

# TRANSNATIONAL CONSUMER CONCEPT AND A RESEARCH ON IDENTIFYING TRANSNATIONAL CONSUMER PROFILE IN TURKEY

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## Abstract

Along with globalization, custom of consuming has been changing too. Globalization is adding a new dimension to the immigration case and revealing new terms like mobility, movement, transnationalism, transnational marketing and mobile marketing. "Transnational as an adjective was first used in 1921 and defined as "extending or going beyond national borders" according to *Webster's Dictionary* (1988: 1254). Transnationalism is happening to be a concept related with globalization. In this context, the concept 'transnational marketing' emerges as marketing actions directed to meeting needs and demands of consumers in different countries at different times, with different purposes. 'Transnational marketing' concept brings along the concept of 'transnational consumers'. They are immigrants, refugees, tourists as well as business people and professionals. Along with globalization in Turkey, it is viewed that the number of transnational consumers is gradually increasing nevertheless there aren't enough researches about this subject. It is thought that identifying the profiles of transnational consumers in Turkey will be beneficial to both literatures academically and to the firms in Turkey to know consumers better. This study aims to determine the profile of transnational consumers in Turkey. In this study; the concept of transnational consumers and transnational consumers in Turkey are identified according to their demographical properties. This study is a conceptual study based on literature review and secondary data.

## Introduction

The topic of transnationalism first defined immigration-oriented in sociology and anthropology. In the forthcoming years transnationalism is not discussed only immigration-oriented but also discussed much more comprehensively in such areas like economics and marketing.

Transnational marketing is a new concept so there are limited researches in the literature. On the purpose of fill this gap in the literature, it is essential to research in this issue. In this context this study aims to determine the profile of transnational consumers in Turkey.

In the first part of the study the transnational and transnational marketing concepts are explained. In the second part of the study transnational consumer concept and the types of the transnational consumers are defined. In the last part of the study transnational consumers that live in Istanbul has been introduced as demographic profile.

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## **Transnational Marketing**

The increasingly invoked notion of 'transnationalism', referring to various kinds of global or cross-border connections, currently frames the view of numerous researchers concerned with migrants and dispersed ethnic groups (Vertovec, 2001, 573).

Transnationalism can be understood in a dialectic view of the links between "the global" and "the local" in a world of nodes denoting the transnational space where global and local are increasingly difficult to separate from each other (Kearney 1995; Miller 1995, 1997; Grewal and Kaplan, 1994; Jackson et. al. 2004, Sirkeci, 2013, 3).

Transnationalism refers to social, cultural, economic and political relations which are between, above or beyond the nation-state, interconnecting, transcending, perhaps even superseding, what has been for the past two hundred years their primary locus (Grillo, 2004, 864). Transnational activities can be classified in a variety of ways. They may include activities that are political (for example, lobbying), economic (for example, remittances and investment), social (such as, promotion of the human and other rights of the transnational group within different societies) and cultural (for example, articles in newspapers) (Al-Ali, Black ve Koser, 2010, 581). Specifically, within anthropology, transnational used in a migration context refers to people, transnational migrants ('transmigrants') who in the simplest formula 'live lives across borders' (Grillo, 2004, 864).

Transnational marketing is a new concept in the literature of consumer behavior and marketing strategy. In many marketing texts and articles "transnational marketing" has been mentioned but not really elaborated and defined. Although a few more ideas are added about the "transnational", still the term is used rather confusingly, referring strongly to the global description. It is pretty common that the two terms are used interchangeably which implies that global and transnational are almost the same (Sirkeci, 2013, 13). But the two terms has different meanings.

Transnationalism overlaps globalization but typically has a more limited purview. Transnational corporations operate worldwide but are centered in one home nation (Kearney, 1995, 548).

Globalization has perhaps passed its sell-by-date now and this why scholars, researchers, managers and practitioners are seeking new vocabularies and approaches. When the term "glocal" introduced in a very catchy slogan "think global act local", many cheers were heard (Sirkeci, 2013, 4). Glocal refers to the need for globalization on the one hand and localization, adaptation and customization on the other (Sirkeci, 2013, 2). In terms of production and marketing, multinationals offer products tailored for national markets, the globals offer standardized product for all markets, and internationals offer diversified products for a few or more markets (Sirkeci, 2013, 4). The key feature of the transnational perspective is the recognition of the interaction between the global and the local as well as the compromise due to the continuing power of nation states that moderates transnational movement of things, finances, ideas, and people (Sirkeci, 2013, 2).

Transnational marketing has emerged as a way of life and transactions between buyers of one country/culture and sellers of another country/culture are commonplace (Sheth, 1983, 46). Transnational marketing can be defined as understanding and addressing

customer needs, wants, and desires in their own countries of residence and beyond and in borderless cultural contexts with the help of synergies emerging across national boundaries and transfer of expertise and advantages shared between markets where the organization operates transnationally (i.e. functions based in two or more countries) with a transnational mentality supported by transnational organization structures and without compromising the sustainability of any target markets and resource environment offering satisfactory exchanges between the parties involved (Sirkeci, 2011, 14).

### **Transnational Consumer**

Transnationals are different from globals and locals in terms of their connectedness and mobility (Sirkeci, 2013, 14). Transnational consumers are those people who understand, perceive and behave in a framework transcending the national and local (social-cultural, political, economic, and technological) reference points. They are often linked to more than one national framework and/or referring to such behaviour patterns beyond any national framework. Therefore, those customers who are not mobile but connected transnationally as well as others who are spatially mobile, spending substantial period abroad or on travelling or moved abroad, and yet stay in touch with the countries of origin and countries of transit. Hence the transnationals as a consumer segment can be examined in two sub-groups: 1) transnationals (or borderless non-mobiles) and 2) transnational mobiles (or borderless mobiles) (Sirkeci, 2013, 14).

Transnationals can surf through, search, meet up with each other in the comfort of e-geography without the hassle of a physical move (Sirkeci, 2013, s.28).

To be transnational, mobility is not essential. The transnational outlook, connectedness, being part of such networks spanning across national borders can influence consumption patterns (Sirkeci, 2013, 26).

Transnational mobiles are both consumers and providers; they are marketers too. They do move around the world and consume products and services satisfying their distinct needs arising from the fact of being mobile (Sirkeci, 2013, 39). The transnational mobiles can be categorized under two main groups: Migrants and non-migrants, based on the criteria of changing place of residence for 12 months or more as the UN definition suggests (Sirkeci, 2013, 39). Core migrant groups include minorities, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented movers. Non migrant groups include entrepreneurs, wealth mobiles, working holiday makers, seasonal workers, sojourners, students and professionals.

It must be taken into account that in transnational consumer societies the market becomes the mirror of what consumers are, what they want to be, and what they can become. The market becomes the arena where individuals build up new social spaces for themselves (Ferrero, 2002, s.195).

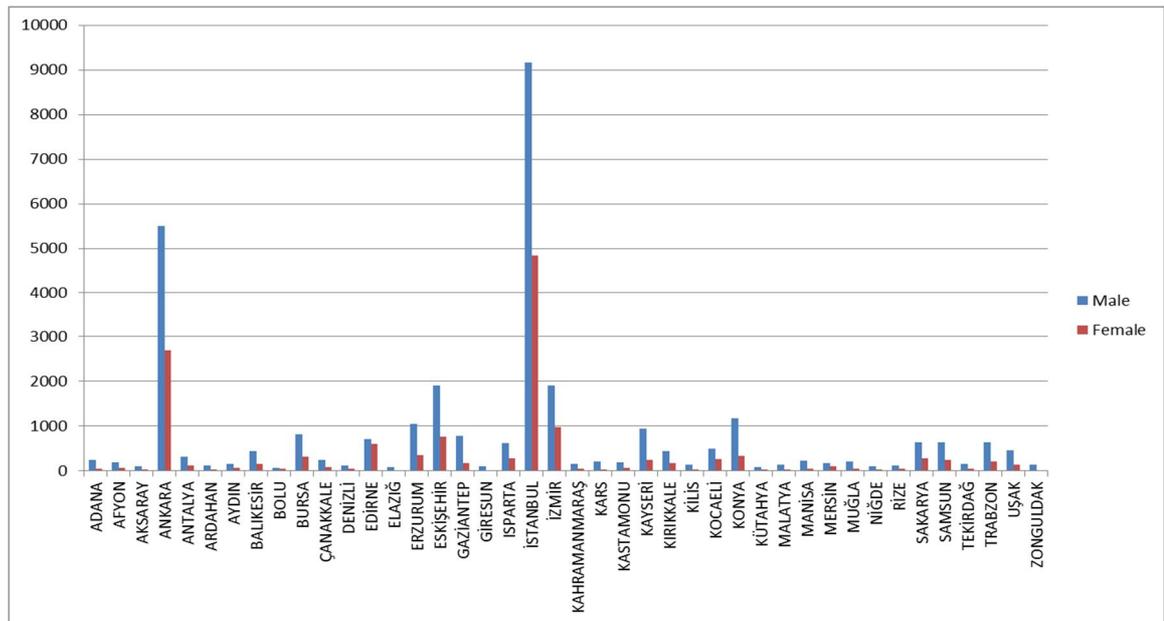
Along with the increase of transnational consumers all over the World, the research about transnational consumer's consumption patterns is increasing day by day. Some researches such as transnational food (Ferrero, 2002, s.195), transnational fashion (Jackson, Thomas and Dwyer, 2007, 908) shows the importance of ethnic consumption.

## Methodology

Aim of this study is transnational consumers in Turkey are identified according to their demographical properties. In this study data collected secondary data. In this study transnational consumers are categorized. This categories are described in the following.(Sirkeci, 2011, ...)

- ✓ Tourists
- ✓ High Skill Professionals
- ✓ Entrepreneurs
- ✓ Students
- ✓ Migrations
- ✓ Wealthy Mobiles

In this study, only which are explained only for students data . Because data of other groups are not enough. Foreign students in Turkey are transnational consumers and they constitute market. They have a lot of and different needs. Foreign students increases more and more in Turkey. In 2011, 31 thousand 170 in Turkey in 2014, the number of foreign students who came to 54 thousand. Students from 93 countries to study at universities in Turkey and, most foreign nationals in the ranking of universities providing education to students from Istanbul University ranks first with 4 thousand 519 students. In second place with two thousand 660 students at Ankara University, 3rd and 2 thousand 439 students and is located at Marmara University. Number of foreign students studying in first place in the rankings with 6 thousand 861 students receiving Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan ranks second with 6 thousand 703 students, the third is located in Iran with 4 thousand 266 students. (<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/egitim/26066682.asp> , 01.02.2014).



Graphics 1 : Descriptive Frequency on City

According to data of Turkish Higher Education Institution the number of foreign student is 47616 in Turkey. %69 of these students are male (33038 students); %31 of these students are female (14578 students). ([www.yok.gov.tr](http://www.yok.gov.tr) ). However foreign students come to Turkey for Erasmus Program. According to data of National Agency the Number of Erasmus students are 2069 in Turkey. Along with this data Erasmus students are 4% of the total foreign students in Turkey. Foreign students firstly prefer to universities in Istanbul. Secondary they prefer to Ankara and thirdly Izmir. On other hand most of the foreign students prefer universities in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Transnational marketing point of view foreign students are transnational consumers in Turkey. This market is very important for Turkey. In this sense transnational marketing strategies to be implemented for foreign students and their needs must be satisfied.

Foreign students firstly are seen to come from Turkmenistan (6867) secondary from Azerbaijan (6749) and thirdly from Iran (4286). At the same time Erasmus students, increase the number of foreign students in Turkey. Accordingly transnational consumers increase in Turkey. Table 1 show that number of foreign students and their nationalities in Turkey. (The first 20).

**Table 1 Nationals of Foreign Students in Turkey (The First 20)**

TURKMENISTAN	6867
AZERBAIJAN	6749
IRAN	4286
AFGHANISTAN	2300
SYRIA	1752
IRAQ	1567
GREECE	1495
KYRGYZSTAN	1386
KAZAKHSTAN	1290
KOSOVO	899
NIGERIA	875
NORTHERN CYPRUS Fri.	856
MONGOLIA	856
BULGARIA	843
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	824
PAKISTAN	719
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	685
PALESTINE	662
ALBANIA	636

Number of students in higher education are 5448658. In turkey, the rate of foreign students in total students are %08. The ratio is very low. But foreign students increasingly prefer to Turkey. This result indicates that the increase of transnational consumers in Turkey. We know that there are different categories transnational

consumers in Turkey. For instance tourists, high skill professionals, migrations... We just researched foreign students. Because we had to limit access to data and time problem. This study show that foreign students preferred the universities in Turkey for foreign students is preferred, most preferred suggests that universities in Istanbul. From within the universities in Istanbul also preferred that most of Marmara University

## **Result**

In this study; the concept of transnational consumers and transnational consumers in Turkey are identified according to their demographical properties. This study is a conceptual study based on literature review and secondary data. We researched transnational consumers profile in Turkey. There are different categorieies transnational consumers: Tourists, foreign students, high skill profesioanals, etc. We just selected foreign students in Turkey. According to this study results foreign students prefer to Turkey. Foreign students firstly prefer to universities in Istanbul. Secondary they prefer to Ankara and thirdly Izmir. The increasing mobility of people, changing their consumption habits. Results of this research are considerable from theoretical and practical point of view. So far various theories is presented in explaining individual behavior and noticed in different sciences to various angles of individual behavior day by day.

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