



Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

**The Status of Consumption and Consuming the Status: A Theoretical Discussion on
Alain de Botton's 'Status Anxiety' in the Context of Post-Modern Consumer**

**Tüketimin Statüsü ve Statünün Tüketimi: Alain de Botton'un 'Statü Endişesi' Üzerine
Post-Modern Tüketici Bağlamında Bir Teorik Tartışma**

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Öz: “Kitle tüketim çağı” olarak da adlandırılan Post-Modern toplumla birlikte toplumsal statülerin en önemli belirleyicilerinden biri tüketim haline gelmiştir. Bu da tüketim olgusunu doğrudan araştırma nesnesi edinen pazarlamanın önem kazanması ile sonuçlanmıştır. Pazarlama bilimini temel sosyal bilimler olan ekonomi, felsefe, sosyoloji ve antropolojinin bir sentezi olarak yorumlayan çalışmaların varlığı da bu önemi göstermektedir. Bu sürecin daha doğru bir şekilde yürütülmesi için bahsi geçen sosyal bilimler alanlarındaki yaklaşımların pazarlama bağlamında tartışmaya açılması gerekmektedir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilen bu çalışmada Alain de Botton'un Statü Endişesi adlı çalışması ile post-modern tüketim olgusu pazarlama bağlamında tartışılmıştır. Bu çalışmada öncelikle Statü Endişesi çerçevesinde statü, snopluk ve kıskançlık olguları incelenmiştir. Böylece bu kavramların post-modern tüketim olgusu içindeki konumları belirlenmiştir. Son olarak, bu literatür taramaları ile birlikte tartışma ve sonuç bölümünde bir sentez ortaya konmuştur. Bu kapsamda Botton'un yaklaşımında pazarlamaya yönelik çıkarımlar derlenmiş ve çözüm önerileri eleştirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, sınırsız tüketim isteyen bir tüketicinin varlığı, sürdürülebilirlik sorunlarını çözümsüz bırakmaktadır. Bu bağlamda tüketicilerin alternatif ekonomik sistemler üzerinden bir tüketim felsefesi geliştirmeleri gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmada Botton'un teorisindeki eksiklikler tespit edilmiş ve ekonomize edilmemiş post-materyalizm ve minimalizm çözüm olarak sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Statü Endişesi, Alain de Botton, Tüketici Davranışları, Pazarlama Felsefesi, Snobizm, Postmodern Tüketici.

Abstract: Consumption has become one of the most important determinants of social status, together with the Post-Modern society, which is also called the "age of mass consumption". This increase in consumption has also caused the discussion of the sustainability of the economy and natural resources to gain importance. It has resulted in the importance of marketing, which takes consumption as a direct research object. The existence of studies that interpret marketing science as a synthesis of the basic social sciences, economy, philosophy, sociology, and

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anthropology, also shows this importance. In order for this process to be conducted more accurately, the approaches in the social sciences mentioned above should be discussed in the context of marketing. In this study, which was conducted for this purpose, the post-modern consumption phenomenon was discussed in the context of marketing with Alain de Botton's theory of Status Anxiety. In this study, first of all, status, snobbery, and envy phenomena were examined within the framework of Status Anxiety. Thus, the positions of these concepts in the post-modern consumption phenomenon were determined. Finally, a synthesis was put forward in the discussion and conclusion section together with these literature reviews. In this context, the implications for marketing in Botton's approach were compiled, and the solution proposals were criticized. As a result, the existence of a consumer who wants unlimited consumption leaves sustainability problems unsolved. In this sense, consumers need to develop a consumption philosophy through alternative economic systems. In this study, deficiencies in Botton's theory were identified, and non-economized post-materialism and minimalism were presented as solutions.

Keywords: Status Anxiety, Alain de Botton, Consumer Behaviours, Philosophy of Marketing, Snobbism, Postmodern Consumer.

Introduction

The mass consumption society that emerged with the Post-Modern period (Matsuyama, 2002: 1035) has made it a necessity to examine consumer decisions and behaviours in terms of many disciplines. Because now, consumption as a phenomenon takes place within the framework of sociological, philosophical, and psychological factors, beyond the context of satisfying needs. This change shows that it is not possible for a sociological approach that explains today's society to ignore consumption. This determination also shows that it has become a necessity to develop connections between different sociological, philosophical, and psychological approaches and marketing. For example, it is not possible to ignore consumption in explaining the sociological structure of the Panopticon thought (Bentham, 2008: 200), which Foucault revealed as a result of his historical studies and brought back to the scientific world. Because in today's society, which is defined as a mass consumption society (Baudrillard, 2008), consumption has become a symbolic language. For example, it is insufficient to explain luxury consumption or luxury consumption desire and tendency in the context of need. For this reason, such consumptions should be seen as a means by which consumers express their social status (Piacentini and Mailer, 2004: 251-252). Therefore, consumption and marketing should be considered directly in order to fully explain social phenomena such as status and to decide about the whole society in practice. However, there is no direct mention of marketing in the solution proposals for Botton's Status Anxiety. This issue is expressed in more detail within the scope of the importance of this study and its contributions to the literature. The practical importance of this study is based on the discussion of sociological, psychological, and environmental exhaustion caused by consumption. Because today, the increase in consumption has come to such a point as to argue whether it endangers humankind (Chen, Wu and Jiang, 2022).

These inferences show the importance of explaining sociological, philosophical, and psychological approaches in the context of marketing and integrating them with marketing. However, it is a methodological necessity to consider each important approach one by one and to create frameworks that explain individuals and society through micro-level integrations. In this study, which was designed within the framework of this understanding, the approaches in Alain de Botton's study called Status Anxiety were opened to a theoretical discussion with a marketing perspective. However, in order for the theoretical discussion to be conducted correctly, first of all, a conceptual framework regarding status and consumption should be established. Then, a literature review was conducted on the two main contexts of this study, post-modern consumer behaviour and the "status anxiety" created by Alain de Botton. Finally, in line with these examinations, inferences were made on the consumption of status in the context of marketing in the discussion and conclusion part of this study.

Conceptual Framework

In order to understand the study correctly, first of all, it is necessary to specify a philosophical conceptual framework on the consumer, that is, human, which is the research object of the field of consumer behaviour. When the concept of human is examined from an ontological point of view, one of the most common definitions is that human is a social creature. However, in order for this general framework to be understood correctly in specific theoretical discussions, the concept of sociality mentioned in the definition should be examined. In fact, sociality should not be seen as a community created only for the just satisfaction of the needs of societies. While each society creates itself, it also creates a symbolic structure. In order to understand the essence of this inference, it is necessary to consider the differentiation in consumption behaviours under the assumption that individuals are not in society. For example, under the assumption of a human model who does not worry about status in the social structure, the concept of symbolic consumption in marketing science would not exist. These inferences show that there will be significant changes in the consumption decisions and behaviours of someone who is not integrated into the social structure. The source of these differences points to the differentiation caused by the aforementioned social status in human behaviour. This differentiation is of great importance in terms of showing the importance of reading the symbolic values created by society correctly. Otherwise, it will not be possible to explain this structure.

The two concepts that should be specified in the conceptual framework of Botton's Status Anxiety approach of this study are the concepts of status and snobbery. At the same time, these concepts are important in terms of forming the basis of the Status Anxiety approach. Because before the discussion on Status Anxiety, Alain de Botton emphasized these two concepts. However, first, examining the definitions of the concept of status in different sources would be correct in terms of the objectivity of this study. First, it should be noted that the Oxford Dictionary examines the concept of "status" under the title of "B2: People in Society" (Oxford, 2021). This classification of the concept shows that status is based on the positioning of people in society. Thus, it is understood that it is not possible to detach status from the context of the relationship between individual and society. In the Cambridge dictionary, the concept of a status symbol is defined as "an object that shows that the person it belongs to has a high position in that society" (Cambridge, 2021). The definition in the Cambridge dictionary has two important components. The first is the definition of status as an individual's belonging to a social position. The second is that it indicates the necessity of establishing ownership or forming ownership on an object that will be an indicator of the social position. In this context, the relationship between the object of ownership and the individual needs to be explained with the market economy today. The exchange in question in this market economy is explained by marketing science. After these basic definitions, the definition of the concept of status according to Botton should be examined. Botton, on the other hand, defines the concept of status as the value that expresses the value and importance of the person to the world (Botton, 2020: 7). Throughout this study, the concept of status was used within the framework of the definition adopted by Botton in his study called Status Anxiety, which is one of the main contexts of the research.

After the concept of status, the concept of snobbishness, which is a concept that Botton associates on the basis of status, needs to be explained. The word snob began to be used in England in the 1820s. At that time, it emerged as an abbreviation of the words "sine nobilitate" (non-noble) to describe non-aristocrat students at Oxford and Cambridge universities, and its first use is seen as "s.nob". However, this concept has changed in the meaning of "non-noble" and started to mean "people who are uncomfortable with the absence of high status" (Botton, 2020: 25). In this study, the concept of snob is used in its current meaning, that is, "the person who is disturbed by the absence of high status".

The conceptual framework determinations conducted up to this point show that the existence of ownership in the consumption society constitutes the status and the existence of the status constitutes the snobbiest structure. While the value attributed by this structure to snobbery expresses the desire to reach values as the determinant of social status, ownership refers to the objects that are subject to exchange in that society. The understanding of the market economy in today's society ensures that this exchange process takes place on the basis of the concepts of marketing, consumption, and consumer. In

this study, the concept of consumer is used in the sense of "post-modern consumer" as the generally accepted consumer profile today, unless otherwise stated. The reason for this is that this study examines the equivalent of today's consumption in terms of status and status anxiety, rather than the history of consumption. Therefore, apart from the historical development of consumption, the consumption patterns seen in the past are out of question. A consumption concept with the prefix "Post" expresses a post-Modern Period, in fact, a period in which the Modernist understanding is in the "past" (Hebdige, 1986: 79). In this context, the post-modern consumer is defined as a shopping-oriented, pleasure-seeking, rebellious, and activist consumer model that goes beyond the functionality of products (Thomas, 1997: 56-57). A more detailed examination of the concept was conducted in the literature review section regarding the historical development of consumption.

Finally, it should be noted that the concept of market expressed throughout the study is defined as any virtual and physical environment in which supply and demand forces intersection with free will within the framework of market mechanisms, and access to products is provided through buyers with purchasing power, sellers, and distribution channels (Imber, 2000: 342). The concept of consumer, on the other hand, is defined as a person who has a need, purchasing power and desire to cover all roles (Mucuk, 2017: 70). The concept of need is defined as deficiencies that create psychological and physiological tension when not satisfied (Desmond, 2003: 147-148). Although it is stated that detailed philosophical and sociological evaluations of the concepts are made under the relevant headings, general frameworks regarding these concepts are stated in this section.

The Problem, Purpose, and Importance of This Research

It does not seem possible to define and understand today's society by ignoring the consumption phenomenon, and indeed, marketing. As a matter of fact, although Status Anxiety frequently makes inferences about consumption, it does not directly discuss marketing, especially in the solution proposals section. In this context, the problem of the research is the deficiencies in the marketing context of the Status Anxiety Approach created by Alain de Botton.

The purpose of the research is to evaluate a marketing approach, which is considered in terms of the Critical Approach, from a philosophical perspective with the inferences obtained within the framework of Status Anxiety. In other words, the purpose of the study is to fulfil the necessity of questioning consumption in today's economic system, where the numerical growth in consumption and the economy is evaluated only as correct or good. In addition, as a secondary purpose, it is partly to criticize the solution proposals of Status Anxiety in the context of marketing. However, it should not be ruled out that the context of the study is marketing in this process.

The importance of the research is based on questioning the current economic understanding. As mentioned, there are chronic crises in today's economy in which increased consumption is evaluated as purely correct. For example, crises that recur every ten years and which are also called the crisis of capitalism (Durmuş, 2010: 61) and environmental problems arising from production and consumption have necessitated changes in the philosophical understanding of consumption on both macro and micro levels. Today, symbolic consumption as a gaining status is the basis of the understanding that makes consumption just right. Since Status Anxiety is based on symbolic values by its nature and it is an important study that offers solutions to the problems caused by status anxiety of people, it intersects with the evaluation of symbolic consumption in the context of marketing. This study is important in terms of fulfilling these requirements and focusing on this intersection in the literature.

The Structure, Foundations, And Historical Development of The Statute

As it can be understood from the evaluations in the conceptual framework, society is an inevitable life structure for human beings. However, the same society inevitably creates a structure consisting of status layers in addition to this. It is also possible to trace the change processes of this structure throughout history. In fact, Botton's approach of Status Anxiety begins with a similar analysis. In his work, Status Anxiety, which forms the basis of the status approach, Botton starts his discussions on the

structure that forms and incorporates social layers from the Middle Ages. When the status quo in the Middle Ages is examined, it is seen that the transition between these layers was difficult. However, in addition to this, despite the absence of this transitivity in practice, there is an egalitarianism based on the belief in the hereafter. In other words, although there was practically no equality in this period, there was a perception of equality based on the belief of being equal before God. This shows that the lack of transition between layers caused by the status quo is not questioned. As a matter of fact, Botton states that it was not possible to criticize people in the Middle Ages with the judgment that they acted snobbish in today's sense (Botton, 2020: 58). For example, in the resource *Policraticus* published in 1159, social classes are explained as the organs of a body, and therefore the judgment that the transition between organs is not possible is based (Salisbury, 2000: 113).

When the status quo structure is examined from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period, it is understood that there is a structure in which transitivity is not possible. This finding leads Botton to conclude that there was no jealousy arising from class differences at that time. The reason why he concluded that it is meaningless to accuse someone of acting snobbish in the Middle Ages is essentially this judgment. However, it should not be forgotten that status symbols exist in every period of history, regardless of whether the transition between classes is possible or not. For example, as Veblen stated, a status is seen only on the basis of consumption in hunter-gatherer societies. This consumption is based on the distribution of commodities obtained by hunter-gatherer actions within that society, not purchased (Veblen, 2005: 58). Similarly in Sparta (400 BC), warrior and fighting skills were a status symbol for a man and working or efforts other than developing these skills were not welcome. In Western Europe, between the years 476-1096 AD, trying to have the characteristics of Jesus described in the Christian faith has become a status symbol (Botton, 2020: 207-208). In other words, status symbols that give social prestige to those who have it have differentiated through social values throughout history. As a result of the change in this process, the act of consumption has become directly realized on the basis of a commercial act (Aydemir, 2011: 327). However, according to Nancy Armstrong's analysis, status symbols are semiotics that determine the identity of the society and exist in all social structures (Latham, 2003: 11). At this point, it is necessary to mention a distinction that shows the context of this study. In fact, consumption has been seen as a status symbol throughout history. However, the fact that this status has become the research subject of marketing science has started with the acquisition of the consumed object through purchasing. For this reason, throughout the study, the concepts of consumption and status express the status provided through the commodities obtained by purchasing and are examined in the context of marketing.

When the historical development of status quo and status symbols is examined, it is seen that consumption (based on the purchase) was not a status symbol until the last change, which continues its effects today. As a matter of fact, this process of change is explained by the expressions “from religion to science, from science to consumption...” (Kvale, 2003). In fact, the fact that marketing began to take place as a context in the examination of the status quo coincides with the observation of the transformation that evolves into consumption. In other words, the fact that consumption began to exist as a source of social status quo also means the period when consumption began to be the determinant of social motives. This transformation process needs to be addressed in more detail in order to properly understand the fact that consumption has become a status quo-determining structure today.

There are two important differences between the Middle Age and the Modern Period in terms of the status quo structure. The first of these is the transition between social classes, while the second is the integration of status symbols with the monetary system. Before examining today's status structure, it is necessary to understand the changes seen in the Modern Period. In fact, the Modern Period draws attention as the period in which democratization has become a widespread view. Apart from the political changes caused by the democratic structure, it should not be ignored that it also caused significant changes in the class understanding of the society. In this process, the social class understanding in the Middle Ages came to an end with Hobbes's *Leviathan* and Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* (Botton, 2020: 59; Devine, 1975). However, it would be wrong to reach the conclusion that class difference comes to an end with this transformation process. Because with this transformation, there has

been a change only in the status symbols, in other words, in the reference criteria of the social structure. For example, Marx and Weber continued to defend the idea that these social classes were distributed imperfectly (Lenski, 1954: 405). In other words, this change brought the understanding that social classes are determined by the economic situation instead of God. Thus, the status determined by the economic situation also made an economic ambition revealed by class transition understandable. However, with the social transition becoming more flexible, jealousy and snobbery began to be discussed in this period. In other words, a social structure has emerged where snobbery can become a lifestyle (Köksal, 2006: 164). For example, it is noteworthy that Hume brought jealousy into a discussion in this period and that property and possession were the basis of his discussions (Hume, 2009: 755). Consumption in the Modern Period is not yet a status symbol. The values, which are the status symbols of this period, are mostly the means of production. As a matter of fact, this is the reason why Hume put it in the focus of his discussions of property and possession. That is, the property that Hume discusses focuses on the means of production. This difference in understanding between the Modern and Post-Modern Periods is also seen in economic research. For example, while ethical production and more production are the focus of research in the Modern Era, economic studies in the Post-Modern Era examine ethical consumption and more consumption (Ransome, 2005: 159). During this change process, snobbish feelings started to be discussed in parallel with jealousy. In this context, it is necessary not to see jealousy and snobbish feelings as mere feelings. These structures also reveal an understanding in which the relations between the aristocratic structure and the lower classes are questioned (Thackeray, 2008: 24).

In the post-modern period, the status symbol accepted in the social structure has become consumption. In other words, in parallel with democracy, the society entered a relentless consumption race (Tocqueville, 2004: 559). Botton, on the other hand, interprets wealth as a class determinant since consumption becomes a symbol of social status while democracy makes individuals equal on paper. He also states that in this period, society evaluated the facts in a more numerical and deterministic way while interpreting the facts and that the people who were seen as "poor" thought they were like that because of their own incompetence (Botton, 2020: 100). These findings explain that consumption has become a ritual. Although these rituals are not needed at all, they cause many products to be seen as a basic need in the eyes of the society (Smith, 1997: 141-149). Galbraith, on the other hand, states that although people's salaries are sufficient for their living, they describe them as vulgar because they are under the society average, and they cannot afford to buy status symbols (Galbraith, 1998: 195). Botton expresses these determinations with a more concrete example that a linen shirt is not a necessity, and although people can live without that product, even the lowest class people in Europe are ashamed of going out in public without a linen shirt (Botton, 2020: 218). In other words, the warriors of Antiquity became priests in the Middle Ages. Today's warriors and priests are pretentious consumers of high wealth, living in luxury homes and owning luxury cars.

This literature on society and status symbols shows that consumption is now the determinant of the status quo in Post-Modern society. The social structure also increases these tendencies, making even non-needed consumption objects a necessity. Sombart confirms this situation with the concept of thin demand for qualitative luxury goods. In this context, the concept of Sombart thin demand refers to the satisfaction of needs with more qualified goods beyond the basic meaning. According to Sombart, although all the goods consumed today are aimed to satisfy a thin demand (Sombart, 2013: 117-118), it is necessary not to evaluate consumption as a status symbol in terms of pure consumption action. Because when it comes to status, the discussion of how well a product satisfy the need is insufficient. For this reason, the post-modern consumer is motivated to create a thinner-than-average effective demand. In other words, the post-modern consumer gains status in direct proportion to the thinner effective demand it can create. Moreover, the increase in communication tools has an accelerating effect in this process. Although the borders between countries also create limits to symbolic understandings (Jarness and Friedman, 2017: 14), the essence of the symbolic structure consists of consumption. In other words, although the form of consumption changes with cultural influences, consumption itself continues to exist as a phenomenon.

These developments have made marketing science, which was born in the Modern Period, gain great importance in the Post-Modern Period. Beyond that, it has become an important component of philosophical, sociological, psychological, and anthropological studies. So much so that today, according to some approaches, marketing is shown as a synthesis of psychology, sociology, economics, and anthropology, which are defined as basic social sciences (Erdoğan, 2018: x). Undoubtedly, marketing also reacted to this social transformation process and explained the consumer mass formed by this new society from its own perspective. These approaches are examined within the framework of post-modern consumer behaviour in marketing science. In order to understand this study correctly, it is necessary to examine the characteristics of post-modern consumer behaviours determined by marketing science.

Symbolic Consumption and The Post-Modern Consumer

It has long been recognized that products have a symbolic value for consumers (Dimanche and Samdahl, 1994: 121). For example, Udell argued in 1964 that the direct benefit of a product is the psychological satisfaction it creates in the consumer. In addition, he explained psychological satisfaction through social satisfaction (Udell, 1964: 9). Dolich (1969: 84) argued that consumers perceive products as symbols, and they always tend to attribute symbolic values to products. It is not a coincidence that such approaches began to appear in the 1960s. Because these dates should be evaluated in the context of corresponding to the emergence process of the post-modern society, which is also called “consumption society” today. The dates when symbolic consumption began to be discussed in the literature also coincide with consumption becoming a status symbol. In other words, consumption is no longer considered purely in terms of functionality. Instead, individuals form a social identity through symbols. As Sarup (1996: 120) puts it, the identities of individuals in the post-modern world are formed by consumption patterns. In different studies, the process of creating symbolic meaning and social identity through consumption is explained with a more striking expression as follows: Today's post-modern world should be interpreted as a consumption-sphere rather than a globe, and the social structure governs the individuals in this world through consumption symbols (Firat and Vankatesh, 1995); Giddens, 1991; Slater, 1997). The idea of symbolic consumption can be defined as a consumer approach that attributes symbolic values to products and calculates the benefit to be gained through the social status that this symbolic value will bring to them. In this context, significant changes were seen in the benefit criteria of products in the post-modern society. While these changes are seen as symbolic consumption at the micro level, they emerge as post-modern consumer behaviours at the macro level. In other words, the phenomena that symbolic consumptions create in society in a cumulative way correspond to post-modern consumer behaviours. At this point, it would be appropriate to switch from symbolic consumption to post-modern consumer characteristics, in other words, from micro-scale to macro-scale. In fact, Baudrillard makes an important determination and explains this situation with semiological sign exchange value, which is beyond use and exchange value (Baudrillard, 2009: 1). In other words, in the post-modern consumption era, Marx's exchange and use value is not enough either. Instead, semiotics has emerged as an important value creator.

The most important feature of post-modern consumption is that consumption gains an experiential appearance by breaking away from functionality in this period (Raaij, 1993). However, this determination is not sufficient to fully understand consumer behaviour. In order to understand this determination more accurately, the concept of experience should also be examined. Experience includes two components in post-modern consumption. The first is that consumption has become the focus of life, and the experiences while consuming gain importance. In other words, experiences without consumption are not considered in the Post-Modern Period. In addition, examining experience as a phenomenon reveals the second component. In fact, the increase in symbolic consumption and the fact that consumption itself has become a means of social status shows that an experience itself is not important. Instead, what really matters is the social status of having that experience. So, it is about experiencing status.

The systematic examination and explanation of postmodern consumer behaviour in marketing science coincides with the end of the 1980s and is a continuation of the Interpretive Approach

(Kassarjian, 1994: 273). The Post-Modern Approach, which makes the structure envisaged by the Interpretive Approach more systematic and classifies consumer behaviours, has gathered consumer behaviours in three main components (Elgün and Karabiyik, 2020: 3348). Three basic key concepts of post-modern consumer decisions and behaviours defined by marketing science are as follows (Ackerman, 1997: 652; Gabbott, 2008: 110; Featherstone, 2007: 81):

Asocial Individualism: Although the process of integration between societies has accelerated with the expansion of communication tools, individuals do not accept the symbolic values directly imposed by the social structure. However, this does not mean that consumers are disconnected from the social structure. Instead, it means that the symbolic values that are not directly imposed and created by the social structure are more adopted by the consumers.

Greed: Consumption has a greedy nature in parallel with the definition of the Post-Modern Era as the “age of mass consumption” (Glickman, 2012: 411). Because each consumption means a status achieved. In fact, what consumers greedily turn to is not the consumption of objects but the status to be achieved.

Meta-Adaptation: Post-Modern consumers want to have more information about the products they consume than ever before. However, it should not be ignored that the information that consumers have is not based on pure functionality. In other words, consumers want to know everything about the product, brand, and even the manufacturer. Because now, consumption has become social, and individuals are aware that when they consume, the society will see them, and the products they consume will be known. In other words, meta-adaptation should be understood as a necessary stage of the identity to be formed through consumption.

When the literature on post-modern consumer behaviour is examined, it is seen that there is a parallelism between the changes in marketing science and the historical development of the status quo. The relationship between status and consumer behaviour in Botton's approach, which is the main purpose of this study, is examined in the discussion and conclusion part.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

According to Botton's theory, consumption has become an effective sociological structure, especially in the Post-Modern period. Although he did not examine consumption under a specific heading in Status Anxiety, it is noteworthy that in the eyes of Post-Modern society, having the most expensive products is also equivalent to having the best character traits in society (Botton, 2020: 220). Evaluating the status motive from a much broader perspective in his study, Botton cited lack of love, snobbery, expectation, meritocracy, and trust as causes of status anxiety. Examining these reasons in the first part of the study, Botton offers philosophy, art, politics, Christianity, and bohemianism as a solution to these status concerns in the second part. However, consumption is one of the most fundamental values of post-modern society, as the approach in Status Anxiety accepts. However, the fact that it does not examine consumption as a specific factor should be seen as a shortcoming of this approach. In order to eliminate this deficiency, it would be appropriate to compile the implications of marketing in the study.

It is important to make inferences in the context of marketing in the Post-Modern Period, in which social status is achieved through consumption, in order to ensure the parallelism of the discussion section of this study. As a status symbol in today's society, wealth still maintains its importance. As a matter of fact, Turner emphasizes that although the tools change in the process of changing the status, the mentality does not change and he states that the essence of status is wealth. The way to show status as a result of changing tools is to consume products that fewer people can afford. For this reason, some products or brands are artificially reduced in supply and thus the elite who can still buy that product can show their status (Turner, 2000: 90-91). However, it has become possible to appear to have a higher status than the wealth owned, especially thanks to the financial instruments seen within the framework of the Neo-Liberal Economy. In a more concrete expression, consumers have had the opportunity to

increase their social status, which they can buy by mortgaging their future incomes. From this point of view, one of the factors that makes class transition flexible is financial instruments (Munoz-Cespedes, Ibar-Alonso & Ros, 2021). However, how healthy this situation is for an economic system is a controversial issue. This situation also coincides with the "compulsion of growth (Han, 2021: 11)" metaphor of the neoliberal economy, as Byung-Chul Han puts it. According to Han, wars break out in periods when economic growth cannot be sustained. For this reason, post-modern consumers have to consume to ensure peace (Han, 2021: 111). As this interpretation is macroeconomic, it is not directly related to the context of this study. However, it is important for status in terms of showing how effective consumption is at both macro and micro scales.

On the other hand, it is seen that status symbols have had certain purposes throughout history. For example, the warrior of the Ancient Age undertakes the task of protecting the society he lives in while he is in danger of losing his life in return for the status symbol he has acquired. In other words, it shows that those who carry out the action believed to be done for the society in every period have a status. This inference shows that today it is believed that consumption should be increased for society. By making consumption a status symbol, post-modern society sanctifies economic growth and assumes it as pure good. In this context, the understanding of expanding the economies by increasing consumption supports this argument.

The issue of avoiding the individual and social harms of status anxiety caused by seeing consumption as social status is examined in the eighth section under the Bohemian title of the second part of Botton's solution suggestions. At this point, Alain de Botton's solution proposal is based on awareness. This awareness is at the point of the diversity of resources that will give status. If the post-modern individual is aware of the existence of status sources other than consumption, he will get out of this consumption spiral. According to Botton, it is not possible to completely eliminate status anxiety. However, it is possible to channel it correctly, and the search for solutions should be conducted on this basis.

The structure systematized in Concern for Status needs to be combined with the features of post-modern consumer behaviour. The solution to the tensions created by consumption as a status symbol in the individual should be initiated by considering the consumer characteristics, which are classified by marketing science as asocial individualism, greed, and meta-adaptation on a philosophical basis. Because all these structures need to be detached from consumption and turned into views of life with a philosophical background. For example, bohemianism, which is one of Botton's solution suggestions, coincides with asocial individualism. However, bohemianism created without a consumption philosophy will not be a solution. Because, as mentioned in the literature review, solution proposals that are not disconnected from consumption lead to the conclusion that Jarness and Friedman's understanding of consumption based on cultures does not change even though cultural boundaries are formed. In other words, although there is a difference between a consumption-oriented towards bohemianism and post-modern consumption in terms of product and brand, the basis of consumption will not change. A bohemian will continue to consume to establish his own identity. As a matter of fact, it can be explained with today's marketing understanding that this method will not provide a solution. For example, when businesses develop their marketing strategies, choosing a target market and creating a brand image suitable for those markets, in a way, bypasses the unphilosophical use of concepts such as bohemianism. As a solution to the crisis of the system, snobbism has also been discussed by philosophers such as Fitzgerald and Bourdieu (Peterson, 1997: 87). However, it should not be forgotten that snob emotions do not offer an opposing view to the current system. In other words, it does not have a base of understanding of change. On the other hand, it is based on the aim of achieving a high status within the framework of the same status quo understanding. Similarly, jealousy has the same nature. However, the philosophical structure that needs to be developed for the solution of the crises should have the ability to look at the post-modern structure from outside it. In other words, a meta-post-modernist understanding needs to be developed. This understanding is the result of this study.

Conclusion

Up to this point, the consumption pressure caused by the consumer society on individuals or the proposals that could not offer a practical solution to the consumption race was discussed. First, it should be noted that the status-providing structures created by the society were not seen as the most ideal situation in this study. Like this approach, the approaches of Marx and Weber are mentioned in the literature review section, and the search for suggestions that will bring this situation to a more ideal point in practice constitutes the problematic of this study. In other words, the concluding part of this study focuses on offering solutions to the issues that Botton ignored or bypassed by the marketing practices that emerged after him.

Although, according to Botton's theory, approaches such as religious belief or bohemianism are suggested as a solution to status anxiety, the marketing process of today's status symbols, which has become consumption-oriented, has melted this understanding in its own pot and revealed a new consumption model. This model is particularly relevant in practice through market segmentation, niche markets, and positioning. For example, a post-modern consumer who does not follow the philosophy of bohemianism will tend to consume the product group of a bohemian-focused positioning of marketing practices. This leads to the emergence of an economy in which bohemianism is consumed rather than a bohemian philosophy of consumption. For example, the bohemian process, which, according to Botton's theory, should result in alienation from consumption, can be the subject of fashion today and become the model series of a high-priced clothing brand. Thus, as a result, consumers show that they are a bohemian to the society with their consumption - which consists of the continuation of consumption by changing its form.

This study argues that the most basic and functional solution proposal brought by Botton to this problem seen in status anxiety is philosophy. Because questioning the components of consumption, status, and post-modern society with philosophy causes important changes in consumer behaviour. One of the most typical examples of this, although it is rare, is the life views developed by post-materialist and minimalist understandings. The fact that such approaches gain importance in terms of inner peace, especially in the United States, where the structure of the consumer society is intense, shows that these approaches will be discussed in the scientific and philosophical world in the near future as a solution proposal. For example, the post-materialistic approach in Wallman's book titled *Stuffocation* (2017) offers a more effective solution to Botton's correct determination of status anxiety. Similarly, the approach defined by Schumacher (Schumacher, 2019) with the phrase *Small is Beautiful* proposes a more effective solution proposal system on both macro and microeconomic scales. In this context, the post-materialistic and minimalist understandings of philosophy need to be examined in a broader framework at the point of solving the tension caused by consumption in the individual and the crisis created by the necessity of obtaining status through consumption. This requirement is a suggestion of this study. Within the framework of this proposal, the reasons for Botton's status anxiety should be resolved with the understanding of minimalism and post-materialism in the economic framework. On the other hand, considering many global problems like climate change due to increasing consumption (Chen, Zheng & Shah, 2022: 223) stemming from increased production, it is a fact that status anxiety towards consumption is a problem that needs to be resolved. This study also examined Botton's solution proposals and concluded that his solution proposals should be updated within the framework of a non-monetized consumption philosophy within the framework of Neo-Liberal understanding. Among these philosophical approaches, post-materialism and minimalism seem to be strengthening models. The integration of these models into the marketing field as a philosophy of consumption constitutes the recommendations of this study.

Limitations and Further Studies

This study is one of the pioneering studies that focuses on the problems of consumption, which is seen as purely good in the consumer society and examines this process on a sociological basis. It is especially important in terms of Alain de Botton's focus on a specific subject such as Status Anxiety.

However, it was thought within the framework of some limitations as it is a pioneering study that tries to establish the context between Status Anxiety and marketing. For example, this study focused only on Status Anxiety and marketing but ignored the relationship of this theory with other theories in the field of sociology. The reason for this limitation is that, as mentioned, this study is both a pioneering marketing study focused on Status Anxiety, and it is aimed to keep the context of the study in the focus of marketing science. For this reason, focusing on this specific subject, which is a limitation of this study, also constitutes the recommendations of this study. First, this study proposes studies that will integrate different sociological and philosophical theories into marketing science to develop the philosophy of consumption and create an understanding of consumption in practice.

Another limitation of the study is that the subject is discussed only within the framework of post-modern consumption. Although it touches on the historical change of consumption and status superficially in order to determine the process of consumption becoming a status symbol at some points, these issues are out of the context of the study and limited to a level that can only constitute a basis for current discussions. In this context, in order to understand the history of marketing and consumption, studies that examine historical changes in the understanding of consumption together with philosophical and sociological understandings are another of the suggestions of this study.

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