

AN APPLICATION RESEARCH ON DETERMINING THE LEVEL OF CAPITALISM OF YOUNG CONSUMERS USING GAMIFICATION METHOD IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GOGOL AND WEBER¹²

GOGOL VE WEBER'İN İZİNDE GENÇ TÜKETİCİLERİN KAPİTALİSTLEŐME DÜZEYİNİ OYUNLAŐTIRMA YÖNTEMİYLE BELİRLEME ÜZERİNE BİR UYGULAMA

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Öz

Bu arařtırmanın amacı pazarlamacıların tüketicileri daha iyi anlamaları ve pazarlamanın geleceğini yönetmelerini sağlamak üzere tüketicilerin ne oranda kar maksimizasyonu peşinde kořan rasyonel tüketiciler olduklarını ve birbirlerine ne oranda güvendiklerini farklı bir arařtırma yöntemiyle ortaya koymaktır. 156 üniversite öğrencisi Gogol'un Ölü Canlar romanının ana konusu ve kahramanlarının kısa canlandırılmasıyla (role playing) arařtırmaya dahil edilmiştir. Arařtırma sonunda ortaya çıkan davranış modelleri romandaki kahramanlarla eşleřtirilerek yorumlanmıştır. Arařtırma sonuçlarına göre katılımcıların %47'si karřı tarafa güven duyarken, %26'sı hem güven duymuş hem de kendi faydasını maksimize etmeye çalışmaksızın empatik bir davranış sergilemiştir. Bu oranın toplumsal açıdan iyimser bir tablo oluşturduđu iddia edilebilecektir. Katılımcıların sadece % 3'ünün romanın en kapitalist ve güvenilmez karakterine denk gelen bir davranış sergilemiş olması da bu iddiayı destekler durumdadır. Ayrıca arařtırmada güven duygusu ile fayda maksimizasyonu davranışı arasında anlamlı bir iliřki olmadığı anlařılmıştır. En yüksek maddi çıkar sađlayanlar ise karřı tarafa güven duymaksızın kendi faydasını maksimize etme güdüsüne sahip olanlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici Davranışları, Kapitalizm, Güven, Rasyonel Davranış, Kar Maksimizasyonu

Abstract

This research aims to understand consumers and manage the future of marketing by revealing the extent to which consumers have embraced capitalism and the degree to which they trust each other through a unique research method. One hundred fifty-six university students were included in the study, and they role-played the characters of Gogol's novel "Dead Souls" according to its main theme. According to the results, 47% of the participants trusted the other party, while 26% trusted the other party and exhibited empathetic behaviour without seeking to maximize their benefits. As an optimistic result, only 3% of respondents exhibited behaviour that equated to the novel's most capitalist and unreliable character. Furthermore, the quantitative analysis revealed that participants who trusted the other party were more inclined to reach agreements in negotiations. Those who achieved the highest financial gain sought to maximize their benefits without trusting the other party.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Capitalism, Trust, Rational Behavior, Profit Maximization

JEL: M30, M39, D91

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1. Introduction

The science of marketing has flourished and developed within capitalism. Therefore, to understand marketing and foresee its future, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of capitalism. According to Weber (2011), the essence of capitalism lies in "rational" behaviour. In capitalist societies, individuals are assumed to be rational entities striving to maximize their interests. This assumption applies to consumers and companies, but behavioural economists have debated and criticized it, especially. It is also acknowledged that due to risk and uncertainties, individuals often act emotionally and intuitively.

This research does not aim to conduct an economic theory study; instead, it focuses on two essential aspects from the perspective of marketing science. The first is the outcomes of consumers' behaviours, and the second is the unique methodology of the research that could serve as an example for other studies. It is anticipated that both of these aspects will provide benefits for marketers. In the conclusion of the research, some recommendations have been developed for marketers to enhance the company's image in the minds of consumers. The greatest benefit of this research for marketers is that it provides insights into consumers' perceptions and behaviours in commercial relationships.

The consumer qualities revealed in the research have been examined in two dimensions that complement each other and are based on the sense of trust: rational behaviour and the tendency towards profit maximization. As these findings contain implications about the developmental climate of marketing (capitalism), they are likely to offer strategic benefits. For instance, it could offer responsive clues to questions such as "As the ratio of altruistic individuals in society increases, will the importance of social marketing also rise? Will profit margins continue to decrease depending on the proportion of consumers pursuing profit maximization? Have the limits of marketing development been reached? Will increasingly self-interested consumers exert more pressure on brands? Should we expect people to consume less if rational behaviour is on the rise?"

In previous research that discussed the rationality of consumer behaviour, quantitative techniques were used, and decisions were mainly examined through observations or experimental methods. Biological (neurological) studies have been added to these research approaches. In this study, a different approach was taken, utilizing a qualitative projective research technique called 'role-playing,' exerted through the theme and characters of a novel. Although the superiority of projective techniques over quantitative research has been demonstrated in many studies on consumer research, they are still underutilized (Başfıncı, 2020, p.133; Zaltman, 2003). However, quantitative analyses were also conducted to support the qualitative research. This support does not mean that the research is a quantitative study. The qualitative interpretations have been substantiated with numerical data. In this regard, the research can be defined as a quantified qualitative study. Therefore, no study with a similar method to this research has been found in the literature. Thus, this study's methodology is expected to serve as an example for future research.

Before providing information about the research and its results in the following sections, one of the symbolic thinkers of capitalism, Max Weber's views on capitalism and rationality, as well as behavioural theories, are presented. Following that, an explanation is given about the novel under examination and the research methodology, which is considered quite distinct.

In this study, research and publication ethics were complied with.

2. Literature

2.1. Weber, Capitalism, and Rationality

It is necessary to acknowledge that marketing has flourished and developed within the context of capitalism. On the other hand, capitalism, which is the prevailing economic ideology of today, despite being credited for various societal, scientific, and industrial developments due to its competitive approach, can also be seen as the source of unacceptable injustices and unsustainable resource waste in the world (Bukowski & Novokmet, 2021, p.237)

The origins of capitalism lie within modernism, which was nurtured by Western civilization and emerged from ancient Greek philosophy. Indeed, the foundation of Western metaphysics is based on a dualistic philosophical approach, inherited from Plato, seeking the absolute, who was influenced by predecessors such as Zenon, Heraclitus, and Parmenides (Erdoğan & Poyraz, 2022, p. 275). In a very broad summary, as we come to Weber, the dualistic nature of Existence and the pursuit of the absolute, which can be defined as logos, have transformed into rationality and rational behaviour. In Weber's interpretation of logos, this duality has given rise to distinctions such as rational/irrational, modern/traditional, progress/backwardness, and West/East (Turner, 1984, pp. 74-76).

According to Weber, the emergence of capitalism was not solely driven by the bourgeoisie's pursuit of profit; individuals driven by the desire for profit existed even before capitalism. Additionally, Weber argues that the detachment of religion (magic) from life played a role in the birth of capitalism (Torun, 2008). Thus, Weber associated the origins of capitalism with religion (Protestantism) and the Reformation. According to Weber, the Eastern individuals who failed to develop due to their lack of rational behaviour are religious, rural, primitive, believers in magic, and individuals who act based on tradition and emotions (Turner, 2019). Therefore, the traditional state in the East is characterized by a patrimonial (father-to-son inheritance) and prebendal (loyalty-based) governance system. The capitalist individual that brings about capitalism has transformed into a methodical worker under the banner of a profession, refraining from excessive consumption and ostentation, exhibiting thrift, diligence, passion for work, and a focus on tasks and duties. Thus, religious ethics have been rationalized into a utilitarian worldview. In this worldview, acting based on emotional reasons means departing from rationality. It is evident that the capitalist individual described by Weber, who practices thrift rather than excessive consumption, is not the type of individual that contemporary marketing seeks. Indeed, according to another economic history thinker, according to Sombart (2020), the roots of capitalism lie in the spirit of entrepreneurship and the influence of the bourgeoisie. According to the author, instead of the needs-based work mentality that existed before capitalism, the emergence of the capitalist mentality, which focuses on producing and selling more, even with low profit, is rooted in bourgeois virtues such as dedication to work, industriousness, thriftiness, and honesty. However, these virtues have now become objective principles of economic behaviour rather than the personal will of the capitalist entrepreneur. In this regard, the renowned historian Braudel (1996) supports Sombart rather than Weber. Sombart (2020) states that in the first period of capitalism, which is currently crushing everything in front of it, the first bourgeois who emerged in Italy acted more towards meeting needs. They came across a contented, honest and hardworking type of person. However, according to the author, after the industrialization and emergence of large corporations in the 19th century, the bourgeoisie somehow became immoral. In other words, the bourgeoisie has transformed into cunning individuals driven by greed for profit and growth. Another expression of this transformation is the shift from a production society to a consumer society. On the other hand, in contrast to Weber, who links the emergence of capitalism to Protestantism, Karl Marx, who connects it to bourgeois society, argues that the evolution of economic society consists of five stages (Kaya, 2012): Primitive Communism, Feudalism, Capitalism, Socialism, and Communism. According to Marx, the capitalist system of his time evolved into Socialism and Communism, which were established by the working class, or proletariat (Cirhinlioğlu, 1999, p. 122)

According to Weber (2011), capitalism is the rational balance of the drive for unlimited gain and profit, meaning the display of behaviour aimed at a profit through the peaceful utilization of exchange possibilities in the most rational manner. The most crucial word this definition needs to emphasize is 'rational.' Furthermore, according to Weber, although it encompasses different meanings, rationality involves systematically evaluating data for a purpose, demonstrating consistency with nature while eliminating magic (metaphysical elements) (Weber, 2019). In another definition, rational behaviour is acting thoughtfully, calculatingly, with minimal resources to achieve the most optimal benefit – in other words, it is economic behaviour (Erkan, 1987, p. 31). This presents a paradox. The more consumers become capitalist or act rationally, the less they should consume. However, the opposite is true; people are consuming more and more. Therefore, it could be claimed that individuals are irrational or that Weber is incorrect. Although this theoretical debate remains beyond the scope of this research, the most significant concept that explains the relationship between consumption behaviour (excess) and rational behaviour could be utility maximization. In economic understanding, one of the most concrete manifestations of rational behaviour is utility/profit maximization. Schoemaker (1982, p. 531) suggests that in their books 'Theory of Games and Economic Behavior' (1944), Von Neumann and Morgenstern proposed axioms for utility maximization to express rational behaviour. The subjectivity of utility could provide a rational explanation for increased consumption since, for the modern individual, utility, pleasure, and the concept of consumption converge on the same axis.

On the other hand, it is necessary to discuss neoclassical economic theories about consumers' rational behaviour. One of these theories, the "Expected Utility Theory," acknowledges that individuals always strive to increase their benefits in a rational manner. Nevertheless, other studies (Herbert Simon's Bounded Rationality study, Allais and Ellsberg Paradoxes) and expressed criticisms have shown that individuals do not act as rationally as believed due to risks and uncertainties (Zsolnai, 1998, p. 614). Particularly in 1979, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky provided a more realistic approach by revealing that individuals are influenced by irrational, intuitive, and emotional factors when making decisions under uncertainty (Prospect Theory), challenging the Expectation Theory. In fact, a similar evaluation was made by Keynes in his work 'A Treatise on Probability' (Aksoy & Şahin, 2015, p. 2). Therefore, one of the most significant factors challenging rational behaviour is uncertainty. It is important to note that uncertainty differs from risk – while risk can be mitigated through experimentation and statistical methods, uncertainty cannot be

eliminated even with complete information (Alada, 2000, p. 69). Indeed, scientists striving to eliminate uncertainties have turned to new methods such as neuromarketing or neuroeconomics to achieve more precise results in consumer behaviour. It is apparent that one of the most influential concepts on rational behaviour or profit maximization behaviour is uncertainty. Thus, in order to remain selective and not stray too far from the primary axis of consumer behaviour, it is essential for the study to briefly touch upon the concept of trust, which is one of the most significant determinants of uncertainty in consumer behaviour.

2.2. The Element of Trust in Consumer Behavior

Trust is generally understood as a sense of security (Weiss et al., 2021, p.124; Dick & Basu, 1994), a state of accuracy and safety (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust has many positive results, such as loyalty, satisfaction, and repeat purchases (Sullivan & Kimb, 2018). Trust, which has extensive literature, can be economically defined as the assurance that economic agents are not harmed in their mutual relationships (Özsağır, 2017, p.49). As reported by Nikbin et al. (2022, p. 496), Silva et al. (2020) and Ventre & Kolbe, (2020), trust is a critical antecedent of customers' behaviour. In the research, the concept of trust, which will influence profit maximization and rational behaviour, was tested through bilateral relationships (an application of negotiation). Therefore, briefly discussing some research that examines the concept of trust through negotiation will be beneficial.

Mutual trust between negotiating parties is a fundamental condition for a negotiation where both parties benefit (Öztürk & Dağ, 2021). In fact, the absence of the trust element is a significant reason for the failure of negotiations (Özaralli, 2015). If one party in a negotiation finds the other party untrustworthy, they may behave the same way, and the negotiation may not result as intended. Therefore, especially in negotiations intended to be long-term, the parties may want to behave more ethically (Yurtsever, 1999). During a negotiation, if one party creates the impression that the other party is honest and trustworthy, this leads to liking and increased attractiveness of that party (Thompson, 1990). Conversely, in a mutual relationship, if a person sees others as less ethical, they may not feel the need to improve themselves morally (Ferrell & Weaver, 1978). According to Pitney and Abratt (1986), someone who believes everyone engages in unethical behaviour can accept this as part of the business.

In conclusion, this research also examined how individuals behave under uncertain circumstances, whether rational or considering profit maximization, and the relationship between these variables and the sense of trust. The method used to conduct this examination was based on Gogol's (2010) novel "Dead Souls." Therefore, it will be useful to provide brief information about the societal meanings of novels and the novel "Dead Souls."

2.3. Novels as Social Indicators

According to Hoggart (1966), a social expert can only fully understand a society with the testimony of literature. Game and Metcalfe (1999) go even further, stating that literature puts into writing the knowledge that sciences attempt to discover. Dönmez (2020), citing the works of other authors, has given examples from many literary works that made accurate predictions for the future. For instance, according to Bahtin (2005), in the novel "Gargantua," signs of modernism that would come in the 16th century, according to Lowenthal (1989, p. 40-44), in Knut Hamsun's novels, indicators of fascism that would come to Germany, and according to Merrill (2012: 43-56), in the novel "Robinson Crusoe," signs of emerging colonialism can be found. According to Goldman (2005), the novel's history is a biography and a diary recording all events experienced by society.

2.3.1. Gogol and the Novel "Dead Souls"

Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol (1809-1852), as expressed in the saying attributed to Dostoevsky, 'We all came out from Gogol's Overcoat,' is one of the most important writers of Russian novels. Despite his short life and physical and psychological discomforts, he produced highly influential works in various styles. He wrote about fantastic events and characters and also crafted masterpieces of realism in works such as "The Inspector General" and "Dead Souls" (Keskin, 2020). The main framework of this research is formed by the story and characters of "Dead Souls." Therefore, providing brief information about the novel and its characters will be beneficial. In the introduction of "Dead Souls," Gogol (2010) states the following:

"In this book, which you have read in the first edition, I am describing someone from our society. My hero travels through the lands of Russia in his car and encounters many people from different classes and strata, from the nobility to the common people. I wrote it to show the shortcomings and faults of the Russian people, not to show their superiority or their virtues. Again, I wrote about the people around us to show our weak and deficient sides. I will include the good, positive types in the next volumes of my book."

As the author himself expressed, this novel was originally written as a three-volume work, but unfortunately, only the first volume has survived to the present day. It is rumoured that Gogol burned the sections he had written about the other volumes in which he mentioned positive characters (Yıldırım, 2015). In the first volume, Gogol depicted the process of capitalization in Russian society and presented a prescription for salvation in the subsequent volume, some of which have reached the present day. This prescription includes knowledge, frugality, practicality, passion for work (not for becoming rich), and localism (Özel, 2018). Based on Gogol's (2010) work, the story of the novel can be summarized as follows:

The protagonist, Chichikov, has been influenced and raised by his father to be materialistic, opportunistic, and deceptive. Concealing his true intentions, he rises in his job as a Customs officer, and once in a position of power, he orchestrates a major swindle. Later, due to disputes, he fights with his accomplice and their crimes are revealed. Escaping from this situation with difficulty, Chichikov takes advantage of a loophole he has learned in the workings of the state and bureaucracy. He travels from town to town, exploiting a government opportunity, to gather dead souls (serfs) from land and slave (soul) owners who are no longer alive but still listed as alive in state records in order to obtain free land and money. In the process, he engages in various conversations with different characters, and by the end of the section, Chichikov's deception is exposed by another swindler (Nozdrev). The characters' behaviours in the novel and the main event of the peculiar dead soul's transaction will be presented in a scripted manner in the methodology section and, therefore, are not discussed here.

In conclusion, "Dead Souls" is a multi-dimensional and multi-layered novel with more than just a one-dimensional societal critique. Some opinions suggest connections between it and the works of authors like Homer, Dante, Rabelais, Swift, Molière, and even religious texts through the lens of the seven deadly sins (Denissova, 2021).

Özel (2018) categorized the characters in the novel based on their degrees of feudal generosity or traditionalism, moving towards market stinginess according to rationality/capitalization levels. According to this classification, Manilov, who readily and freely gives away his serfs, even covering the costs of the transaction, is generous and kind-hearted but lacking a useful purpose, making him, according to Weber, an utterly irrational character. He is not a capitalist. Korobochka attempts to follow market rules, has diminished trust, and considers his own interest; he represents an average middle-class capitalist. Sobakevich, on the other hand, is self-interested, miserly, resolute, and a negotiator; he is a true market and capitalist individual. Nozdrev, similar to Chichikov, is sly, a gambler, and a swindler. Indeed, he outsmarts Chichikov. The research obtained results about participants' interpretations of these character correspondences.

3. Materials And Methods

3.1. Research Technique

Research has demonstrated that indirect methods utilizing projective techniques are more effective in producing results when dealing with topics that are sensitive to consumers, rather than direct and quantitative research techniques (Zaltman, 2003; Başfirıncı, 2020). The concern over making inaccurate measurements and reducing accuracy has led more social researchers to shift towards indirect (projective) measurement methods instead of directly asking participants questions (Drake et al., 2018).

In this context, given that a susceptible topic for consumers would be investigated in this study, the role-playing technique from Malhotra (2010), as cited by Başfirıncı (2020, p. 131), was employed as an indirect measurement technique. The scenario used in this technique was derived from a novel, as mentioned above. Participants were presented with a scenario both orally and in writing, and they continued and concluded it as they wished. Through this technique, participants believed they were portraying a different character without realizing they were actually reflecting on themselves. As a result, participants could feel at ease and express themselves more accurately.

3.2. Sample Size and Selection

Although Creswell (2017) indicated varying sample sizes for qualitative research techniques, the sample size is not greater than 30, and the size determination is based on theoretical saturation, where information starts to repeat. The sample size used in the research is higher than what is deemed appropriate. The criterion sampling method was employed for sample selection, which is a useful technique in qualitative research involving individuals with experience related to the studied phenomenon (Baltacı, 2018, p. 264). The criterion for selection was university students who have taken marketing or economics courses and have yet to read the novel "Dead Souls. The population

of the research is young consumers in Turkey. The sample participants were selected from a faculty and a vocational school of a state university located in Istanbul.

3.3. Validity and Reliability of the Research

According to Karahan et al. (2022), there are various perspectives on the validity of qualitative research based on more than 10 studies. For the validity and reliability of this research, the procedures outlined by Akgün (2020, p. 96-99) were followed:

- For internal validity (credibility), a scenario was prepared with an additional expert opinion and first tested on two subjects. Participants were provided with detailed pre-information about the purpose, content, and method of the interview, and the scenario and the role they would play were presented both orally and in writing. Written consent forms were obtained. Participants were asked to document their experience after role-playing and reminded of the option to make changes in the records. The analysis and interpretation were also reviewed and confirmed by another marketing expert not affiliated with the researcher.

- For external validity, i.e., transferability, the research process, scenario, and its basis were described in detail within the boundaries. Moreover, examples from the result texts provided by the participants were included in the research text.

- Expert examination was used for internal and external reliability, i.e., consistency and confirmability. In other words, another expert reviewed and confirmed the research for integrity and congruence. On the other hand, qualitative research is generally not well-suited for making generalizations due to the nature of subjective descriptions. To make generalizations, qualitative processes should be presented in great detail and placed within a comprehensive theoretical framework, and mixed methods should be employed (Creswell, 2017, p. 204). In this research, the qualitative process was as detailed as possible, and while the theoretical framework was succinct, it was aimed to be effective. In terms of methodology, although a single method was applied, a quantitative assessment was conducted through descriptive content analysis using frequencies. Thus, the research findings can be partially generalized.

In accordance with research ethics, the SBU Hamidiye Ethics Committee obtained Ethics Approval (File/decision No: 25-6, Date: 18.11.2022) before the interviews.

3.4. Method and Roles

In this research, the extent to which young consumers are influenced by capitalism is attempted to be revealed based on two criteria: rational behaviour and benefit/profit maximization behaviour, grounded in the foundation of trust. Participants were divided into two separate roles. For both roles, these two criteria were determined based on the role-playing outcomes and the written comments provided by the participants. However, in the scenario, Role 1 is partially fixed, while Role 2 is a variant role. Each pairing evaluated whether the participant with Role 1 (Chichikov) displayed only profit maximization behaviour and whether rational behaviour, profit maximization behaviour, and trust were established for Role 2 (Landowner). Rational behaviour and profit maximization behaviour are interrelated and interconnected concepts. The trust element is the main variable of this research. Indeed, whether there is a significant relationship between the feeling of trust and both variables was tested with a separate hypothesis for Role 2. Additionally, the relationship between the trust element and the resulting final state (agreement) after role-playing was tested with a third hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between a sense of distrust and rational behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive relationship between a sense of distrust and benefit maximization behaviour.

Hypothesis 3: There is a negative relationship between a sense of distrust and reaching an agreement between the two parties.

As stated above, participants were divided into paired groups, ensuring they did not know each other well. One person in the group portrayed Role 1, while the other portrayed Role 2. Participants were presented with the scenario both orally and in writing as follows:

General Description

The events take place in 1840s Russia, during a feudal social structure. There were two main classes: the Nobles and the Peasants. Nobles owned the land and had peasants (workers) who worked for them. These peasants had no say

whatsoever. They were treated as property, called "can" (soul or life). This situation was considered natural and customary.

Role 1: Chichikov

You are an (impostor) who tries to maximize your material interests. Your father raised you that way. You were brought up with advice like, "Appear good to everyone for your own benefit, befriend the rich, money is everything." You have previously held positions where you pretended to be very honest to make a large profit, later received a high amount of bribes in the government office, got caught, but managed to get out of it. Money means everything to you. Because you have previously held a government position, you are aware of the incentive offered by the government: If you become the owner of workers (souls) to be employed in the Herson region, one of the most remote places in Russia, and engage in agriculture there, you will receive free land from there and an allowance of 200 rubles per soul. You want to take advantage of this opportunity. With a certain amount of capital, you start travelling to towns, getting to know the local elites, and trying to win them over. You are quite polite, wealthy, and refined. In other words, you can play this role well. This way, you endear yourself to others and give the impression of being an elite individual. Then, by visiting the landowners with the most souls, you request them to transfer the souls (workers, peasants) who have not been officially removed from the population records even though they died within that year. This way, you will also save them from the individual tax (10 rubles) paid to the government. If they disagree, you are also considering buying them with some money. Moreover, you will cover 0.5 of the notary expenses during the purchase and sale. So, you made your first visit to a landlord. Now, persuade him to transfer their dead but unregistered souls (peasants) to you, if possible, free of charge or at minimum cost.

Role 2: Landowner Noble

You live in a town that was small in Russia in the 1850s. You are a landowner, in other words, a noble. You have extensive lands and nearly 1000 workers (souls) under your ownership. You pay an annual tax of 10 rubles per soul to the government. About 60 of your souls died in the past years. However, since it is not very important to you, you did not report their deaths to the government. A distinguished noble came to your town. He got acquainted with the town's prominent figures, including you, and started attending your meetings. He is a very good, polite, and wealthy person. His name is Chichikov. One day, Chichikov visited you.

After necessary briefings were given to the paired groups separately, ensuring they were unaware of each other's scenarios, each group was given a 15-minute discussion period. At the end of this time, participants were expected to communicate the outcome of the discussion in written form, as illustrated by the sample (actual data) result in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample Discussion Outcome and Evaluation Form

Class: X	Role 1	Role 2
Participants : Y	Name Surname (Chichikov)	Name Surname (Landlord)
What happened? Result?	<i>The Landowner sold all the dead souls for 20 Rubles each. They agreed.</i>	
Why did it happen?	I quickly explained my purpose before he even asked me why I needed the souls. As a reason, I mentioned that I wanted to open a school providing religious education in the region. I needed to appear as a local of the region, which required having a few souls registered under my name. Since I was involved in religion in the matter, no one questioned me further. I even thought they would give me the souls for free, but it did not turn out that way. We settled at 20 rubles per soul; that was the initial offer, and I did not propose a lower price. Because I was already making a profit, I did not try to push for more profit; I did not want my scheme uncovered.	Chichikov got straight to the point and explained his intention. I did not want to incur losses, but at the same time, I did not want to lose my soul. So, I sold my dead souls at twice the price I paid for them, which is 20 rubles each.

How did it happen?	<p><i>Chichikov initiated the conversation, expressing his desire to build a school for religious education and explaining that he needed souls. He asked if I had any souls to give. I replied that I could provide 60 souls and inquired about the price he had in mind.</i></p> <p><i>Chichikov emphasized how he could save me from paying taxes for the deceased souls and the time and money needed to erase them from the records. He also reiterated his intention to do a good deed. However, the landlord disagreed and asked for 20 rubles per soul. Chichikov did not negotiate; he immediately agreed. We reached an agreement.</i></p>
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Note: The information in Table 1 has been filled with actual data later on.

Statistical Method

The descriptive analysis technique was used in the data analysis because the data was analyzed, summarized and interpreted according to predetermined themes (sense of trust, rational behaviour and benefit maximization behaviour) (Ültay et al., 2021, p.191). Before evaluation, rational and utility maximization behaviours for both roles are defined as:

Table 2. Behaviour Evaluation Criteria

Role	Rational Behavior	Profit/Benefit Maximization Behavior	Trust Factor
Role 1	Out of evaluation	Not offering any money for dead souls.	Out of evaluation
Role 2	Trying to agree, agreeing.	Demanding extra money for each dead soul.	Does not trust

4. Findings

The data collected in the format specified in Table 1 were consolidated according to the criteria in Table 2. Meanwhile, the reasons expressed by the participants were analyzed as content, and the lack of confidence in the results was also added. The results are in Table 3 for Role 1, 4, and 5 for Role 2.

Table 3. Outputs related to Role 1

	Number	%	Number of Agr.	Agr. %	Av. Agr. Dead Soul No	Av. Price (Per Dead Soul)
Acted With Benefit Maximization	36	46	24	67	59	5,2
Did Not Act With Benefit Maximization	42	54	33	79	52	24
Total	78	100	57	73		

According to the scenario, only the profit-maximizing behaviours of these players could be tested. Even though most participants were able to be encouraged to maximize their profits according to the scenario, they needed more effort for profit maximization. 46% of the participants attempted to maximize their benefits, meaning they tried to acquire the souls without paying any money. When behaving in this manner, it has been observed that, despite a slight

decrease in the agreement rate compared to the opposite scenario (from 79% to 67%), they were able to acquire more souls (59 instead of 52) at a much lower cost (only 5.2 rubles instead of 24 rubles).

Table 4. Outputs Related to Role 2 -1

Behavior With Benefit Maximization											
	Does Not Trust				Trusts				Uncertain		Total
	Agreement			No Agr.	Agreement			No Agr.	Agr.	No Agr.	
	N	P.	Av. Price		Num.	P.	Av. Price				
Rational	10	50	55	0	13	60	11	0	2	0	25 (32%)
Irrational	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3 (4%)
Total	10			2	13			0	3	0	28 (36%)

Table 5. Outputs Related to Role 2 -2

Behavior With No Benefit Maximization											
	Does Not Trust				Trusts				Uncertain		Total
	Agreement			No Agr.	Agreement			No Agr.	Has an Agr	No Agr.	
	Number	Piece	Average Price		Number	Piece	Average Price				
Rat.	10	52	3	0	20	60	0	0	1	0	31 (40%)
Ir.	1	1	0	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	18 (23%)
T	11			18	20			0	1	0	49 (63%)

According to the two tables above, it is evident that the main variable of the research, Role 2 participants, like Role 1, have chosen profit maximization behaviour to a lesser extent (%28 compared to %49). This may be due to the scenario for Role 2 being less directive. On the other hand, the other factor that indicates the level of capitalization, the rate of rational behaviour, moves in the opposite direction to profit maximization behaviour. This is because these two variables have been accepted in the analysis of the study in a way that contradicts each other. If an agreement cannot be reached in a game, then it is assumed that Role 2 is irrational. However, the reason for the lack of an agreement is often that Role 2 has tried to maximize its benefit. In this regard, when the behaviour of profit maximization decreases, the rate of irrational behaviour also increases from 4% to 23%. On the other hand, in cases where an agreement is reached, participants who have acted rationally and without considering benefits should also be considered irrationally. Indeed, these participants (20 people) represent Manilov among the novel characters.

Of the Role 2 participants, 25 exhibited rational and profit maximization behaviour. There were 31 participants who tended to agree, i.e., acted rationally but did not try to maximize their benefits. Of these, 20 gave all their souls to Chichikov without asking for any payment (in one game, Chichikov proposed payment). These individuals can be claimed to correspond to the novel character Manilov, as mentioned above. On the other hand, 10 participants, while not trusting Chichikov, reached an agreement with him. Together with these participants, those who acted with both rational and profit maximization motives and did not trust (10), trusted (13 people), or had an uncertain attitude (2 people) while reaching an agreement can also be claimed to exhibit a capitalist approach. However, they do not correspond to any character in the novel.

Additionally, one (1) participant who, despite trying to maximize his benefit, is considered irrational because he did not reach an agreement due to a lack of trust and one (1) participant who acted without trying to maximize his benefit but had uncertain trust have both reached an agreement, and it is accepted that they exhibited a capitalist approach.

In the research, there are 18 participants who, despite not trying to maximize their benefits, do not trust the other party, are wary of being deceived, and are considered irrational because there is no agreement. These participants are considered suitable for the novel's Korobochkav character. An example of this situation is provided below.

Game 3: Chichikov aimed to enrich his lands and promote development by only requesting the dead souls of the Landowner. This way, the Landowner would also be relieved of paying empty taxes. The Landowner first asked how Chichikov learned about the dead souls. Chichikov said he heard that taxes were paid for the dead souls. After all, he was a respected figure in his community. However, the Landowner did not trust Chichikov's seemingly good-willed offer and rejected the proposal. They bid farewell, saying they might meet again later.

The participant in this game can be considered to resemble Korobochkav in the novel. On the other hand, the participant in Game 71, who acted irrationally, despite reaching an agreement with the Landowner as explained below, chose to make a symbolic agreement by lying because he did not trust.

Chichikov came and asked for the dead souls to win over his father and save me from the tax burden. I sensed something else behind this and understated the number of dead souls.

This participant should also be identified with Korobochkav.

Finally, two participants, who were primarily identified as having completed capitalization despite acting irrationally as they missed the agreement while trying to maximize their interests, are considered to be associated with the character Sobakevich in the novel.

Game 9: I thought there must be a reason why Chichikov wants the dead people. If he had no personal gain, he would ask for the living ones instead. Thinking that his benefit was also related to money, I considered my benefit and told him that I could fulfil this request only in exchange for money. In other words, if this task is to be done with my help, I should also benefit from it.

Game 34: Chichikov offered to pay the tax for every dead soul and 20 TL for each soul based on 60 workers. The Landowner questioned the reason. Chichikov said he would have work done for his own field. The Landowner did not find this very reasonable and was suspicious. Then, the price seemed too low to the Landowner, and there was a disagreement about the price. When they could not agree repeatedly, no agreement was reached.

Due to the complexity of interpreting behaviours in the results, a more simplified approach to analyzing novel characters would be useful. Table 6 presents this situation.

Table 6. Distribution of Capitalist Behavior by Novel Characters for Role 1 Participants

Ratio of Capitalisation	Characters	Piece	Percentage
Very Low	Manilov	20	26
Low	Korobochkav	19	24
Enough	Others- Behaved like a capitalist	37 (10+10+13+2+1+1)	47

Too high	Sobakevich- A total capitalist	2	3
TOTAL		78	100

Confidence Analysis and Hypothesis Tests

It was understood that 33 of the Role 2 participants trusted the other party, while 41 of them did not. No determination was made in 4 participants. While all the trusting participants agreed with the other party, only 21 of the non-trusting participants, 50%, reached an agreement; that is, they acted rationally. SPSS chi-square test was used to test whether there was a significant relationship between these two categorical variables. The results are in Table 7.

Table 7. Distrust-Reconciliation Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18,555 ^a	2	,000
Likelihood Ratio	21,995	2	,000
N of Valid Cases	78		

The "p" value in the table is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between participants' sense of (dis)trust and the ability to reach an agreement. Hypothesis 3 has been accepted.

Since reaching an agreement between the two parties is generally considered rational behaviour, Hypothesis 1 should also be accepted. In fact, Table 8 presents the chi-square test between the variables of (dis)trust and rational behaviour.

Table 8. Distrust-Rational Behavior Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20,120 ^a	2	,000
Likelihood Ratio	23,828	2	,000
N of Valid Cases	78		

The "p" value in the table is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between participants' sense of trust(distrust) and rational behaviour. Hypothesis 1 has been accepted.

Finally, the test result between distrust and benefit maximization variables is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Distrust and Benefit Maximization Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3,266 ^a	2	,195
Likelihood Ratio	3,108	2	,211
N of Valid Cases	78		

Since the "p" value in the table is greater than 0.05, there is no statistically significant relationship between the participants' sense of (dis)trust and benefit maximization. Hypothesis 2 is rejected. Although this situation seems inconsistent with the literature, as explained above, the rejection of Hypothesis 2 was an expected result since, in most cases, an inverse interpretation is made between rational behaviour and utility maximization during the evaluation phase.

Out of 78 participants, 20 (26%) altruistically provided their lives to the other side without maximizing their own benefit and without experiencing any distrust. Additionally, 4 participants had an uncertain response, while 37 (47%) participants expressed trust in the other party.

Another aspect of the outcomes is the agreement price. In cases where Role 2 participants exhibited benefit maximization behaviour, based on the weighted averages of whether they had trust (60 lives for 11 rubles) or did not have trust (50 lives for 55 rubles), they gave 55.65 lives for 30.13 rubles to Chichikov. Those who did not exhibit benefit maximization behaviour gave 60 lives for free in cases of trust and 53 lives for 3 rubles in cases without trust. The weighted average was 57.3 lives for 1 ruble. As expected, Role 2 participants who exhibited benefit maximization behaviour without trusting the other side achieved significantly higher profits (benefits) of 2,250 rubles compared to the lowest earning (benefit) condition (0 ruble gain).

5. Discussion and Comments

The research's most essential and debatable finding is that approximately half of the participants in both roles exhibited rational behaviour aimed at maximizing their profits. The sociological and psychological reasons behind this phenomenon require the expertise of specialists in those fields. However, irrespective of the reasons, it is meaningful to conclude that young consumers have yet to capitalize in a societal sense fully. On the other hand, this situation provides an advantage to consumers who are considered fully capitalized or, in other words, those who act rationally. This is because they have obtained higher profits in the applications.

The second notable finding is that 26% of the participants trusted the other party and acted without prioritizing their benefit. This behaviour is unexpected in today's context. Again, it would be appropriate for sociologists and psychologists to offer their insights. Individuals with this behaviour may experience material losses in a capitalist society. However, whether it is necessary for the number of people behaving in this way to increase in a society with high levels of trust and sharing is another topic for research and discussion. The overall trust rate among all participants toward the other party is 47%.

When no data is available and when a situation exists that would benefit one's own interests, the percentage of participants who do not trust the other party is not insignificant, standing at 24%. The origin of this behaviour is open to debate. However, it could be argued that insecurity or fear of being deceived plays a prominent role.

At the end of the research, it was found that the behaviour leading to the highest material gain was the one where participants maximized their profit without trusting the other party. Given this practical outcome, it is clear that an increase in trusting attitudes within society and, therefore, altruism cannot be expected. Thus, it has been shown that capitalization directs individuals toward attitudes of not trusting others and prioritizing their interests. This result is not surprising but rather an expected one.

Although there appears to be a positive relationship between insecurity and profit-maximizing behaviour, which seems inconsistent with the literature, as explained above, during the evaluation phase, since a reverse interpretation

is often made between rational behaviour and benefit maximization, the rejection of Hypothesis 2 is considered an expected outcome.

6. Conclusion

While the findings section may express the participants' level of capitalist behaviour, as mentioned in the introduction section, the purpose of the study is not to reach outcomes related to capitalism or its reflections. It aims to reveal how rational and benefit-maximizing consumers are in interest-based relationships, their level of trust, and the effects of this trust on their behaviours.

Based on the findings, when individuals (consumers) do not trust the other party in dealing, their tendency to reach an agreement diminishes, leading them to behave outside the realm of rationality. This situation is consistent with the studies in the literature section, aligning with an expected result. However, the expected relationship between trust and benefit maximization did not occur. This might be because an individual focused on maximizing their benefit might need to place more importance on trust. As expected, when individuals focus on their own interests and engage in benefit maximization behaviour without trusting the other party, a high-profit situation emerges.

Because the sense of trust is still high and significant, some recommendations can be made for managers:

- Strategies that emphasize trust in consumer relationships can be developed. For example, communication language can be adjusted in this direction, and social responsibility projects can be launched.
- It should be noted that acting with a high profit motive will negatively impact customers who are focused on maximizing their own profits and who are highly insecure.
- Being a brand that cares about the interests of its customers rather than just focusing on its own interests is attractive to consumers. However, achieving this is quite challenging. It should be assumed that this approach will not influence 27% of consumers.
- In employee selection, preferring employees with high trust and altruism will benefit the company.

The originality of this study lies in its ability to reveal the extent to which consumers trust each other or, in other words, their inclination to reach agreements in commercial relationships. No such research has been encountered in the literature. The mentioned ratio is approximately 47%. Furthermore, 26% of consumers have placed trust in the other party and have yet to focus on their own interests (Manilov). This ratio is a moderately optimistic scenario. On the other hand, this result shows that the sense of trust in society is not low; according to Weiss et al. (2021), it is compatible with research such as. Alongside the Korobochkav character, which manifested itself as 24% in the study, half of the consumers appear to be quite receptive to persuasion, indicating a lack of total capitalization.

Another significant outcome of the study is its methodology. As described in the introduction and literature sections, this qualitative study, conducted through the lens of novel characters, has provided tangible and quantitative results, setting an example for other research endeavors.

Limitations and Future Research

Comparing and testing the results of this study with those of research conducted using alternative techniques will enhance the utilization of this method. Furthermore, adapting different novel scenarios to various subjects is expected. Simultaneously, applying this study to demographics beyond students and young adults and deriving demographic interpretations from the outcomes would provide additional benefits.

Comparing the differences between the results obtained by conducting the same research in continental Europe or the USA, especially in line with Weber's East-West distinction, and the results of this research will be able to show Weber's rightness or to what extent the East has become Westernized.

Another variable that should have been included in this research but was left out is the duration of the interviews. Under what conditions does the deal take less time? Market researchers would like to learn this information.

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