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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Consumptionscape of Turkish Feminist Mothers: Negotiations between Motherhood, Consumer Culture and Feminist Ideologies

Miray Baybars¹ , Ayla Özhan-Dedeoğlu² 

Abstract

The present study analyzes consumption practices of feminist mothers and how they negotiate tensions arising from the clash of their multiple identities and marketplace behaviors. Having a broad research focus, this study aims to contribute to the epistemic terrain of motherhood and consumption and provide new theoretical explanations by revealing the extent of negotiations at the crossing axes of consumer, feminist and mother roles. The findings reveal that feminist mothers negotiate different cognitions, practices and narratives of identity, and develop a practical logic based on the interplay between authentic and mass-produced, natural and artificial, branded and generic, traditional and modern, industrial and rural, over-consumption and needs-satisfaction without necessarily privileging one over the other. The present study fills a theoretical gap by revealing how their practices incorporate a polysemous quality based on their intertwined roles and discourses.

Keywords

Feminist Mothers, Motherhood, Consumption, Negotiations

Introduction

In consumer society, the marketplace has become a preeminent source of mythic and symbolic resources through which people construct practices and narratives of identity, and communicate meanings in particular social roles and relationships (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Mothering practices and motherhood identities are evidently constructed and communicated through consumption in the marketplace. The domain of knowledge of modern motherhood, and its rules of action and modes of relation to oneself are largely structured around consumer culture. Women, as constituent subjects and reflexive consumer agents, construct motherhood through authenticating acts and communicate and negotiate it in the community through authoritative performances (Arnould and Price, 2000). Despite the em-

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powerment through meaning-making activities and the agency consumers have, the structure of the consumer society and mass-marketed consumption ideologies are perceived by feminist literature as a compromise to women's independence; they objectify and oppress women as females, wives and mothers at the psychological, economic, and socio-cultural levels (Gimenez, 2005). To gain comprehensive insight into the individual experience of mothers, as Foucault (1997) asserted, instead of the constituent subject per se, there is a need for an analysis that accounts for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework and comprises domains of knowledge, types of normativity (e.g. rules that differentiate good mothering from bad), and modes of relation to oneself and others. Feminist ideologies problematize motherhood as another venue of modern patriarchy for male dominance, proletarianization and confinement of women to the private sphere (Steiner and Lachover, 2016; Click, 2009; Sancar, 2012; Fraser, 2013). The discussions on motherhood are largely centered on the 'good mothering' ideology that rests on the power relations and ideology of the traditional patriarchal family and sets of norms for mothers (Kinser, 2010; Dedeoglu, 2006).

Despite rich feminist literature on motherhood and gender, inequality, domination, family relations and other dimensions, there remains a need for research (Cook, 2013; Hollows, 2013; McRobbie, Strutt and Bandinelli, 2019) on how feminist mothers interpret mass-media marketplace ideologies. Previous studies mostly investigated the problematic relationship between consumption and feminism using texts that appeared in mass media. Some studies illustrated tensions between feminist mothers and children that arise during shopping (e.g. Miller, 1997), but tensions between the mother and third parties with regard to consumption practices have not been addressed. The present study addresses the following broad research topic: how feminist mothers construct and negotiate life themes and narratives of identity using market-generated mythic and symbolic resources in relation to other people, such as other family members, within the socio-historical context interwoven with relations of power and dominance. An interrogation of feminist mothers' consumption practices that come into play in the problematic juncture between feminism, motherhood, and consumption requires an acknowledgment of the intersections of woman, feminist, mother and consumer identities. Since women's oppression may stem from multiple subordinations, as they sit at the crossing axes of many categories, intersectionality studies have analyzed intersections of many divisions, such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and class (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Shields, 2008). O'Reilly (2016) argued that maternity needs to be likewise understood in terms of intersectional theory because the motherhood and womanhood identities are distinct from each other. An analysis of feminist mothers' consumption practices may benefit from recognition of mutually constitutive relations among these identities (Green 2019).

Scholarly studies on Turkish modernity (Gole, 2003; Kandiyoti, 2002; Sandikci and Ger, 2002) reveal that Turkey provides a unique case that rests on local interpretations of modernity and patterns of difference, hybridization between local and global, traditional and modern. Despite the gains of the state-induced modernism project and feminist movement

after the establishment of the Turkish Republic and the subsequent second-wave feminist movement, conservative changes in Turkey's political landscape in the 21st century have compelled feminist literature to focus back on women's basic rights instead of less pressing issues, such as motherhood (Arat, 1998; Koray, 2011; Diner and Toktas, 2010; Sirman, 1989; Negrón-Gonzales, 2016; Durakbasa, 2019). The following phenomenological analysis of consumption practices of feminist mothers illuminates how they attempt to shape their children's subjectivity as future consumers and negotiate the tensions arising from the clash of their multiple identities and marketplace behaviors. Since the study also focuses not only on mother and child relations, but also on relations between mother and other people in the non-western context of the Turkish marketplace, the findings may contribute to the epistemic terrain of consumption and motherhood via development of a new theoretical insights by shedding a light on the tensions and negotiations.

Motherhood in the Context of Consumer Culture

Foucault (1978a) emphasized that in a modern society different forms of power, as a function of knowledge, are exercised through disciplinary means in a variety of institutions. In consumer society, consumption has largely become a symbolic rather than an instrumental activity that also constitutes a structure of domination. Consumer culture is organized around the principle of obedience to the different market actors' cultural authority: people who have internalized its values implicitly grant firms the authority to organize their tastes (Holt, 2002). Arnould and Thompson (2005) argued that 'consumer culture and its marketplace ideology frames consumers' horizons of conceivable action, feeling and thought, making certain patterns of behavior and sense-making interpretations more likely than others'. Dobscha (1998) revealed how the marketplace did not act as a place in which mutual exchange is facilitated but rather a place where waste and false claims run rampant. Consumers' free will can be seen as an illusion since consumers are not emancipated from a network of relations that are based on power (Slater, 1997).

Nevertheless, contemporary consumer society cannot be explained with passive individuals vis-à-vis the market; on the contrary, consumers are active agents who construct identity and create a unity between themselves and community through authenticating acts and authoritative performances (Arnould and Price, 2000). Firat and Dholakia (2016) remarked that the human subject has traveled far from the traditional subjectivity of the "being subject" to the "knowing subject" of modernity, which has been especially represented by "the citizen" in early modernity and then "the consumer" in late modernity. Although an individual is a reflexive subject who has agency in constructing the structure, s/he is also constituted by the discourses and practices in which s/he is embedded (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995).

Foucault (1978a) noted that ‘resistance is an integral part of power relations. Despite obedience to the market power, consumers, through meaning-creating activities, reflexively interpret and transform mass-produced meanings to make collective sense of their environments, construct individual and collective identities, and even appropriate marketing institutions and agents, and resist against the consumer culture in diverse ways (Kozinets, 2001).

Since mother and child mutually constitute each other, a mother’s empowering agency in constructing her identity as well as the identity of her child also refers to confining responsibilities due to the presence, dependence and needs of the other (Andersen, Sørensen and Kjaer, 2007; Chapman and Gubi, 2019). Therefore, a mother’s quest for complete personal autonomy and independence from the patriarchal social structure and imposed power relationships is multi-faceted and complex.

In consumer culture, motherhood is experienced in the sphere of consumption of market-made commodities, symbols or information (Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006; Theodorou and Spyrou, 2013). It is the marketplace that structures the good mothering ideology that dictates child-centered, expert-guided, and labor-intensive child-rearing practice that necessitates a similar workload of a full-time job (Hays, 1996). Defining the symbolic boundaries, the marketplace also offers emancipatory opportunities for subjectivity. Mothers, as full-fledged consumers, are interpretive agents whose meaning-creating activities range from those that embrace the dominant representations of consumer identity to those that do not resonate with these ideological instructions (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Symbolic consumption facilitates the transition to the role of motherhood and contributes to the development of new identities by reducing perceptions of role uncertainty and incongruity between the actual and the ideal self (Moisio, Arnould and Price, 2004; Bahl and Milne, 2010; Andersen, Sørensen and Kjaer, 2007; Hogg, Maclaran and Curasi, 2003; Layne, 2000).

According to Thompson (1996), ‘caring consumption’ helps mothers to create more ideal family settings, juggle schedules, adapt to unplanned occurrences, overcome time constraints and develop positive feelings of accomplishment and control. Andersen, Sørensen and Kjaer (2007) illustrated that baby clothing is an important category of expressing the mothers’ identity and their motherhood ideals. Budds et al. (2017) revealed that mothers are able to construct identity positions such as committed facilitator, creative provider and careful/caring monitor.

Yet, consumption may also complicate the transition to motherhood because of insufficient resources and uncertainty felt due to lack of consumption skills and unawareness of product-related meanings (Voice Group, 2010a) . Moreover, they may not relate to the marketplace ideologies and/or resist commercialized mothering experiences. The marketplace takes up and amplifies the domain of knowledge and types of normativity of motherhood and ties them to consumption, constructs possible identity roles mothers can live up to and

excludes alternative maternal subjectivities (Voice Group, 2010b). Banister, Hogg and Dixon (2010) argued that to define their own version of the ideal self, mothers either resist the discourses, reconcile the discourses or disengage from the discourses.

Consumer culture context is vital on how mothers construct and negotiate life themes and narratives of identity not only via commodities or symbols within, but also the power relationships within this context that are effective on these relationships. Understanding motherhood experiences and the identity negotiations will be incomplete with an investigation excluding consumerism and consumer culture. Therefore, feminist mothers' mothering experiences need to be examined through a lens with a consumer culture focus.

Feminism, Motherhood and Consumption

Feminist theory questions the social construction of gender and male-dominated power structures in modern capitalist societies, demands socio-political identification, socio-cultural recognition, and embraces individualism and intersectionality (Kristeva, 1981; Sancar, 2009). With a focus on economic independence and equal rights, Hollows (2013) suggest that many first-wave feminists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries used domestic consumption practices as a resource for intervening in political struggles in the public sphere. Consumption was seen as a safe area for women, who were confined to their house, so that they could become a part of the public sphere while shopping. Kleinberg (1999) noted that affluent women used the maternal platform as one basis for social activism, improved education, and political integration. Second-wave feminism broadened its focus to difference, identity and gender hierarchy and further scrutinized the role of the family and maternal thought in political philosophy (Anderson, 2001). They rejected patriarchal systems of power and pointed to capitalism's power to construct 'false needs', and to manipulate individuals into social conformity and subordination (Martens, 2009; Nava, 1987). The beauty and fashion industries were seen as contributing to 'symbolic annihilation' and objectification of women (Fenton, 2001). Third-wave feminism embraced post-structuralist interpretations of gender and argued for relativity, and the multiplicity of every person's possible identifications (Kristeva, 1986) and intersectionality. Post-feminism advocates for more personal and daily gender-based struggles and argues that, within a consumer culture context, consumption is a tool to achieve power and pleasure, as an alternative route for self-esteem. Through consumption, women construct their identity, and challenge, negotiate and critically engage with the ways in which capitalist consumer culture was organized (Adriaens and Bauwel, 2014). Nava (1987) argued that consumerism is a discourse through which disciplinary power is both exercised and contested. Hollows (2013) pointed to the potential of a feminist politics of consumption to challenge the ways in which consumer culture operates.

O'Reilly (2016) contended that mothers are the unfinished business and the unspeakable of feminism, the 'problem with no acceptable name'. Ideologies surrounding motherhood can complicate the construction and negotiation of women's individual subjectivities, especially when motherhood is conflated with gender essentialism. Since exclusive female mothering that originates from the gender essentialism of modern motherhood is contested in feminist literature, a clash between feminist and mother identity narratives can be expected.

Mothering practices of feminist mothers in the context of consumer culture has not been sufficiently addressed. Since 'caring consumption' (Thompson, 1996) is a site where patriarchal capitalist ideology is inscribed, it can be suggested that feminist mothers' relationship with consumption may differ from that of other mothers. Miller (2005) revealed that materialism can be perceived as a major pollutant for children even by mothers who may not see marketing as necessarily evil, and mother and child relations are redolent with contradictions due to the clash of their individual agencies. Although consumption can help women during transitions into motherhood, it can also make transitions complicated and complex (The Voice Group, 2010a). Phadke (2013) argued that for feminist mothers, the dilemma lies in their own discomfort both with this limited and limiting notion of consumer agency as well as with the ways in which the marketplace sexualizes and objectifies their daughters. Another dilemma stems from mothers' consumption by proxy, specifically in the name of children who can pursue agentic goals, putting mothers in a position of dominance and power, which feminism rejects from the start.

Considering the limited literature related to motherhood and feminism in consumer culture, it can be stated that there are important points that this study will illuminate on the basis of feminist motherhood by focusing on consumption, which is one of the important focuses of motherhood.

The Study

Although there are studies that focus on the resistance of feminist women against dominant beauty ideals, there is insufficient interest in consumption in feminist literature, despite consumption practices' potential transformative power on suppressive operations of consumer culture (Cook, 2013; Hollows, 2013). By studying consumption practices of feminist mothers, this study aims to offer new theoretical explanations about how they construct and negotiate their identity narratives in the marketplace by using consumption-related material and symbolic resources, and how they cope with tensions that emerge in the problematic juncture between feminism, motherhood, and consumption. The study also aims to provide insights into tensions feminist mothers experience in Turkey, a patriarchal and Muslim country. The western-oriented modernism project of the early Turkish Republic had a transformative impact on the private and public spheres, on gender relations, and identities (Gole, 1996). The

project embraced gendered identities where women were identified as agents of modernization and western civilization, patriotic citizens with civil rights and corporeal visibility in the public sphere, and mothers that would cultivate the new generations (e.g. Kandiyoti, 1991; Durakbasa and Ilyasoglu, 2001). Despite the gains of state-induced modernization reforms on women's emancipation during the 20th century, women's studies only became a field of study after 1990, and the feminist movement could not flourish due to the lack of a separate discourse independent of the ideological contexts of secularism, religious conservatism and other socio-cultural factors (Durakbasa, 2000; Tekeli, 1992; Kandiyoti, 1987).

Scholarly studies have revealed Turkey's unique character, that embraces distinct patterns of modernity and rests on socio-historical continuities and discontinuities. Turkish context is characterized with cultural fragments, varieties in mentalities, lifestyles, identities and consumption behaviors and the hybridizations between the traditional and the modern (Kandiyoti, 2002; Sandikci and Ger, 2002). In the early 21st century, Turkey has undergone several socio-cultural changes in terms of people's attitudes toward the organization of the public and private sphere, and ethnic and religious conservatism has resulted in a certain dividedness between people. Considering the past and present representations of motherhood and consumption in the marketplace, and particularly in mass media that strengthen patriarchal ideology, it can be proposed that potential tensions, and thus, negotiations are salient and worth further investigation.

Methodology

For the aim of the study, a phenomenological perspective was adopted to develop an in-depth and rich understanding regarding the essence of experience (Finlay, 2009: 6; Creswell, 2016: 105). As phenomenology is inclusive of all types of qualitative research and is concerned with the meaning, rather than the experience itself (Merriam, 2013: 24), this method is considered to be a very suitable technique to have a deep understanding of the phenomenon of "feminist motherhood consumption".

Data was collected through in-depth interviews. For a preliminary discovery of the participants' main concerns, six mothers were interviewed in 2013. After these initial meetings, to meet women who define themselves as feminists and have child(ren), the lead author attended ten meetings of a feminist organization, so that she could reach participants and gain a deeper understanding about feminism. In these meetings, she met women, so she determined the first feminist mothers to interview, and reached other women with their help. Snowball sampling was used to reach participants living in different cities. Interviews were mostly held in public places like restaurants, cafes and parks. Four of the interviews were held in participants' offices, and one was held online due to the interviewee's remote location. The questions were prepared depending on categories obtained from the relevant literature. The shortest

interview took about 90 minutes -with F. C., due to her urge to leave the meeting-, whereas the longest interview took about three and a half hours. A computer program was used for data analysis and coding. During the coding phase, the researchers worked together, thereby trying to establish a consensus.

Informants were diverse in terms of age, geographical location, religious orientation and length of motherhood experience. It is aimed to make it possible to understand the consumption practices of feminist mothers who have different lifestyles and worldviews. Some participants' relatively short motherhood experiences and thus, differences in terms of respondents' ages are thought to add richness to the data since they increase diversity, despite offering some limitations.

The demographic profile of the participants appears in Table 1. Feminist mothers were interviewed between 2014 and 2016. After interviewing seventeen mothers, data saturation in terms of themes was reached. To validate the accuracy of the findings, a member checking procedure was used; the findings were shared with the participants who agreed to be contacted for any additional comments. Credibility and transferability of the study was enhanced by means of referential adequacy and prolonged observation. Interviews were recorded for further audit and confirmation.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Informants

Informant Initials	Marital Status	Year of Birth	Child(ren)/sex/year of birth	Education-level	Occupation	Residence
A.C.B.	Married	1980	A son (2009)	Bachelor degree	Unemployed	Izmir
B.G.	Married	1956	A son (1990)	Bachelor degree	Retired	Izmir
M.K.	Married	1964	A daughter (2007)	Bachelor degree	Public Officer	Izmir
R.K.	Married	1970	A son (1999)	Bachelor degree	Public Officer	Izmir
J.A.	Married	1970	A daughter (2005)	High school degree	Public Officer	Izmir
S.C.	Single	1963	Two sons (1982-1992)	Bachelor degree	Psychologist	Izmir
M.K.	Married	1976	A son (2013)	Graduate Degree	Public Officer	Izmir
E.D.	Single	1976	A daughter (2002)	Bachelor degree	Teacher	Izmir
B.K.	Married	1979	A daughter (2012)	Graduate Degree	Research Assistant	Ankara
E.H.	Married	1974	A son (2009)	Bachelor degree	Social Anthropologist	Ankara
F.C.	Married	1970	A son (2005)	PhD Degree	Academician	Ankara
M.I.C.	Married	1966	A daughter, A son (2000-2004)	Graduate student	Psychologist	Ankara
G.B.	Married	1969	A daughter (2003)	PhD Degree	Psychological counselor	Ankara
E.E.A.	Married	1970	A daughter, A son (2008-2011)	PhD Degree	Academician	Ankara
R.C.	Married	1986	A son (2015)	Bachelor degree	Translator, musician	Istanbul
T.M.K	Married	1980	A daughter (2015)	Bachelor degree	Teacher	Izmir
G.A.A	Married	1979	A daughter (2015)	Bachelor degree	Financial consultant	Izmir

Findings

Consumption: A major or minor problem?

Our findings indicate that, in general, the participants did not consider capitalism and consumption to be an urgent macro-political problem, despite many consumption-oriented concerns reflected in their individual consumption practices. Notwithstanding feminist critique of consumption as a tool of patriarchal systems of power, for participants, it was not an area that triggered resistance (e.g. Gibson-Graham, 2006). Consumption is regarded as a topic that ‘you cannot be completely free from it’ and that needs to be ‘balanced’. Considering that all participants were representatives of upper-middle class, it can be anticipated that they do not have social class-related concerns. The quotation below demonstrates concerns other than capitalist marketplace ideology, such as basic human rights, violence, and gender inequality are deemed more crucial.

B.G.: Think about the many incidents we've been experiencing since 2013. (She exemplifies women's and human rights incidences). We suffered so much... Just a few people who know what's going on in the country they live in and, despite everything, try to do what needs to be done. We don't have enough time and energy to deal with everything. Other urgencies, other agonies all the time. The miseries of human life come first. [Questioning] Such things may be the product of a free mind. We don't have that luxury.

Further probes revealed that participants consider consumption to be a challenge to the private sphere that may jeopardize their own identity narratives and motherhood discourses. Consumption is perceived as a 'trap', a domination mechanism and a threat towards individual autonomy. Adoption of feminist ideology helped them develop 'awareness' about how experiential marketing activities crept into aspects of their lives to shape beauty ideals that do not 'belong' to them. They feel a need to decline some of the guilty pleasures of consumer culture for the reason that these are sources of women's oppression in the marketplace.

G.A.A.: Not just about being thrifty, but I have political reservations about consumerism. I don't feel very good about consuming. I feel good when I go to a restaurant and eat, or have a cup of tea while chatting. Spending on nourishment doesn't annoy me, but when it comes to clothes and other things... I don't visit the hairdresser because I get so bored over there. I don't like having my nails done. Pressure on women is somehow done through grooming; you should follow fashion and know the conditions of being well-groomed and beautiful. I don't want to fall into that habit.

Despite their discursive problematizations, consumerist practice is regarded as 'compulsory' and 'inevitable' no matter how much a person is aware of the negative consequences. The quotation below reminds us of Baudrillard's (1998) argument that 'objects are neither flora nor fauna. And yet they do indeed give the impression of a proliferating vegetation, a jungle in which the new wild man of modern times has difficulty recovering the reflexes of civilization.' Despite their critique of consumer society, participants, surrounded by many basic rights violation cases and entrenched consumer culture, cannot use their consumption practices as a form of political activism and oppose capitalism.

B.G.: To stay sterile, especially in today's conditions is impossible; you have to live in seclusion at the top of the mountain. If you don't want to mess with anything, and believe that you must consume the products that suit your point of view, you should make yourself a small garden and consume only your own tomatoes. It's impossible. When S. (a company) fired workers who wanted to be unionized, I stopped buying their brand. More than 1,000 working women died in an accident, I also stopped buying that brand. If I blacklisted all of them, I would live in seclusion. Impossible.

The participants reflexively reproduce and remake what is already made in the continuity of praxis (Giddens, 1984) and reveal consumer resistance in terms of complete denial of mar-

ket offerings; nevertheless, they also refuse to comply with consumer culture to some extent. The quotations below indicate why participants abstain from hospitals' marketing offers for new mothers and events like baby showers: they are criticized for being artificial, for not being authentic Turkish culture but borrowed from the West and practiced in kitsch form. These symbolic meanings are not appropriated in feminist mothers' quests for an authentic identity; on the contrary, they are interpreted as a kind of conspicuous consumption that rests on western discursive (non)representations. Their critique can be interpreted through a postcolonial lens. Even though Turkey was never actually colonized, the modernization project recognized a goal for 'civilization' that is Western and accepted the 'European gaze' as the authoritative standard (Capan and Zarakol, 2017). Ger et al. (1999) remarked that an orientalist imagery of Turkey has been adopted by Turks, resulting in an aspirational identity that has become that of the modern Westerner. The following quotation illustrates how participants comment on emulation of Western consumption practices; they argue that displacing the authentic signs of cultural practices and assigning new, yet 'artificial' consumption-related signs creates a universe that is so empty that it can lead the doer to depression.

M.K.: Baby showers are ridiculous. A consumption frenzy. My nephew's wife threw a party. All artificial... The child is real, everything else is like 'playing house'.

A.Ç.B.: Hospitals offer birth packages; they say we decorate the room, etc... I have a friend. We were pregnant at the same time. She gave birth in a private hospital, she bought them all... She did everything you could think of. Beyond that artificiality, She couldn't not think of the birth's naturalness. She only thought about purchasing things. After birth, she went into depression, because not everything is fun. You are sleep deprived and can't take care of yourself.

The participants evaluate most marketing offers as either deceitful and/or artificial. They elaborate how they are related to consumer culture and cope with such 'traps' by simply avoiding, protesting or finding alternative/informal markets and engaging in non-market transactions (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Corporations, hypermarkets, global brands, industrial food and credit cards are seen as signifiers of 'capitalism, patriarchy, fascism that feed each other'. Simply avoiding these traps appears to be an easy solution that participants prefer on some occasions. However, being aware of the entrenched inevitability of capitalism, they also cope with tensions they feel whenever they are able to develop alternatives. For instance; E.D. explains her political attitude that favors shopping from 'villagers', i.e. farmers, and local shops in the neighborhood. Their avoidance strategies fail when prices in local shops are high or when they need compulsory products like diapers that cannot be provided from alternative outlets. They then develop justification strategies: as long as marketed products are believed to be healthy, natural and/or handcrafted, i.e. not 'sloppy', these products justifiably lose the quality of being traps and become legitimate. To deal with tensions between

entrenched capitalism and their feminist worldview, they develop negotiations and (re)shape their consumption practice (not their ideology, comprehensively) so that it coincides with the post-capitalist feminist view of political economy that calls for emancipation from the hegemony of capitalocentric discourse and liberation of economic difference through ‘dislocation—identifying the alternative economic activities, events, and experiences and giving them space to fully exist.’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

Circumcision, the surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis due to religious beliefs, and the celebration ceremonies of a boy’s transition to manhood cause ambivalences. Although most of the participants approve of circumcision for health reasons and choose to comply with the widespread religious and societal traditions of holding celebration ceremonies, they oppose its connotations that signify masculine culture. An unexpected finding is that, although they argue for rites of passages for girls to some extent, most of their concern is not about gender inequality but, notably, about celebrations that represent ostentatious consumption rituals and traditions. The following quotations reveal how they use psychological repair work and justification as coping strategies when they cannot avoid this patriarchal and religious tradition. A.C.B.’s mentioning of ‘dressing up like heroes’ points to her criticism of ceremonial dress that symbolizes the state of being superior by emulating Ottoman prince costumes. On the other hand, S.C.’s identification of Western classical music as proper music (along with nostalgic Turkish music) and her despise of Arabic music indicates that aspirational identity of Turkish feminist mothers, as offsprings of the Turkish modernization project, is also that of the modern Westerner. Considering that they also criticize baby showers for being a venue of simple emulation of Western consumer practices that may signify uncritical acceptance of subalternity (Varman, 2018), it is possible to suggest that they develop a practical logic based on the interplay between authentic and borrowed, traditional and modern, the east and the West. Examining A.C.B.’s attitudes toward baby showers and circumcision rituals indicates that circumcision rituals which, indeed, are products of masculinity and constructed socio-culturally over centuries, have been appropriated more than baby showers that are currently practiced in the marketplace.

S.C.: We had a quarrel over it, but I couldn’t convince my husband otherwise. If there’s no escape, at least it could be close to what I wanted. So, I tried hard to have a nice party. I planned everything. I had to deal with these ridiculous things. I rejected Arabic music and allowed a classical orchestra and nostalgic Turkish music. If I’m spending money, I would like to have proper music played ... I got what I wanted. Circumcision is an Islamic imperative, but I’m an atheist. I knew that it can cause castration trauma. I wanted my son to make his own decision when he grew up. But I quarreled with my husband. Wedding rituals are understandable. But the celebration to remove a part of a boy’s penis is nonsense.

A.Ç.B.: I’m not sure about having a circumcision for my son. If we decide to do it, it’ll be for health reasons. But I won’t follow all rituals; I aim not to. I’ll tell my son that I don’t

want him to dress up like a hero for the party ... If we have to, you know, so that he won't get ridiculed by his friends for not being circumcised ... there won't be a traditional party, all dressed up, hair done and so on... I'll fight against it.

Although tensions regarding shopping between feminist mothers and children have been analyzed previously (e.g. Miller, 1997), tensions between feminist mothers and individuals other than children with regard to consumption practices have not been addressed. Current findings indicate that participant mothers influence, sometimes even dominate, other people in their consumption practices, contrary to their feminist ideology which rests on critical subjectivity, opposing all forms of domination in principle. They have negative attitudes about excessive spending and try to struggle against it no matter who decides. They take the initiative not only for their own but also in other peoples' lives. Their conflictual relationship with the capitalist system surpasses their feminist reflexes against domination contingent upon the nature and amount of consumption.

B.K.: We buy things we like only on special days or when we see something reasonably priced. We don't buy expensive things. My sister had purchased a baby chair for my daughter. She insisted on buying Chicco brand, so we argued. We've tried to avoid consumerism. But we try to hinder my mom. The other day, after entering a baby store, she grumbled, 'God, help me so I won't buy any of those fabulous things.' We laughed at how much pressure we put on her.

Consumer Socialization: Feminist Shaping (Attempts) of (Subjectivity) of Future Consumers

Studies reveal that feminist mothers problematize traditional child-rearing practices, and prioritize the construction of subjectivities of their children (e.g. Gordon, 1990; Martin, 2005; Phadke, 2013) through empowerment of, and a continuous dialogue with, the child. Consistently, current findings reveal that fostering self-awareness and self-confidence of the child is among the aims of participants' child-rearing projects. These projects involve the quest for a 'strong personality', 'humanity', 'respect hard work', 'self-sufficiency', 'societal concern', 'aesthetic taste', 'physical and mental consciousness of being a woman' for daughters, in other words for qualities that indicate modern agency and subjectivity. Providing freedom to choose and respecting the rights and preferences of the child as an individual are among the issues to which feminist mothers are concerned (Phadke, 2013). Informants explained how they attempt to shape the subjectivity of the child and provide them with the tools necessary to make their own decisions, even though at times these issues may not comply with the mother's views and cause stress for them.

E.D.: Last weekend, my daughter suddenly decided to become a vegetarian. She was influenced by a book. I respected that. She told me, 'You've never mocked, you didn't laugh.' I said: "Why would I? That's your choice. Let's see what happens".

Informants' sensitivity about the development of a 'neutral', i.e. egalitarian gender identity differentiates their worldview from other mothers. In addition to shaping (attempts) their children's subjectivity and personal growth, they also work toward raising critical awareness about gender inequalities. The following quotation illustrates how they elaborate on child-rearing practices that reinforce traditional gender roles.

T.M.K.: [At day-care center] They take children to see *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs!* I don't want my kid to see it. ...Being persecuted by her stepmother, she runs away and is rescued by seven dwarves. To deserve a place to live, she has to do housework. After settling for all this, when she frees herself and needs nobody, a prince shows up. I believe that all these reinforce gender roles.

The findings reveal significant sensitivity in a child's cognitive and emotional development. Struggling with the notion that women lack cognitive abilities, participants prioritize the empowerment of daughters through cognitive development. By doing so, they develop a foundation as the springboard from which a girl learns to struggle against masculine domination.

G.A.A.: I want my daughter to be smart, not just beautiful. That's my priority. Intellect is important in the process of becoming a woman because women are already in a disadvantaged position in society. Beauty helps them until a certain age, after that they become lonely and weaker. But intellect follows you all the way. It's something that needs to be developed.

Studies indicate feminist concerns about the commercialization of children's social, psychological and physical well-being (e.g. Linn, 2010). Despite the participants' feminist anti-consumption attitude, marketing offers which are evaluated as genuine and authentic or which enable rich experiences with children fit in their child rearing and consumer socialization projects that focus on shaping children's subjectivity and gender-neutral identity. Although the extent of commercialization irritates participants, expenditure on intellectual products and experiences (e.g. entertainment shows, travel activities) are justified as an investment in the cognitive and emotional development of the child. Informants tolerate excessive spending on intellectual products and services, such as books, art and drama classes and formal education. 'Spending money on books even when they won't be read' is neither seen as extravagant nor similar to overspending on other fashion items. Their demand for an education that cultivates the child's intelligence surpasses their demand for a 'natural' life in the country. In the case of education and products that develop cognitive abilities, the participants exploit resources provided by the marketplace without feeling any tensions between capitalist ideology and their feminist worldview.

E.D.: We moved from the village to the city. I don't want her to grow up in a village. She already experiences village relationships when she visits her grandparents. But I want her

to go to a quality school, get acquainted with urban culture and develop a social network. For me, being raised in the country had some serious shortcomings. You can't learn proper etiquette. Mothers buy their children things they couldn't have for themselves in the past. I do the same when it comes to personal development, not economical things or consumption.

Major Dilemma: Health vs. Feminist Critique of Marketplace

Ger and Belk (1999) found that Turks legitimize their materialistic consumption through ethics such as altruistic consumption, instrumentalism, uncalculated pleasure, and pursuit of modernity. Current findings indicate that, similar to instrumental justification of the participants' overspending on experiences and intellectual products, overspending on health-related products for a child is justified altruistically so that it signifies a mother's devotion. For participants, avoiding expenditure on the health of their loved ones is 'out of the question'. Although their ethic to moralize their over-spending on experiences and intellectual products are drawn from feminist discourses, their altruistic ethic for justification of over-spending on health products does not encompass gender perspective. Health can be seen as a gendered phenomenon (Boneham and Sixsmith, 2006); modern motherhood emphasizes the moral obligation for women to care for family and be the 'care and health' provider. Although the participants defined themselves as feminists, they did not question the gendered nature of health. The marketplace encourages consumption and amplifies vulnerability, especially if it is medically related (The Voice Group, 2010b). Miller (2005) points to the medicalization of motherhood as indicative of the wider social structures that shape women's lives differentially in patriarchal societies. Theodorou and Spyrou (2013) illustrated how pregnancy is perceived by expectant mothers as a state of anxiety and how they engage in consumption for amelioration. Despite the marketization and commodification of healthcare in Turkey (Agartan, 2012), the participants did not develop any critical view; on the contrary, they adopted the dominant ideology of the marketplace. For instance, they take price as an indication for better quality, even of medical services. S.C. explained how she avoided public hospitals and preferred private medical service during her pregnancy despite her severe financial difficulties. The following quotation illustrates how F.C. justifies her demand for private medical services;

F.C.: You get involved in consumerist dilemmas starting from pregnancy. You visit private clinics, not hospitals, because you want special attention. You want the physician to see you as a client, not a burden.

The motives underlying the demand for products that may affect the child's health indirectly, such as food and personal hygiene products, are based on 'caring consumption' (Thompson, 1996). Consider, for instance, the case of E.D., who chose to pay more than she could afford for feeding her daughter natural sea fish, even when she cannot buy it for herself. It can be argued that the discursive understanding of health, especially a child's,

amplifies feminist problematizations of marketplace ideology. As Ger et al. (1999) argued, the contextual use of an altruistic ethic for materialistic consumption of healthcare creates a loophole that provides room for negotiations between feminism and consumption. Uncritical adoption of healthcare discourse may also rest on the socio-historical construction of birth and childcare that is deeply influenced by patriarchal tradition. It also reflects the influence of the Turkish modernization discourse on women's daily lives, which regards medicalization of child-care as an inevitable aspect of 'modern' life (Cindoglu and Sayan-Cengiz, 2010).

Permissive Parenting: Until When?

The findings demonstrate that feminist mothers adopt a permissive parenting style so long as they do not feel threatened by consumer culture and patriarchal ideology. Raising the child as a free agent and respect for the child's preferences are major themes in the data. However, they face certain dilemmas when raising a child who can exercise agency in a context saturated with values of consumption and patriarchy. Phadke (2013) remarked that the idea of childhood agency is being increasingly invested with the power to consume. Products and experiences that objectify women, such as Barbie dolls, cosmetics, clothing may be, at the same time, what children choose to partake in. Findings reveal that how feminist mothers deal with this dilemma depends on how much importance they place on childhood agency or on feminist ideology.

Intervening in the child's decisions that are aligned with consumer culture puts mothers in a position of dominance. Informants explained how they worry that the child is becoming a brand fanatic. They abandon their libertarian approach when they do not approve children's consumption practices in 'critical domains' (i.e. indecent clothing choices: girl clothing items that display a girl's body and violence-themed items such as toy guns signifying masculine domination). The findings indicate that when dealing with the issue of clothing their child, or purchase of gender-stereotyped toys or toy guns, driven by the need to protect the child from external threats, they relinquish their quest for promoting childhood agency and exercise 'legitimate' authority. Considering how the participants take the initiative not only for themselves or their child but also in other peoples', such as their own mother's, domain with an aim to dominate their consumption decisions in some other contexts, it can also be suggested they can ease their feminist reflexes and choose to exercise 'objectionable authoritarianism' (Hanrahan and Antony, 2005).

G.A.A.: Learning gender is a cultural process. There are infant girls' shoes with high heels. Why should she get used to these? To be a whole woman, get ready for the future. No, she shouldn't do it. I want her to dress comfortably; shorts, pyjamas. Everybody calls her 'a boy'. For not dressing up like those fancy little girls. And I say 'yes, he is!'

While they may choose to exercise authority over recognizing the child's own choice on grounding conditions and dominate the child's decision, they may consent a purchase decision even though it may conflict with their feminist worldview. Consider the case of E.D. She bought a wedding-like dress for her daughter when she saw her looking at her friend's dress in kindergarten with heartbroken eyes and 'despite all the feminist critiques'. E.D. rushed to buy one for her.

The participants' tolerance depends on the nature of the consumption practices; while some practices are strictly rejected and are outside the scope of negotiations like purchasing a toy gun, some trade-offs can be made after negotiations as in the case of purchasing a wedding dress.

Paradoxical Juxtapositions

The findings reveal a significant tendency toward tolerance for diverse narratives as well as paradoxical juxtapositions at opposite poles. Informants playfully consume modern and non-modern objects, and communicate their own social reality rather than the one that is constructed by others. Even though they criticize consumer culture and scrutinize it as imposed by the patriarchal capitalist ideology, they still have 'loose' boundaries for what is acceptable or not. Without limiting themselves, they may spend money on fashionable products, such as expensive jewelry, perfumes and cosmetics, so as to feel good, elegant and well-groomed.

R.K.: Consumer culture is what is imposed by capitalism. We've become captives. It impacts me in terms of clothing. I take great care in fashion; the looks, exactly. I buy pants, sweaters, jackets, shoes, boots, even when I don't need them. But I'm trying to stay on budget. I limit my purchases, but still, I shop. I love shopping. I sometimes question my feminist identity. Feminists are unadorned, you know, but I am. I combine all the lifestyles I like.

Chytкова and Kjeldgaard (2012) suggested that discourse for the modern woman entails individualism, free consumption choices and a focus on hedonistic and self-enhancement consumption. The case of Turkish feminist mothers reveals that consumption serves as a means of construction and negotiation of an identity as a modern woman. Considering the ambivalent feelings they have, it can be suggested that they suffer from inconsistencies between their feelings and thoughts. The modern era rests on consistency and continuity of identity narratives (Ahuvia, 2005). Yet, as Firat and Venkatesh (1995) suggested, in the post-modern era, plurality of identity and lack of the need for consistency among multiple identity narratives can be seen as liberatory. In the present case, the inconsistency between the temptation to gratify their desires despite their attitudes towards consumerism is solved by trying to reach a balance through avoidance of over-consumption.

The quotation below demonstrates that they also freely juxtapose traditional and modern discourses on motherhood and childcare. Their playfulness ends where their stable feminist ideological positions regarding rejection of traditional gender roles and basic rights begins.

F.C.: With modern motherhood, if we mean a type of mother that wants to grow away from their own mothers' mothering style and, instead, try to learn from books and is always in control of experts... Motherhood, which is able to combine traditional and modern, doesn't reject any of them. A synthesis seems better to me. When a baby has colic, rubbing the baby's belly with some herbal oil may be more useful than taking her to a doctor.

Discussions

The findings reveal that participants constantly negotiate and sometimes juxtapose even opposing , contradictory and unrelated meanings, experiences and cognitions. They negotiate different cognitions, practices and narratives of identity (feminist, woman, mother and consumer), and develop a practical logic based on the interplay between authentic and mass-produced, natural and artificial, branded and generic, traditional and modern, industrial and rural, over-consumption and needs-satisfaction without necessarily privileging one over another.

Analysis of the current findings in regards to the previous studies about Turkish mothers' practices (e.g. Dedeoglu, 2006; Yelsali-Parmaksiz, 2019; Cindoglu and Sayan-Cengiz, 2010) indicate that there may be variations in the extent of tensions and negotiations across mothers that define themselves as feminist or not. Playing multiple and sometimes conflicting roles complicates identity narratives and life themes. Figure 1 depicts their negotiations between their discourses of motherhood, feminism and consumerism.

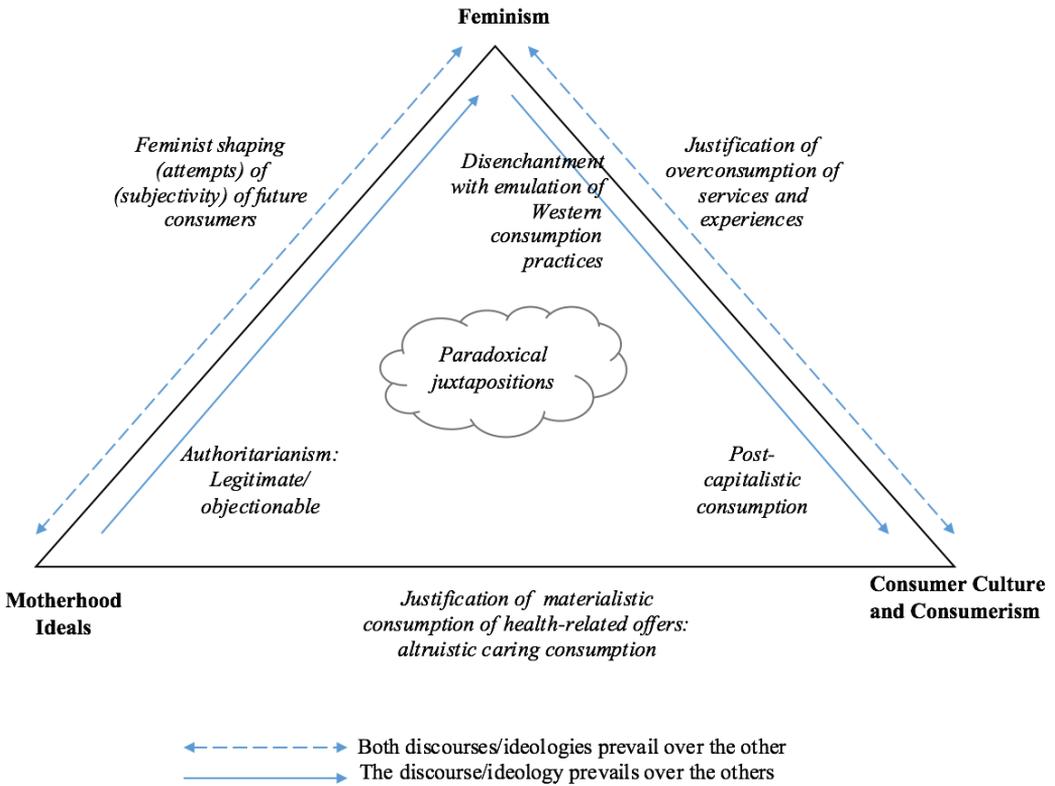


Figure 1. Negotiations between Motherhood, Consumer Culture and Feminist Ideologies

Negotiations are observed in many cases. First of all, despite their critique of consumer culture, the participants did not consider it as a major and urgent problem in the public sphere; they consider consumer culture as a threat in the private sphere that may jeopardize their own identity narratives as a woman and mother. Although they refuse to comply with marketplace behaviors to some degree, they recognize the entrenched inevitability of capitalism and consumer society. They try to find a ‘balance’ between their goal to develop critical subjectivity and the demands of the marketplace structure that allows limited and limiting notions of consumer agency (Phadke, 2013). They cope with the ‘traps’ of the marketplace by simply avoiding and protesting, or engaging in alternative market or non-market transactions. When coping strategies fail, they develop justification strategies. Although the participants’ ideological critique of consumerism is aligned with the anti-capitalist tradition of second-wave feminism, an analysis of their consumption practices coincides with the post-capitalist feminist view of political economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006) that embraces practicing “non-capitalism” through emancipation from the capitalocentric discourse and marketplace, rather than opposing capitalism.

Emulation of Western consumption practices by displacing the original cultural meanings and appropriating them using market-generated symbolic resources contradicts participants' quest for authentic identity narratives. Although they criticize emulation of baby shower rituals in a non-western context, an examination of the participants' attitudes toward circumcision ceremonies reveals that, being offsprings of the Turkish modernization project that rested on western modernization, their aspirational identity has become that of the modern Westerner (Ger et al., 1999). Unlike the circumcision ceremonies that have been socio-culturally constructed for centuries, the market-generated meanings of baby-showers have not been appropriated by consumers as authentic, thus signifying the uncritical acceptance of subalternity (Varman, 2018).

Negotiations can be observed in their feminist shaping attempts of the subjectivity of future consumers. To enable the child to build his/her critical subjectivity and to construct a gender-neutral identity, they provide the child, as future consumers, with the tools necessary to make their own decisions, even if at times these may conflict with their feminist worldview. To support childhood agency, participants adopt a permissive parenting style so long as they do not feel threatened in a context saturated with consumption values which are charged with sub-texts of patriarchal ideology. They feel tensions between empowering the child to take initiative and depriving the child of free agency when their decisions are inappropriate. Findings indicate that when dealing with the issue of revealing garments for children, particularly daughters, driven by the need to protect the child from external threats, such as sexual objectification, they relinquish their libertarian attitude and quest to promote childhood agency.

Furthermore, even though they have reservations about consumerism and regard the marketplace redolent with 'traps', they uncritically consent to (over)consumption of experiences and intellectual products. They use them as tools to accomplish their feminist child-rearing project. Materialistic consumption of health-related products are justified altruistically as it signifies a mother's devotion. Their discursive understanding does not rest on any critical feminist inquiry of health, as a gendered phenomenon, or the medicalization of motherhood. Motivated by motherly devotion and altruistic caring consumption (Thompson, 1996), they tend to adopt the dominant ideology of the marketplace, even the simplest heuristics of price and quality. Their consumption practices rest on the socio-historical and patriarchal patterning of meanings around birth, health and childcare. Their understanding of health, as a part of 'modern life', can be seen as a product of the Turkish modernization project.

The third main theme of negotiations emerges from the clash of the individual agencies of mother, child, or other people, such as their own mothers. Taking the initiative out of the child's hands can be deemed legitimate under conditions of external threats to feminist child-rearing projects that aim to shape the critical subjectivity and gender-neutral identity of future consumers. However, in some other consumption contexts, despite their feminist worldview that opposes all forms of domination, participants also dominate the child's and

other peoples' consumption decisions and still seek justification in an attempt to avoid inconsistency.

They assess and weigh their reasons for action and extend or adapt their behavior in many possible ways. So they avail themselves of the benefits of achieving a consumer's goal without necessarily suffering from cognitive dissonances. Based on multiple roles and identities, they reflexively (re)construct the logic of their practice based on negotiations between material and symbolic interests and a few generative principles. For Gabbay and Woods (2003: 14), a practical logic is "a theory of what practical agents think and reflect upon, cogitate over and decide, and act". Human reasoners are also adept at recognizing and manipulating defaults. Bourdieu (1977) remarked that a logic of practice is 'able to organize the totality of an agent's thoughts, perceptions, and actions by means of a few generative principles, themselves reducible in the last analysis to a fundamental dichotomy, only because its whole economy, which is based on the principle of the economy of logic, presupposes a loss of rigour for the sake of greater simplicity and generality'. He noted that polithesis, i.e. the confusion of spheres, results from the highly economical application of the same schemes to different logical universes. A logic of practice is defined by the agent's practical relation to the situation apprehended through the generative schemes (Bourdieu, 1977).

In line with Bourdieu's conceptualizations, it can be proposed that, driven by material and symbolic interests, participants' practices incorporate a polysemous quality based on their multiple identities and different discourses in which they are positioned. These range of discourses can be conceived 'as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable' (Foucault, 1978b). They emerge in various particular, rather than universal, strategies and even co-exist within the same strategy in an attempt to construct a logic of their practice. The participants do not seek a uniform logic of practice; rather, they negotiate different, yet complex, narratives and ideologies to construct a logic of their practice.

In their study that focuses on new middle class consumers in Turkey, Kravets and Sandikci (2014) identified three salient new middle class sensibilities that crystallize into a particular mode of consumption which entails working with a standard set of products and rules and creating distinct combinations that can be assembled and reassembled consistently to produce individualized outcomes. They suggest that this "formulaic creativity" helps these consumers "to reconcile the disjuncture between the promises of neoliberalism and the realities of living in unstable societies that have distinct political-economic, social-cultural conditions and historical experiences". This kind of formulaic creativity also requires practical cognitive agency and logic. Our participants' logic of practice incorporates a polysemous quality based on multiple roles and ideologies through the instrumental use of consumption for self-enhancement and gratification of desires and by freely juxtaposing traditional and modern dis-

courses on motherhood, in addition to negotiations between consumer culture and feminist ideology. Their playfulness, which is enabled by their social class positions and other structural, intersecting factors, ends where their stable feminist ideological positions regarding rejection of traditional gender roles and basic rights begins.

Conclusion

The present study focuses on the consumption practices of Turkish feminist mothers by analyzing how they construct and negotiate identity narratives, with an attempt to shape the subjectivity of their children as future consumers, and cope with tensions that emerge in the problematic juncture between feminism, motherhood, and consumption. A phenomenological analysis indicates that the extent of tensions and negotiations varies across mothers that define themselves as feminists. Identification with an additional identity category escalates the extent. Based on an analysis of the negotiations, we propose that feminist mothers do not seek a uniform logic of practice; rather, they negotiate different, yet complex, discursive narratives to construct their logic of practice. Their consumption practices are grounded in the interplay between discourses of motherhood, feminism and consumerism. Playing multiple roles, they negotiate and sometimes juxtapose even oppositional, and unrelated cognitions, practices and identity narratives (feminist, mother and consumer).

Even though the present study analyzes consumers who sit at the crossing axes of different identities and reveals how their practices incorporate a polysemous quality based on their intertwined roles and discourses, it suffers from having a broad focus. Future studies should be designed with a narrower focus. Moreover, the study suffers from limitations of phenomenological analysis, such as reliance on a comparably narrow set of participants in a socio-cultural context. Future studies that focus on diverse socio-cultural contexts may reveal the extent of negotiations.

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