consumption. I have more, but I want more now. I think I have a better life, compared to my parents....I say also that my life is more complicated, stressed. It is an informational explosion I feel. And that is good; perhaps I cannot live without [these things], but this, more and more, stresses me often.

While this young woman is already overwhelmed by the choices she now has, to Americans used to overwhelming abundance, the stores of Romania are still bare and bleak. If stress and confusion are evident now, they are not likely to soon dissipate.

After an automobile, the most desired good for younger Romanians is fashionable clothes or shoes. Also very important are electronic goods and an apartment or house. Supply of dwellings has decreased since the revolution as the state building system came to a virtual halt and no general contractors existed to take its place. The cost of an apartment has skyrocketed and waiting lists are impossibly long, even for those with the money. This is the case with many other goods as well. As a focus group participant who lives in a small village summarized the current situation:

Before we had nothing to buy from shops. Everywhere you could find the same products (if any was available in the market). Now there are so many goods there, but no money to buy them.

Another villager added, "I feel worse than before when I see so many things but there is no money to buy them." Not only do Romanians now feel their relative poverty in the world more clearly, there is a new class structure emerging in which money and goods rather than position in the Communist party are determinants. Competitive consumption is evident in one comment that "I would feel that I was the shame of the village if I wouldn't be able to keep up with the others." The more conspicuous consumers are

objects of both admiration and envious hatred. They are seen as "obsessed" or taken with "consumption fever." This, plus the unaffordability of some formerly affordable goods like housing, cause many Romanians to lament that they were better off before the revolution.

Status goods are nearly inevitably foreign. This was true before the revolution, but then scarcity made such goods very hard to acquire. Now it is more a matter of their greater cost, plus their continued association with foreign lifestyles, that imparts status to their owners. Kohák (1992) notes a similar situation elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc:

The unfortunate truth is that as the former subjects of the Soviet empire dream it, the American dream has very little to do with liberty and justice for all and a great deal to do with soap operas and the Sears catalogue. The Americans of Czech popular imagination are people who never have to deny themselves anything, who can charge anything that strikes their fancy to their credit cards without ever worrying how they will pay for it. They live in an enchanted land free of all mundane cares, a land where wishing makes it so. Most of all, they live in a land which is totally dedicated to the unlimited expansion of individual material affluence. That is approximately what most Czechs unthinkingly assume the dream of freedom to be, seldom pausing to reflect that it is a dream made up mostly of irresponsibility, unreality, and instantly gratified greed (p. 209).

Beginning at least with the "kitchen debates" between Krushchev and Nixon in the 1950s, in which the two argued about which nation had the highest consumer standard of living, it was implicit or explicit U.S. policy to try to bring down communism with images of abundance and luxurious consumption in the West. But the images that many Romanians have of U.S. lifestyles suggest that they have been seduced by a fantasy.

Nevertheless, this fantasy is so vivid and so alluring that what U.S. (as well as European and Japanese) marketers are now selling in Romania is not the product as much as the symbol of a better life. Drakulić (1991) notes that in Poland, Coke is more of a symbol than a beverage. Even though Poland produces a great deal of fruit, there are no fruit juices, while Coca Cola is everywhere. Romanians find it disgraceful and bewildering that Coke and Pepsi are deluging the market with competitive advertising, but they are quick to adapt these products as symbols of the good life. While it may foster economic imperialism, having a conspicuously consuming country of origin is the key to success for many products. Television cigarette advertising of such "American" brands as "Hollywood," "Cowboy," and "American" cigarettes employs English voiceovers and American rock music just to be certain that their supposed origin is not lost upon the audience. While imported cigarettes cost only half of what they would cost in the U.S., a Romanian of average income would have to spend it all on these cigarettes in order to buy a pack a day. With this in mind, we turn to a case study of cigarette consumption.

Kent Cigarettes in Romania

During the communist regime, Kent constituted not only the cigarette of choice for gift giving and consumption (when they could be afforded), but also the most secure and legal financial vehicle. Kent cigarettes — described by economists as commodity money — were (unlike official currency) not subject to devaluation, and (unlike hard currency) did not carry the risk of illegality (Thurow 1986). Since the revolution, competing brands have rapidly made their way to the marketplace. Cigarette ads for

American and French cigarettes are now ubiquitous in shop windows, on billboards, and on television screens. American, French, and Greek imports are available at every street kiosk, in bars, restaurants, and shops. Nevertheless, Kents remain the cigarette of choice. Of 23 informants in the present case study (13 males and 10 females, ages 22 to 68), 17 indicated either that they were likely to purchase Kent cigarettes for gift giving, or that Kent was among the cigarettes considered for this purpose. In a related survey, 14 out of 46 student respondents indicated that in their opinions Kent would be the cigarette of choice for a high-status person. While during the communist regime, if you flashed a pack of Kent, you could avoid standing in line or you could buy a taxi ride, fine cuts of meat, and other hard-to-obtain products and services (Thurow 1986), nowadays Kent cigarettes still come in handy if you want preferential treatment or if you want to give someone a useful gift — perhaps to facilitate transactions and obtain favors.

The depth interviews exploring the Romanian consumer's continued preference for the Kent brand, despite the widespread availability of alternative brands, revealed that Kent's dominance in the Romanian cigarette market for two decades has created strong brand loyalty. Consumers perceive Kent to be a desirable brand with good taste, superior quality, and a positive image:

...I grew up with this (Kent) brand being seen as the best brand of cigarettes, so I smoked it too and got used to it. Now that it is available, I spoil myself with it.

Kent ads portraying successful chic young professionals are aired on television in the middle of the "Dallas" television series — a celebration of opulence, wealth, and greed, and a program rich in consumption imagery (c.f. Hirschman 1988, p. 345). The image created is very appealing to Romanian consumers' desires to identify with Americans and to project affluence through their consumption:

...I don't think that all Romanians like this (Kent) cigarette. Only the simple ones do, because they think that this is what Americans smoke.

...the French (cigarettes) are too strong, the English too expensive, and the others are not as good (as Kent). [How about Camels, Marlboros...?] They taste differently. Plus...I could get Camels, but that is not an elegant cigarette. And Marlboro, why would I want to smoke...the cigarette of the American peasant, the cowboy?

Romanians do not want to associate with peasants — a low status group, from whom many are only a generation or two removed.

Visitors to Romania are frequently advised to give Kent cigarettes to their hosts or acquaintances. Although many other products — liquor, perfume, and other cigarette brands — are appreciated and readily available in shops, Kents continue to have appeal:

...(Kent) is the cigarette that everyone got used to and likes. I have given Kents as gifts because I know they will be happily received. You always give Kent cigarettes to others. If they don't smoke, they give it away.

Despite Kent's popularity, however, the market for cigarettes is becoming increasingly segmented. Some are beginning to perceive it as a cigarette that appeals to the masses; those with more refined tastes are thought more likely to prefer the more expensive British and French brands.

...if it is a good friend or an important person who appreciates that I have spent a lot for a pack of cigarettes for him, I buy Rothmans and Dunhills. If it is a peasant, I buy him Kent. All peasants know about Kent.

...(I give as bribes/gifts) Kent, Cartier — Kent for males and females, and Cartier for females....Because everybody likes Kent....Cartier is more sophisticated. A woman will appreciate it more than a man.

But despite the increased availability of competing brands and the fact that other brands (e.g., Marlboro) are preferred in neighboring Eastern European countries, Kent continues to reign in Romania's cigarette market. Kent is the preferred cigarette for gift giving and as a "luxury smoke" for a notable proportion of Romania's smoking population. Kent is so ingrained in Romanian tradition that popular jokes refer to it (Banc and Dundes 1986). Is Kent's reign guaranteed for the future? Being the first (and still the dominant) foreign brand in the market, it probably will still retain numerous loyal consumers. But slippage seems inevitable as exposure to a multitude of competing brands increases, and as Romanians step into a world of many differentiated symbols of the good life, rather than one or a few, and learn more subtleties of brand images:

(Kents were the only cigarettes) you used to be able to get on the black market. Now we have everything, and it depends on the purpose of the gift, if it is for influence, if it is for a friend, it depends what kind of cigarettes you buy.

The Development of Consumer Desire in Turkey

The wide availability of a variety of products, more and more attractively displayed in shops crowding the streets of Turkish cities, stimulate consumer desires. Magazines have a section devoted to new products in the West and in Turkey. Television (with 8 Turkish channels — up from one in 1985, and many European channels and CNN on cable), provides a tempting exhibit of a wide range of products appearing in the numerous American programs such as "Dallas" (late 1970's), "The Bold and the Beautiful", game shows ("Wheel of Fortune" is the current frenzy), European music videos, and similar domestic programs. Furthermore, tourists in greater numbers than ever, and "guest" workers in Germany who make return visits to their villages, become role models for consumption. Also there is a new class of nouveau riche who show off their possessions and add to the success, status and power symbolism of consumption, and hence, to its desirability. This abruptly appearing showcase exacerbates the desire for consumption and the interest in brands. Cars, in particular, are a craze; even adolescents know all the makes and recognize new models. The percent of Turks who consider a car to be necessary is found to be greater than the percent who see hot running water as a necessity. A car was, by far, the first choice of the Turkish students surveyed about material desires. Their wish lists include stereos, VCRs, CD players, dwellings, clothes/shoes, home computers, sports gear, travel and entertainment, books, and even a summer house, plane, and a boat. Interest in consumption is obvious not only in wants but also in the prominent display of, and talk about, products — especially the status brands. "People even use the shopping bags of prestigious stores to carry things to the beach or to carry things they buy from other stores." "Not buying brands implies you are a 'kro' (of rural background)", which, as in Romania, is negative. Yet, continuously buying and flashing brands, and new products are also considered 'kro' and unrefined by some.

Consumption of foreign products is highly desirable to Turks. The synonymy of progress with ever-present Westernization whets

the appetite for the now-available foreign products. A detergent brand advertises that it is the one most preferred by European housewives. Status brands are mostly foreign, although a few elite Turkish brands qualify. Furthermore, the perceived low quality of the Turkish products (versus the objectively high quality of some of them), adds to this tendency, or justifies it. For example, Levi's (which, interestingly are made in Turkey, although this fact is kept quiet) are preferred over local brands. They reign due to their image — being a symbol of modern Western lifestyle and being "in". A young female student admits that "I don't even think of other brands, not even Lee's. I don't know why, may be because all my friends wear Levi's".

In a society where interpersonal relations are of prime importance, status-seeking leads to a contagion of buying certain things that are "in" with respect to status or a certain lifestyle. Two years after one man bought a plane, three of his friends also had planes. A businessman said: "In one day I applied to several banks to get credit cards from each, then bought a car phone and a remote control key for my car. When I came back to my office I asked myself why I did it. I think because everybody had these things and if I did not it would have been a prestige loss." The urbanites imitate what they perceive to be Western patterns of consumption. In turn, the rural and the newly urban inhabitants imitate the urbanites. "When my relatives [three families] moved from their village to Istanbul, they each bought a house in same neighborhood and furnished it very similarly, imitating what we had." Our survey results indicate that the only differences between the wants of small versus large city inhabitants are the absence of sports gear and travel in the lists of small city inhabitants who instead want appliances and money.

The novelty of abundance and of products fuel these consumer desires. The feeling is: "There are new products everyday. Newer products are better. So, I want new products, but lose interest after purchase." Some of this interest may wear off as the novelty wears off: McDonalds and Pizza Huts are not as crowded any more. "My parents and their neighbors used to talk about who in the building has what brand of appliance. No longer."

Since abundance is a recent phenomenon, consumers are not experienced in facing alternatives, searching for products and information about products (if it exists), or evaluating alternatives. While some take delight in the newly found opportunity to choose ("I enjoy making a decision while buying something, anything."), many count on friends' choices and brands to guide their selection: "I rely on prestige brands to avoid making a mistake and save searching time. They are a safe bet when I don't want to or cannot make a choice." Furthermore, the evolution of the cigarette demand suggests that as consumers acquire experience, brands or some magically favorite products may lose some of their initial importance. Cigarettes, as in Romania, were among the first foreign brands in the market. Interestingly, Kent was also the first foreign cigarette in Turkey. Later, Marlboro became an obsession. Even people who could not really afford them bought Marlboros. Eventually, choices became varied as other foreign brands entered the market. Recently, there is a switch back to some brands of Turkish cigarettes, partially due to their improved quality, better marketing, more attractive packaging, and lower prices, but also because consumers are learning to choose more knowledgeably.

But, the desire for consumption in this context of the sudden exposure, creates some problems. Confusion about priorities may emerge (Ger and Belk 1990) when the poorer consumers have to make major compromises. A mechanic or an office boy smokes (at least formerly) Marlboros, wears brand name jeans, and buys a VCR, but may not have adequate nutrition. Confusion, in a less drastic sense, also emerges in the absence of knowing how to judge quality, to acquire product information, and to assess alternatives:

"I feel I am being ripped off by the perfumeries, but I cannot risk buying a fake in small stores." Dissatisfaction occurs when products don't perform. For instance, people who don't want to pay the prevalent high prices venture into the spot markets that have been popping up in open-air marketplaces (where food used to be sold). Anything from Russian caviar, t-shirts, and gadgets, to electronics, (and sometimes even cars) are sold in these marketplaces. Although the products are cheaper there, there is no guarantee whether something is in working condition. Dissatisfaction also occurs when purchased products are not utilized. For example, "I regret having bought the VCR which we were 'forced' to buy because all our friends had one, but which we never use." As experience with consumption builds up, some of these confusions and dissatisfactions may dissipate. But, consumers also feel angry, frustrated, or at best helpless, when they cannot buy; and that is the case for the majority. Unless consumption is more democratized and accompanied by consumer education, confusion, dissatisfaction, frustration and anger will prevail.

CONCLUSIONS

While both Romanians and Turks have high consumption desires, there are differences in how these desires arise and in the objects on which they focus. Both national groups have wish lists that include a car, fashionable clothes and shoes, electronics, dwelling, a home computer, books and sports gear. These desires suggest common Western influences in the global village. But Romanians also want basics such as food, water, cigarettes, furniture, appliances, and grooming products. Greater deprivation and scarcity shape these desires. Turks, a notch up in affluence, want more luxurious products.

The present findings also detect common difficulties that arise from too sudden an influx of products and promotions: sudden exposure to global communications, dramatic increases in foreign products (as well as domestic goods in Turkey), abrupt opening up of society following the "defeat" of communism or statism. Such marked disruptions create lowered confidence and esteem. People in these countries feel they have missed out on something and they yearn to catch up quickly. They feel excluded from the world and want to belong. The way to close this gap is to consume as (they perceive) the more modern world does. Both the Romanians and the Turks feel they are not getting what they should and that they deserve more. They cannot rely on previous experience in the face of sudden change and have no better way of knowing what to do than to imitate the "successful" Westerners. And so they imitate what is most obvious: the things that diffuse most readily across cultures are consumption artifacts (Ger and Belk 1990; Mehta and Belk 1991).

This emulation seems to occur differently in the two countries. Driven by scarcity Romanians have a more simplistic and unrealistic view of the Western world and want everything — whatever is available. Romanians are not very discriminating in what they want and consider to be necessary — they want it all according to our survey results. Having no experience in making brand choices, they have difficulty and rely on gross brand stereotypes. Turks are starting to discriminate and evaluate choices. Prestige goods are still significant, but there is greater subtlety and more nuanced choice. These differences suggest that the development of consumer desires and the parallel emulation of the West, based on the interpretation of the images of the West symbolizing the good life, may be occurring in phases, with Romania showing only the early first stage.

While confusion and the feeling of being overwhelmed by choice may well dissipate in moving from Romania's fledgling free

market in consumer goods toward Turkey's more open consumer market, feelings of frustration may not. Former social status, interpersonal connections, party position, and shrewdness matter less. Money matters more. And money is increasingly unevenly distributed in both countries. Being a have-not country in a world of apparent have countries is one thing, but going from being poor among a nation of poor to being poor in a nation with increasingly conspicuous wealthy may be quite another.

The similarities and differences in consumer desires, confusions, and frustrations, interpreted in the context of the common and unique characteristics of the two countries suggest some factors which influence the development of such desires. The consumption frenzy in the two countries seems to be manifesting itself differently, at least partially due to the recency and abruptness of the marketization and change from the previous scarcity and lack of choice in all aspects of life. The commonalities in, and phase-like appearance of the desires, despite religious, sociocultural, and political differences, point to the importance of the impact of the factors of abrupt change, relative deprivation, and globalization or Western influence. Marked disruptions in economic, political, and socio-cultural environment, relative deprivation, and global/Western commercial influences appear to be some of the factors that foster the development of consumption desires. However, many behavior patterns may remain local, and not everything will change or change in a standardized way, due to the culturally specific processes in each country. For instance, the branding, packaging, and location (home vs. restaurant) of meals may change, but the content of these meals in each country have remained much more unique and traditional than the cigarette, clothing, electronics, automobile, music, and media consumption of consumers in Romania and Turkey. It will be some time, if ever, before global consumption patterns obliterate such local differences.

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