

**T.C.
GALATASARAY UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF RADIO, TELEVISION AND CINEMA**

**NEO-SUBCULTURES IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY:
THE CASE OF *RKOT* ON *INSTAGRAM***

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

İlkay Tuzcu Tıǧlı

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Michel Bourse

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To the most special woman in my life: to my mother...

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ABBREVIATIONS

CCCS – *Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies*

DM – *Direct Message*

PKOT – *Poor Kids of Tehran*

RKOB – *Rich Kids of Beverly Hills*

RKOI – *Rich Kids of Instagram/Internet*

RKOL – *Rich Kids of London*

RKOT – *Rich Kids of Turkey*

RPOI – *Rich Parents of Instagram*

SNAPS – *Temporary posts on Snapchat*

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RESUME

Dans les des années 1960 et 1970, des chercheurs du CCCS de *Birmingham* ont conceptualisé la théorie sous-culturelle de la délinquance et la déviance initiée par l'école de *Chicago* dans les années 1920 en s'inspirant de la théorie marxiste gramscienne. Les chercheurs du CCCS ont défini le concept de sous-culture en relation avec des groupes de jeunes de la classe ouvrière considérés comme résistants à l'hégémonie au travers d'un style communautaire. Par une analyse symbolique des sous-cultures, les chercheurs de CCCS ont contribué au domaine des études culturelles par le biais de nombreux travaux sociologiques sur les cultures des jeunes, tels que les mods, les punks et les skinheads.

Cependant, les spécialistes post-sous-culturels se sont prononcés à partir des années 1990 pour la nécessité d'abandonner la théorie sous-culturelle néo-marxiste des chercheurs du CCCS en raison de leur interprétation de la classe, de l'identité et de l'ethnicité des sous-cultures trop symbolique déterministe, rigide et homologique. Ainsi, ils ont suggéré de supprimer le terme «sous-culture» et d'adopter une nouvelle terminologie (néo-tribus, scènes, mode de vie), car les cultures de la jeunesse dans la société néolibérale en réseau d'aujourd'hui reposent sur des comportements consuméristes et individualistes. Néanmoins, d'autres chercheurs contemporains critiquent ce tournant post-sous-culturel, soulignant l'importance de l'approche du CCCS dans les études sur la culture des jeunes d'aujourd'hui. Par conséquent, même s'il s'agit probablement d'un concept inapproprié pour certains projets, quelques chercheurs ont récemment suggéré de reconsidérer la théorie de la sous-culture du CCCS en raison de son potentiel analytique dans les recherches sur la culture des jeunes.

Sur la base de cette approche, cette étude vise à déterminer si les *RKOT* sur Instagram pouvait être considéré comme une sous-culture du cyberspace dans la société de réseau néolibérale d'aujourd'hui. Il y a trois raisons de choisir cet univers par rapport aux études sous-culturelles. Tout d'abord, *RKOT*, en tant que dérivé de *Rich Kids Of the Internet (RKOI)*, a attiré l'attention du public de manière négative à travers les médias nationaux et internationaux du fait d'une «identité collective» et d'un «style» particulier qui affichent une représentation ostentatoire et vulgaire de la richesse. Deuxièmement, le concept de «classe», considéré comme marqueur ultime de «résistance» dans la théorie sous-culturelle traditionnelle, est également inhérent aux *RKOT*, bien qu'il se manifeste en tant que classe supérieure. Ce glissement du concept de sous-cultures de la classe ouvrière vers la classe supérieure questionne l'idéologie dominante moderne résultant des structures sociales de la société établie. Enfin, les concepts de «loisirs» et de «médias» concernant les sous-cultures ont motivé le choix des *RKOT*, *Instagram* étant la plate-forme de médias sociaux la plus populaire parmi les jeunes en Turquie. En outre, sur la base des études contemporaines mettant en évidence le potentiel des réseaux sociaux sur la formation des pratiques sous-culturelles, il a été supposé qu'Instagram pourrait être le nouvel espace social et de loisirs des sous-cultures de la jeunesse dans une société mondialisée connectée.

Dans ce contexte, reposant sur l'approche néo-marxiste du CCCS avec une perspective gramscienne se référant essentiellement à l'école de *Chicago* et aux études sous-culturelles contemporaines conceptualisant les sous-cultures de la jeunesse, une approche holistique a été adoptée pour étudier les *RKOT* en tant qu'entité sous-culturelle. Ainsi, la méthodologie de cette étude repose sur l'analyse de contenus symboliques et d'analyses approfondies de données collectées lors d'entretiens portant sur les signes et symboles (le style) distinguant les *RKOT* sur *Instagram* ainsi que d'autres composants essentiels de la théorie sous-culturelle (résistance, espace, classe, etc.) observés chez les *RKOT*. De plus, ces analyses ethnographiques ont étudié le rôle du consumérisme et des médias dans la formation de l'identité des *RKOT*, leurs modèles de communication sur *Instagram* et leur relation à la vie réelle.

Les données recueillies par l'analyse symbolique du contenu suggèrent qu'Internet et les médias sociaux ont un potentiel normatif d'étiquetage, de marginalisation, voire d'influence et qu'ils peuvent être considérés comme des agents de l'hégémonie culturelle qui qualifie à la fois les *RKOT* et les *RKOI* comme «outsiders marginalisés» dans la culture dominante mondialisée et connectée. Les observations photographiques et (n)ethnographiques ont montré que les *RKOI* et les *RKOT* repositionnent et contextualisent à leur manière le mode de vie et les produits de luxe en renversant les méthodes conventionnelles de représentation de la richesse comme le firent les sous-cultures spectaculaires de l'Angleterre d'après-guerre. Ils construisent de nouveaux usages et de nouvelles significations en tant que style sous-culturel à travers un «bricolage» qui peut ouvrir de nouvelles lectures opposées. Par conséquent, ni les *RKOI* ni les *RKOT* ne respectent exactement les normes et valeurs sociales «ordinaires», «naturelles» et «appropriées» pour «les riches» de l'idéologie dominante.

Ainsi, les utilisations «réappropriées», «subverties» et «radicalement adoptées» de biens de consommation de luxe (voitures chères, vêtements de marque, jets privés, etc.) parmi les membres de *RKOI* et de *RKOT* représentent un ensemble d'intérêts, de valeurs et de règles partagés qui établissent un «ordre extrême» comme l'a montré Hall et al. (2003). Par conséquent, les biens de consommation de luxe, les clichés provocants, le mode de vie ostentatoire, etc. indiquent également une homogénéité au sein du groupe malgré leur image non normative aux yeux de la société. En d'autres termes, les *RKOI* et les *RKOT* affichent tous deux un «style intentionnel» symbolique qui ne correspond pas aux normes, aux valeurs et aux croyances de la culture dominante, mais qui nourrit et renforce plutôt la frustration, la perturbation et la jalousie en raison de leur attitude indifférente et provocante à l'égard des problèmes de la société (politique, inégalité des revenus, pauvreté, etc.). Ainsi, ce «style intentionnel» qui est reproduit et renforcé par le «bricolage» et «l'homogénéisation» est contagieux à travers le monde puisqu'il est communiqué via *Instagram*, ce qui facilite le processus de formation et de diffusion des sous-cultures.

Les données recueillies lors d'entretiens approfondis tentent de contextualiser le phénomène en se concentrant sur les éléments centraux de la théorie sous-culturelle, tels que «classe sociale», «style sous-culturel», «résistance», «loisir», «espace», «médias», «réaction sociétale», «identité et authenticité». Les résultats ont montré que le concept de «classe» et de «conscience de classe» peut encore dans une certaine mesure être applicable aux sous-cultures virtuelles actuelles, en raison du potentiel qu'offre le cyberspace pour des formations plus fluides, instables et hétérogènes, qui permettent également des formations sous-culturelles entre différentes ségrégations de classe. Le «style» distinctif et spectaculaire des *RKOT* a été décrit comme une conséquence de «l'intersubjectivité» révélant également la créativité du consommateur individuel. En outre, il a été constaté que les *RKOT* présentent des

formes «cachées» et «passives» de «résistance intentionnelle» contre la culture marchande, la vulgarité des pairs et les choix stéréotypés du sexe opposé aux niveaux «micro» et «méso» du fait que les motivations des membres concernant les actes et les rituels sous-culturels sont à la fois conscientes d'elles-mêmes et conscientes des autres. En outre, il a été constaté que l'identité turque des *RKOT* présentait des formes de résistance secrètes et passives à la société occidentale fondées sur la nationalité, même lorsque le profil d'un utilisateur ne fait pas explicitement référence au chauvinisme. En conséquence, on peut affirmer que dans la société turque néolibérale d'aujourd'hui, outre le concept d'ethnicité des sous-cultures traditionnelles, le concept de nationalité peut être un élément crucial pour l'établissement d'une identité sous-culturelle.

En ce qui concerne les «espaces de loisirs» et les «médias», il a été constaté que les *RKOT* affichent sur un réseau social particulier (*Instagram*) un regroupement collectif et créatif à travers duquel ils déterminent les critères constituant leur capital sous-culturel. Ainsi, dans la société en réseau, le cyberspace peut fonctionner comme un environnement social de sous-cultures permettant les loisirs. Les résultats ont également indiqué que les membres des *RKOT* se représentent non seulement les autres mais aussi leur propre existence à travers des images produites et diffusées par les médias sociaux (*Instagram*). Ainsi, les *RKOT* qui trouvent un sens dans «l'apparence» plutôt que dans la «simple possession» sont l'expression d'une génération qui renforce un modèle de consommation spécifique sur *Instagram* reposant sur un style extravagant et ostentatoire. En bref, ils représentent «la société du spectacle» qui résume leur propre univers de spéculation à un style de vie concret, idéalisé avec des biens de consommation de luxe, un style de vie et des choix. Dans ce contexte, il semblerait qu'*Instagram* soit le média social le plus populaire parmi les *RKOT* en raison de ses caractéristiques conviviales, éphémères, sans discipline ni idéologie. Les entretiens ont également révélé que les *RKOT* participent également à «l'économie de l'attention» puisque l'administrateur et certains *RKOT* avaient l'intention de réaliser des bénéfices financiers. Cela a été expliqué comme étant le processus de «marchandisation» des *RKOT*, une conséquence de la société néolibérale dans laquelle les médias sociaux, en particulier *Instagram*, sont utilisés comme plate-forme de l'économie de l'attention.

En ce qui concerne la «réaction sociale» des *DMs Instagram*, les résultats ont également indiqué que la formation sous-culturelle des *RKOT* initiée par un désir d'attention et de popularité, avait également entraîné une prise de conscience et une sensibilité accrues envers les classes inférieures de la société et stimulant la philanthropie. En termes d'« ethnicité », il a été suggéré que dans la société turque néolibérale d'aujourd'hui, mis à part le concept d'ethnicité des sous-cultures traditionnelles, le concept de nationalité pourrait être un élément crucial pour la constitution de l'identité sous-culturelle des *RKOT*. Cependant, la question du genre est essentielle dans la formation d'une identité sous-culturelle car le patriarcat affecte négativement la participation des femmes et leur sentiment d'appartenance à la sous-culture du point de vue de la nationalité. En outre, il a été suggéré que le capital sous-culturel joue un rôle crucial dans la question de l'authenticité de la formation de l'identité sous-culturelle des *RKOT*, dans la mesure où l'identification sociale des *RKOT* dépend de hiérarchies internes, représentant une pratique davantage socio-psychologique. L'individualité et l'intersubjectivité des *RKOT* ont donc un impact important sur l'identification de l'authenticité. En conséquence, il a été suggéré que «l'authenticité», considérée comme une résistance absolue contre le courant dominant dans la théorie sous-culturelle traditionnelle, désigne aujourd'hui une suprématie des

dimensions sociale, culturelle, politique, économique et sexuelle de l'identité sous-culturelle.

Les résultats ont également montré que les *RKOT* suivent les profils des *RKOI* à l'échelle globale et qu'ils sont influencés par eux. Sur un plan local, ils se manifestent au travers de caractéristiques distinctives propres à la culture turque. Par conséquent, il a été suggéré que, semblable au concept de «translocalité» suggéré par les théoriciens de la sous-culture contemporaine, les *RKOT* peuvent être définis comme une sous-culture glocalisée, participant à une communication visuelle indirecte et ne comportant aucune interaction physique ou territoriale. Ainsi, les *RKOT* expriment une entité «diffuse», «glocalisée», «faiblement focalisée» et «fluide» et se considèrent comme identité de jeunesse collective et résistante. Instruments désormais indispensables, Internet et les réseaux sociaux constituent les outils les plus importants pour la formation de cette identité sous-culturelle. En résumé, les résultats de cette recherche pluri-méthodologique montrent que les *RKOT* peuvent être définis comme une néo-sous-culture présente sur le cyberspace au sein des structures sociales de la société néolibérale connectée.



ABSTRACT

Subcultural theory based on the ground of delinquency and deviance studies of *the Chicago School* of scholars in the 1920s was conceptualized with a Marxist theory based on a Gramscian perspective in post-war England by *CCCS* scholars in the 1960s and the 1970s. *CCCS* scholars developed the concept of subculture in relation to collective working class youth groups who were considered to resist against hegemony through collective style. Based on a symbolic analysis of subcultures, *CCCS* scholars contributed to the realm of cultural studies with numerous sociological works regarding youth cultures such as mods, punks, and skinheads. However, after the 1990s, post-subcultural scholars highlighted the need for abandoning the neo-Marxist subcultural theory of *CCCS* scholars due to their deterministic, rigid and homological symbolic interpretation of class, identity, and ethnicity in relation to subcultures. Thus, they suggested dismissing the term of “subculture” but adopting a new terminology (i.e. neo-tribes, scenes, lifestyle) since youth cultures today, in the neoliberal network society, are based on fluid, loosely grounded, consumerist and individualistic acts and practices. Nevertheless, some contemporary scholars critique this post-subcultural turn highlighting the significance of *CCC*'s approach in youth culture studies today. Accordingly, a few scholars have recently suggested a reconsideration of *CCCS*'s subcultural theory due to its analytic potential for many youth culture studies even though it is likely to be an inappropriate concept for some projects.

Based on this approach, this study has aimed to find whether *RKOT* on *Instagram* can be considered a subculture on cyberspace in today's neoliberal network society. There are three reasons for choosing this universe in relation to subcultural studies. First of all, *RKOT* as a derivative of *RKOI* have attracted the public's attention negatively across national and international media since they have a “collective identity” and a particular “style” that display an ostentatious and vulgar representation of wealth. Secondly, the concept of “class” which was seen as the ultimate resource of “resistance” in traditional subcultural theory is also inherent in *RKOT* although it manifests itself as the upper class. This shift from the working class subcultures to the upper class youth culture has been thought to have the potential for investigating today's dominant ideology resulting from social structures of established society. Lastly, the concepts of “leisure” and “media” regarding subcultures have provided a basis for the choice of *RKOT* since *Instagram* is the most penetrated social media platform among young people in Turkey. In addition, based on contemporary studies highlighting the potential of social media for subcultural formation and participation, it has been assumed that *Instagram* could be the new social and leisure space of youth subcultures in the globalized network society.

Within this context, grounding on the *CCCS*'s neo-Marxist approach with a Gramscian perspective and drawing upon *the Chicago School*'s and contemporary subcultural studies' core components in conceptualizing youth subcultures, a holistic approach has been adopted to investigate *RKOT* as a subcultural entity. Thus, a multimethodology of symbolic content analysis and interviews data analyses has been

applied in the course of the study centering around the signs and symbols (i.e. style) that distinguish *RKOT* on *Instagram* and other core components of subcultural theory (e.g. resistance, space, class, etc.) observed in *RKOT*. In addition, the function of consumerism and media in *RKOT*'s identity formation, their communication patterns on *Instagram* and their relation to real life have been investigated through these (n)ethnographic analyses.

The data collected through symbolic content analysis has suggested that the internet and social media which have the potential for rule-making, labeling, marginalizing, and crusading can be considered to serve as the agents of the cultural hegemony that labels both *RKOT* and *RKOI* as a “marginalized outsiders” in the globalized dominant culture carried out through digitality. The photographic and netnographic observations have shown that both *RKOI* and *RKOT* reposition and recontextualize luxury commodities and lifestyle by subverting the conventional forms of wealth representation similar to the spectacular subcultures of post-war England. They construct new uses and meanings as a subcultural style through “bricolage” which may open up new covertly oppositional readings. Hence, neither *RKOI* nor *RKOT* exactly abides by the social norms and values which are “normal”, “natural” and “appropriate” for “the rich” in the dominant ideology.

Thus, the “re-appropriated”, “subverted” and “radically adopted” uses of luxury consumer goods (e.g. expensive cars, designer clothes, private jets, etc.) stand for a set of common shared interests, values and rules that establish “*extreme orderliness*” as Hall et al., (2003) suggested, among the members of both *RKOI* and *RKOT*. Hence, luxury consumer goods, provocative captions, ostentatious lifestyle, and so on also indicate the homology within the group despite their non-normative image in the eyes of society. In other words, both *RKOI* and *RKOT* display a symbolically “intentional style” which does not coincide with the norms, values and beliefs of the dominant culture, yet rather feeds and reinforces frustration, disturbance and jealousy due to their indifferent and provocative attitude towards the problems of society (e.g. politics, income inequality, poverty, etc.). Thus, this “intentional style” which is reproduced and reinforced through “bricolage” and “homology” is contagious across the world since it is communicated through *Instagram* which eases the process of the formation and diffusion of subcultures.

The data collected through the interviews attempts to contextualize the phenomenon by centering on the core components of subcultural theory such as “social class”, “subcultural style”, “resistance”, “leisure”, “space”, “media”, “societal reaction”, “identity and authenticity”. The findings have indicated that the concept of “class” and of “class consciousness” can be still inherent up to a certain extent in today's virtual subcultures due to the potential of cyberspace for more fluid, loose and heterogenous formations which also allow subcultural formations among different class segregations. The distinctive and spectacular “style” of *RKOT* has been reported as a consequence of “intersubjectivity” which also shows individual consumer creativity. In addition, it has been seen that *RKOT* have a “covert” and “passive” forms of “intentional resistance” against the commodified culture, vulgarity of peers and stereotyped choices of the opposite gender at “micro” and “meso” levels since majority of the members regarding the subcultural acts and rituals are both self-conscious and other(s)-conscious. Also, it has been seen that *RKOT*'s Turkish identity displays a covert and a passive forms of resistance based on nationality against Western society even though there is no explicit representation of chauvinist behavior on the profile. Accordingly, it can be claimed that in today's neo-liberal Turkish society, apart from

the traditional subcultures' concept of ethnicity, the concept of nationality can be a crucial component for establishing subcultural identity.

In relation to “leisure space” and “media”, it has been seen that *RKOT* on a particular social media space (*Instagram*) display a collective and creative agency through which they determine the criteria that constitutes the subcultural capital. Thus, in the networking society, cyberspace can function as the social environment of subcultures where they can also have leisure. The findings have also indicated that members of *RKOT* understand not only others' but also their own existence through images produced and defused by the social media (*Instagram*). Hence, *RKOT* who find meaning in “appearing” rather than “purely having” refer to a generation who reinforces a specific pattern of consumption on *Instagram* which is based on an extravagant and ostentatious style. In short, they represent “the society of the spectacle” that reduces their own universe of speculation to a concrete lifestyle which is idealized with luxury consumer good, lifestyle and choices. Within this context, it has been reported that *Instagram* is the most popular social media among *RKOT* due to its user-friendly, ephemeral and discipline free and ideology free characteristics. The interviews have also revealed that *RKOT* also serve the “attention economy” since the administrator and some *RKOT* have the intention of making financial profits out of it. It has been explained as the “commodification” process of *RKOT* as a consequence of the neo-liberal society in which the social media, especially *Instagram* is used as a platform for the attention economy.

Regarding the “societal reaction” coming through *Instagram DMs*, the findings have also indicated that the subcultural formation of *RKOT*, which started with the desire of attention and popularity, has also resulted in an increased awareness and sensibility among *RKOT* towards the lower classes of society since they have led to philanthropy. In terms of “ethnicity”, it has been suggested that in today's neo-liberal Turkish society, apart from the traditional subcultures' concept of ethnicity, the concept of nationality can be a crucial component for establishing *RKOT's* subcultural identity. However, gender plays a crucial role in establishing subcultural identity since patriarchy negatively affects the females' participation and sense of belonging to the subculture regarding nationality. Moreover, it has been suggested that subcultural capital plays a crucial role in addressing “authenticity” in relation to *RKOT's* subcultural identity formation since the social identification of *RKOT* consists of hierarchies in internal dimensions which represent a more socio-psychological practice. Hence, *RKOT's* “individuality” and “intersubjectivity” have a big impact on the identification of authenticity. Accordingly, it has been suggested that “authenticity” which is considered as an absolute resistance against the mainstream in traditional subcultural theory, today refers to a supremacy of social, cultural, political, economic, and sexual dimensions of subcultural identity.

The findings have also shown that *RKOT* both keep up-to-date in the global context by following other *RKOIs'* profiles and being influenced by them, and manifest themselves in the local context through distinctive features that are peculiar to Turkish culture. Hence, it has been suggested that similar to the concept of “translocality” suggested by contemporary subcultural theorists, *RKOT* can be defined as a glocalized subculture which is interlocked through indirect visual communication in spite of no physical or territorial interaction. Thus, *RKOT*, that stand for a “diffused”, “glocalized”, “loosely focused” and “fluid” entity, still have a resistant and collective youth identity. Also the internet and social media as fundamentals of today function as the most important tools for the formation of this subcultural identity. In brief, the

findings of this multimethod research have indicated that *RKOT* can be defined as a neo-subculture on cyberspace under the social structures of the neoliberal network society.



ÖZET

1920’li yıllarda *Şikago Ekolü* kuramcıları tarafından suç ve sapkınlık çalışmaları alanında ele alınan altkültür teorisi, 1960’lı ve 1970’li yılların savaş sonrası İngiltere’inde, CCCS kuramcıları tarafından Gramsci görüşünü benimseyen Marksist teori temelinde kavramsallaştırılmıştır. CCCS kuramcıları altkültür kavramını tarz yoluyla hegemonyaya karşı direnç gösterdiği düşünülen kolektif işçi sınıfı gençlik gruplarını ele alarak geliştirmiştir. Alt kültürlerin sembolik çözümlemeleri temelinde, CCCS kuramcıları, modlar, punklar, dazlaklar gibi gençlik kültürlerini ele alan birçok sosyolojik çalışmayla, kültürel çalışmalar alanına katkı sağlamıştır. Ancak, 1990’lardan sonra altkültür-sonrası kuramcılar, CCCS kuramcılarının sınıf, kimlik ve etnik köken gibi kavramları açıklama biçiminin gerekirci, değişmez ve benzeşik olması sebebiyle, neo-Marksist altkültür teorisinden vazgeçmenin gerekliliğini vurgulamışlardır. Böylece bugün gençlik kültürleri, neo-liberal ağ toplumunda akışkan, gevşek temelli, tüketmeye yönelik, bireysel faaliyetler ve uygulamalara dayandığı için, yeni bir terminoloji (neo-tribes, scenes, lifestyle) benimseyerek “altkültür” terimini artık kullanmamayı ileri sürmüşlerdir. Ancak bazı çağdaş kuramcılar bu altkültür-sonrası dönüşü eleştirmiş, bugün gençlik çalışmalarında CCCS yaklaşımının hala önem taşıdığını vurgulamışlardır. Bu doğrultuda, son yıllarda birkaç kuramcı CCCS altkültür teorisinin gençlik çalışmalarına yönelik analiz edebilme potansiyelini vurgulayarak, her proje için uygun olmasa da bu teorinin tekrar değerlendirilmesi gerektiğini öne sürmektedirler.

Bu yaklaşım temel alınarak, çalışma *Instagram*’da *RKOT* örneğinin günümüz neo-liberal ağ toplumunda bir siber uzam altkültürü olup olamayacağını araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Alt kültür çalışmaları doğrultusunda, araştırmanın evreni olarak *Instagram*’da *RKOT* seçimi üç ana sebepten kaynaklanmaktadır. İlk olarak, bir *RKOT* türü olarak *RKOT* toplumun olumsuz yönde dikkatini çekmektedir. Bu sahip oldukları “kolektif kimlik”ten ve zenginliği gösterişçi ve görgüsüz bir şekilde sergileyen belirli bir “tarz” sahibi olmalarından kaynaklanmaktadır. İkinci olarak, geleneksek altkültür teorisinde “direnş”in temel kaynağı olarak benimsenen “sınıf” kavramı, zenginler sınıfı olarak karşımıza çıkmasına karşın, *RKOT* örneğinde de gözlemlenmektedir. İşçi sınıfı alt kültürlerinden üst sınıf gençlik kültürüne yönelik bu değişim, toplumdaki sosyal yapılardan kaynaklanan günümüzün egemen ideolojisini araştırmak üzere bir potansiyel olarak görülmüştür. Son olarak, altkültürler bağlamında “serbest zaman” ve “medya” kavramları çalışmanın evreni olarak *RKOT* seçiminde temel oluşturmuştur çünkü *Instagram* Türkiye’de genç bireyler tarafından en çok kullanılan sosyal medya platformudur. Ayrıca, son zamanlarda yapılan çalışmaların altkültürel oluşumlarda ve katılımlarda, sosyal medyanın yaratmış olduğu potansiyeli vurgulaması sebebiyle, küreselleşmiş ağ toplumunda gençlik kültürleri için *Instagram* yeni bir sosyalleşme ve serbest zaman geçirme uzamı olarak görülebilmektedir.

Bu bağlamda, *CCCS’nin* Gramsci görüşünü benimseyen neo-Marksist yaklaşımını temel alarak ve hem *Şikago ekolünün* hem de günümüze ait altkültür çalışmalarının temel unsurlarından yararlanarak, çalışmada; *RKOT* örneğini altkültürel

bir olgu olarak incelemek üzere bütünsel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Böylece, çalışmada, *RKOT'u Instagram'da* ayrıştıran gösterge ve sembollerle (tarz), altkültürel teorisinin ana unsurları (direnış, uzam, sınıf, vs.) doğrultusunda içerik analizi ve mülakat analizlerinden oluşan çoklu-yöntem araştırması uygulanmıştır. Ayrıca, *RKOT'un* kimlik oluşumunda tüketim ve medyanın işlevi, *RKOT'un Instagram'daki* iletişim biçimleri ve gerçek hayatla bağlantılı olup olmadıkları bu (n)etnografik analizlerle incelenmiştir.

Sembolik içerik analizinde elde edilen veriler, kural koyma, etiketleme, ötekileştirme ve karşı mücadele oluşturma gibi potansiyelleri bulunan internet ve sosyal medyanın, *RKOT* ve *RKOI*'yi “ötekileştirilmiş aykırı tipler” olarak etiketlediğini göstermektedir. Bu durum, dijitallik vasıtasıyla sürdürülmekte, internet ve sosyal medyanın kültürel hegemonyanın birer aracısı olduğunu göstermektedir. Fotoğrafik ve netnografik gözlemler *RKOI* ve *RKOT'un*, savaş sonrası İngiltere'sindeki altkültürlere benzer bir şekilde, zenginliğin bilindik ifadelerini bozarak lüks tüketim mallarını ve yaşam tarzını yeniden oluşturmakta ve yeni bir bağlamda kavramsallaştırdığını belirtmektedir. *RKOI* ve *RKOT* yeni gizli karşıt okumalar oluşturabilecek “brikolaj” yöntemiyle yeni kullanımlar ve anlamlar inşa etmektedir. Bu yüzden *RKOI* ve *RKOT* egemen ideolojide “zenginliğe” dair kabul edilen “normal”, “doğal” ve “uygun” normlar ve değerlerle tam anlamıyla örtüşmemektedir.

Böylece “yeniden tahsis edilmiş”, “bozuntuya uğramış”, ve “köklü bir şekilde uygulanan” lüks kullanımı (pahalı arabalar, tasarım kıyafetler, özel jetler, vs.) *RKOT* ve *RKOI* tarafından benimsenen bir takım ortak ilgileri, değerleri ve kuralları ifade etmektedir. Bütün bunlar, Hall ve diğerlerinin (2003) belirttiği gibi *RKOI* ve *RKOT* üyeleri arasında “aşırı bir düzen” oluşturmaktadır. Böylece, *RKOT* ve *RKOI*, toplum kurallarıyla örtüşmeyen imajlarına karşın, kullanmış oldukları lüks tüketim ürünleri, kışkırtıcı fotoğraf altı yazıları, gösterişçi yaşam tarzları vb. ile grup içerisinde bir benzeşiklik göstermektedir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, *RKOI* ve *RKOT* egemen kültürün normlarına, değerlerine ve inançlarına uymayan sembolik olarak “maksatlı bir tarz” sergilemekte ve toplumun problemlerine (politika, gelir eşitsizliği, yoksulluk, vs.) karşı duyarsız ve kışkırtıcı tutumlarından dolayı, öfke, rahatsızlık ve kıskançlık gibi olumsuz duyguları besleyip pekiştirmektedir. “Brikolaj” ve “benzeşiklik” yoluyla oluşturulan ve pekiştirilen bu “maksatlı tarz” altkültürlerin oluşumu ve yayılımını kolaylaştıran *Instagram* yoluyla iletilmesi sebebiyle, tüm dünyada yayılan bir etkiye sahiptir.

Mülakatlardan elde edilen veriler, altkültür teorisinin “sosyal sınıf”, “altkültürel tarz”, “direnış”, “serbest zaman”, “uzam”, “medya”, “toplumsal tepki”, “kimlik ve özgünlük” gibi ana unsurları üzerinde yoğunlaşarak *RKOT* olgusunu kavramsallaştırmaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlar, sınıf ve sınıf bilinci kavramlarının günümüz sanal altkültürlerinde belirli bir noktaya kadar halen var olduğunu göstermektedir çünkü daha akışkan, gevşek ve heterojen oluşumlara zemin hazırlayan siber uzam aynı zamanda farklı sınıflar arasında altkültürel oluşumlara izin vermektedir. *RKOT'un* kendine özgü ve şaşırtıcı “tarzı” bireysel tüketici yaratıcılığını gösteren “öznelerarasılığın” bir sonucu olarak belirtilmektedir. Ayrıca, *RKOT'un* metalaşmış kültüre, akran görgüsüzlüğüne, karşı cinsin basmakalıp tercihlerine karşı “mikro” ve “mezo” düzeyde “gizli” ve “edilgen” bir “maksatlı direniş” gösterdiği gözlemlenmektedir. Çünkü üyelerin altkültürel davranış ve ritüellere özgü motivasyonları hem “öz farkındalık” hem de “diğer(ler)ine dair farkındalık” göstermektedir. Aynı zamanda, *RKOT* profilinde, herhangi bir aleni gösterge olmamasına karşın, *RKOT'un* Türk kimliği Batı toplumuna karşı, milliyetçiliğe

dayanan “gizli” ve “edilgen” bir direniş biçimi sergilemektedir. Dolayısıyla, günümüz neo-liberal Türk toplumunda, geleneksel altkültürlerin etnik yapı kavramından farklı olarak, milliyetçilik kavramı altkültürel kimlik oluşumunda önemli bir unsur teşkil edebilmektedir.

“Serbest zaman uzamı” ve “medya” ya ilişkin olarak, belirli bir sosyal medya uzamında (*Instagram*), *RKOT* kolektif ve yaratıcı bir eylemlilik göstermektedir. Bu eylemlilik vasıtasıyla *RKOT*’un altkültürel sermayeyi oluşturan ayırıcı özellikleri belirledikleri gözlemlenmektedir. Böylece, ağ toplumunda siber uzam, altkültürlerin aynı zamanda serbest zaman geçirebildikleri bir sosyal ortam olarak işlev görmektedir. Sonuçlar, *RKOT*’un üyelerinin yalnızca diğerlerinin değil, aynı zamanda kendi varlıklarının da sosyal medya (*Instagram*) aracılığıyla oluşturulan ve dağıtılan imgelerle anlamlandırıldığını göstermektedir. Bu yüzden, anlamı “yalnızca sahip olmaktan” ziyade “göze görünür olmakta” bulan *RKOT*, *Instagram*’da görgüsüz ve gösterişçi tarzlarıyla oluşturdukları belirli bir tüketim biçimini pekiştiren bir nesli temsil etmektedir. Kısaca, kendi kurgu evrenlerini lüks tüketimini, yaşam tarzını ve seçimlerini idealize ettikleri somut bir yaşam tarzına indirgeyen “gösteri toplumu” nu ifade etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, *Instagram*’ın kullanıcı uyumlu, süreksiz, disiplin ve ideolojiden yoksun olma özellikleri, onun *RKOT* arasında en çok tercih edilen sosyal medya olmasına yol açmaktadır. Sonuçlar, profil yöneticisinin ve bazı *RKOT*’un finansal kar elde etme maksatlarından kaynaklı olarak, *RKOT*’un aynı zamanda “dikkat ekonomisi” için kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Bu durum, sosyal medyanın, özellikle *Instagram*’ın “dikkat ekonomisi” için kullanıldığı neo-liberal toplumun bir sonucu olarak, *RKOT*’un “metalaşma” süreci olarak açıklanmaktadır.

Instagram mesajlarıyla gelen “toplumsal tepki” bağlamında, ilgi ve popülerlik arzusuyla yola çıkan *RKOT*’da, toplumun düşük sınıflarına karşı farkındalık ve duyarlılık artışı gözlemlenmekte ve mesajların hayırseverlik faaliyetlerine yol açtığı görülmektedir. “Etnik yapı” açısından, geleneksel altkültürlerden farklı olarak, neo-liberal Türk toplumunda *RKOT*’un kimlik oluşumunda “milliyetçilik” kavramının önemli bir yer aldığı gözlenmektedir. Ancak cinsiyet altkültürel kimlik oluşturmada önem teşkil etmektedir çünkü ataerkillik, milliyetçilik bağlamında kadınların katılımını ve aidiyet oluşumunu olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir. Ayrıca, *RKOT*’un kendi içerisinde yer alan ve daha çok sosyo-psikolojik davranışları temsil eden hiyerarşiler, altkültürel sermayenin “özgünlük” kavramını anlamakta önemli bir yere sahiptir çünkü bu davranışlar, *RKOT*’un sosyal kimlik edinimini oluşturmaktadır. Bu yüzden *RKOT*’un “bireyselliği” ve “öznelarasılığı” özgünlüğün tanımlanmasında etkilidir. Dolayısıyla, geleneksel altkültürel teoride anaakıma karşı mutlak direniş olarak görülen “özgünlük” günümüzde altkültürel kimliğin sosyal, kültürel, politik, ekonomik ve cinsi boyutlarının egemenliği anlamına gelmektedir.

Sonuçlar aynı zamanda *RKOT*’un diğer *RKOT*’lerin sayfalarını izleyerek ve onlardan etkilenerek küresel bağlamda gündemi takip ettiklerini; yerel bağlamda ise Türk kültürüne özgü ayrıştırıcı özelliklerle kendilerini ifade ettiklerini göstermektedir. Bu doğrultuda, günümüz altkültür kuramcılarının önerdiği “yerelötesicilik” kavramına benzer bir şekilde, *RKOT*, fiziksel ve bölgesel bir etkileşim olmaksızın, dolaylı görsel iletişim yoluyla birbiri içine geçmiş, “küresel-yerel” bir altkültür olarak tanımlanabilir. Böylece, *RKOT* “yayınık” “küresel-yerel”, “gevşek odaklı” ve “akışkan” bir olgu olarak direnen ve kolektif bir gençlik kimliği barındırmaktadır. Aynı zamanda günümüzün temel yapıları olarak internet ve sosyal medya bu altkültürel kimliğin oluşumunda en önemli araçlar olarak işlev görmektedir. Özetle, çoklu-yöntem kullandığımız bu çalışmanın sonuçları neo-liberal toplumun sosyal yapıları altında, *RKOT*’un siber uzamda bir neo-altkültür olarak tanımlanabileceğini göstermektedir.

1. INTRODUCTION

Subcultures, which have been one of the prominent elements in the realm of media and cultural studies, are taking on a new significance and dimension due to the globally changing socio-economic and socio-cultural structures. Today, the network society in which the active audience has evolved into the interactive user (prosumer), who contributes to production whilst consuming, has a huge capacity to create, modify and transform the culture. Therefore, cyberspace as the current platform for virtual interactions of these actors could be regarded as a new, visual, artificial and virtual environment where contemporary subcultures could emerge. Both in the US and the *Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)*, the social and economic structures of the specific society play an important role in the emergence of a particular subculture. For example, the scholars of the US predominantly focus on deviance among the young due to the urbanization and increasing crime rates during the 1920s. Similarly, the scholars of the CCCS further elaborate the phenomenon as the class and power relations among the young and the post-war resistance to cultural hegemony by offering a Neo-Marxist approach due to the social and economic structure of English society during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, contemporary studies on subculture mostly center upon new forms of youth cultural identity and consumption rejecting the centralized significance of class and power relations in the current society due to the current social and economic parameters in society. Hence, it can be claimed that the conjuncture of a specific society is effectual in the emergence of socio-cultural movements within it. Therefore, before elaborating on the research question and the phenomenon of subculture, it is important to draw a frame for the current social, economic and cultural structures of the network society both in the world and Turkey since “*Subcultures must also be analyzed in terms of their relation to dominant culture – the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole.*” (Hall et al., 2003, p.13).

Castells (2000) claims that there is a new society which has entered a new economy. This new society made up of networks depends on a global economy

maintained via *“financial transactions, production sites, markets, and labor pools, powered by money, information, and business organization”* (Castells, 2000 p. 695). Thus, the change in the economy brings along a new social structure in the society. The dimensions of this social structure vary from a new technological paradigm to dominant cultural manifestations. Fischer (1992) claims that technology is a socially embedded material culture. In addition, new information technologies lead to the *“emergence of new forms of production and management, of new communication media, or of the globalization of economy and culture”* (Castells, 2000, p.694). Hence, the Internet (4 billion users currently in 2018) connecting people through shared multimedia hypertext creates a new virtual culture appearing in a symbolic environment (cyberspace) allowing its actors to experience it as communicating beings.

Within this new society emerging during the end of the twentieth century, multidimensional paradigms such as *“the revolution in information technology, the socioeconomic restructuring of both capitalism and statism (with different fates for these antagonistic modes of production); and the cultural social movements that emerged in the 1960s in the United States and Western Europe”* have created the network society (Castells, 2000, p.694-695). The network society based on informationalism, for the first time, has allowed the human mind to be a *“direct productive force, not just a decisive element in the production system”* (Castells, 2000a, p.31). Thus, traditional class differences are no longer based on the struggles between the owner and labor, and the industrial working class is replaced by new social movements regarding more identity-based politics driven by individualistic attitudes and life style conscious (Castells, 2000a).

In addition, those who program and control the information and communication networks have created a new form of economy signaling the end of hierarchical bureaucracies (Castells, 2009). As a consequence of these new consumption/production, management, and communication patterns and power relations in the network society, especially social media platforms embedded in everyday lives have been the most common environments to create, modify and maintain the culture on cyberspace. Hence, cyberspace has been accepted as an applicable place for studies on pop culture due to its unique dynamism and composition of people across the globe (Ohiagu & Okorie, 2015).

Regardless of their differences, people form similar sets of values, lifestyles and worldviews. However, Ohiagu (2010) claims that assuming that people's values, worldviews, beliefs, and habits would all be the same just because they are all exposed to the same mass media messages would be misleading since "*media and information technologies decentralize the global village*" (Straubhaar, LaRose & Davenport, 2013, p.526). Thus, in this super interconnected society, it is inevitable that new dominant and subcultures emerge. As Bennet (2004) in Baran (2009) suggests, new subcultures based on shared tastes and values grow up while geographically based identities blur and fade. Therefore, cyberspace as a new environment for the emergence, maintenance and transmission of the dominant culture and subcultures are the new area for studies on cultural studies.

1.1. Some Definitions

It has been mentioned that "*Subcultures must also be analyzed in terms of their relation to dominant culture – the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole.*" (Hall et al, 2003, p.13). After giving a brief overview of the current social and economic structure of the network society, it is important to clearly define the dominant culture on the cyberspace by adopting a cultural perspective¹ (see e.g. Bennett, 1979; Tucker, 1996; Li, 1999). widely used in communication and cultural studies today. In the most general sense, a dominant culture could be defined as the cultural practice which is accepted by the majority of the society without any opposition.

The concept of popular culture emerging in the nineteenth century and earlier is associated with the culture of the lower class generated by the Industrial Revolution after the end of World War II (Crossman, 2018), so making the majority of the population, the culture of the middle class is accepted as the dominant culture of the English society regarding their set of norms, customs, values, beliefs and lifestyle in respect to social and economic structures of the era. Changing population due to the large scale immigrations, economic decline, changes in the moral codes (e.g., legalization of abortion and homosexuality), and class struggles has created a less deferential and more individualistic society (Black, 2011). In his most famous book

¹ Culture has a significant role in shaping people's beliefs, behaviors, norms and values. Thus, cultural perspective allows scholars to adopt an interpretive approach to understand socially constructed systems of meanings. It also helps to explain the ways of thinking and behavior in society with respect to a group or a collective since it provides the individual with various points of views.

The Making of the Working Class, Thompson (1966) argues that industrialized society has created a new intellectual culture in which “*a shoemaker, who had been taught his letters in the Old Testament; would labor through the Age of Reason*” (p.712), for example. Accordingly, the working class have learnt to see their own life as a part of the conflict between the unreformed *House of Commons*² and “industrious classes”, which allows them to form a picture of the society. With the growth of workers and self-conscious identity, the working class exploited by the ruling class³ struggle to resist against the changes in their lives. Along with lots of negative impacts such as dislocation, deaths, destruction, the end of WW II also created a need for “*progressive*” social, cultural, political and economic mobilizations (Purdue, 2016). World War II damages “...*the independent organizations of the working class*” (Hartfield, 2012) and industrialists aka employers or the ruling class in England had to make some reforms to preserve their influence since the working class’ demands included some reforms in living standards specifically in the form of a welfare state. Thus, class struggles in post-war Britain are considered the basis for capitalist development. In addition, the ruling classes had to accept the fact that marginalized and revolutionary movements of the working class could be a threat to their existence since they had become a collective social force. Also, industrialized society created a consumerist individuality among the workers, along with their institutionalized collective social force identity. Hence, capitalism undergoing hard times due to industrial unrest and national and international economic pressures led to dramatic socio-economic and socio-cultural changes during the 1960s and the 1970s. Within this context, especially, the young working class of English society who were in their teens during the 1950s developed a distinct youth culture between the 1955s and the 1965s, driven by the fashion and music industries (University of Cambridge, 2015). Therefore, they became the leading actor of this resistance through the distorted and reestablished rituals, argot, lifestyle, music and style which were popularized by the mass media.

In another of his influential works, *Customs in Common*, Thompson (1993) discusses the changes in the culture and disappearance of a range of cultural customs as a mean of resistance and rebelliousness in industrialized society. Thus, today in the

² House of Commons, also called Commons, popularly elected legislative body of the bicameral British Parliament. (Retrieved Oct 10, 2018 from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/House-of-Commons-British-government>)

³ The ruling class was the industrialist class in post-war England although it was the aristocrats until the end of WW II.

network society in which traditional economies are replaced by market economies around the globe constitutes a new cultural hegemony which is based on consumption and identity through cyberspace. Debord (1994) states that people have evolved their relationships with each other into an image mediated dimension in the post-industrialized culture. Today's social media users who interact in a virtual and visual environment could be said to intend to shape identities by being mediated by images. The concept of consumption has been approached in relation to the situation in which it exists. Lifestyle codes such as eating, dressing and entertainment underlining the sociological importance of consumption are now represented in cyberspace. Hence, this cyberspace providing its users with flexible, ephemeral, fluid interactions, also allows them to manifest their identity and lifestyle as they want to. Based on the overview of the current social and economic structures of the post-industrial network society, it can be claimed that the dominant culture on cyberspace is the one idealizing consumption and identity and their publicly manifestation as a lifestyle. Today, social networking sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Pinterest*, and so on are the contemporary virtual spaces which allow their users to reproduce and maintain the broader mainstream culture.

Turning to the concept of subculture again, understanding the larger mainstream (dominant) culture on the social media based on consumerism and identity formation is the starting point of this study since subcultures represent cultural practices within the larger mainstream culture with some separation in terms of values, practices and beliefs. However, such a broad context (the globe) in relation to the dominant culture and subculture on cyberspace would not give credible conclusions in a study since the bigger the universe of the study is, the more abstract the conclusions will become. For credibility and validity of the study, it is indispensable and wise to narrow down the universe of the work into a viable context: *Rich Kids of Turkey (RKOT)* on *Instagram*. Therefore, before turning to the research question and the phenomenon of subculture in relation to *RKOT* on *Instagram*, it is important to describe the current social and economic structures in Turkey regarding the dominant culture and the network society.

1.2. Dominant Culture and Youth Identity in Turkey

Since the 1980s, Turkish society has gone through a rapid social change due to economic policies and technological developments. As a consequence of

globalization, post-capitalism and mass culture, popular culture has been based on a cause and effect relation in respect to consumption economy. With the involvement in the world economy system, Turkish society has developed new patterns of consumptions influenced by mass media (Şahin, 2005). Despite their benefits, technological developments have resulted in some conflicts in respect to socio-cultural structure and Turkey has evolved into a mass society (see Demir, 1994; Oktay, 2002; Oskay, 1998;1999). Television as the most distinct component of everyday life has become the most effective tool in the visual and entertainment industry (Oktay, 1996). The working class and lower class are encouraged to consume middle class commodities by the ideology of happiness and pleasure based on consumption (Oksay, 1982). Thus, a culture of consumption primarily belonging to the US and Western Europe has also been effectual in Turkey due to the variety and abundance of consumer goods, instalments, credit facilities, radio and TV shows, and the increase in the number of the advertisement companies (Aydoğan, 2004).

However, mass culture and the culture of consumerism in Turkey differs from those in the US and the Western Europe since Turkish society has not gone through the industrialization process. In contrast, there has been a direct transition from peasantry to visual culture without dabbling enough in written culture in Turkey. Hence, the adaptation of global culture in this geography has brought some social problems. (Atay, 2004b). The effects of these problems have been observed mostly on young people who try to get autonomy and establish identity. In Western society, as a consequence of the industrialization, young people who used to be a part of the labor force had to be pulled away from production processes since they had to get education. (Doğan, 2004).

Accordingly, this transition in the society has created a consumption oriented youth who is dependent on the former generation. Today, young people are the prominent consumers of popularized consumer commodities and values offered by mass media and this allows not only the self-expression of youth but also the profit growth of the businesses (Storey, 2000). McRobbie (1999) argues that youth subcultures are intentionally manipulated for mass market and depoliticized for popular consumption. Similarly, in their research, Yazıcı et al. (2002) shows that young university students in Turkey have a big tendency to consume popular consumer goods. Kurtuluş et al. (2015) suggest that there is a vast amount of consumption among

Turkish social media users and that “*they use social media primarily to follow others in order to learn and interact socially. Using social media for original content creation is not yet common*” (p. 337) since they basically focus on participation and consumption making a great potential for commercial activities and influencers.

In this aspect, Veblen’s early work on conspicuous consumption should be referred to since he argues that leisure and consumption are two significant indicators of social status and/or two significant ways of gaining social status. In the twentieth century, as a consequence of industrialization, the working class and middle class had to work hard to have the consumer goods that belong to the upper class and the success was associated with not only having the consumption goods but also looking knowledgeable and comfortable while having/using them. For example, having well-trained servants or speaking politely were considered a distinctive feature of the leisure life. However, today in the network society, even the lower class have the possibility and the opportunity to manifest wealth and accordingly gain prestige and social status easily thanks to social networking sites. Also, global post-industrial market provides masses with easier access to consumer goods which can display leisure life.

Like in Western society, modernity in Turkey leads to a new socio-cultural structure which is peculiar to Turkey resulting from the need of self-expression of the youth. As a consequence of this need of identity formation and intentional separation from production and decision making processes in the society, it is inevitable that young people form protest subcultures apart from the Mods and so on emerging in the US and England who are accepted as counter-culture movements during 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, Istanbul “*Bağdat Street Youth*” and “*Yüksel Street Youth*” and “*Tunalı Hilmi Youth*” in Ankara could be given as examples of subcultures during those years. The generation of 1968 in Turkey, formed as a consequence of youth movements in the globe, is seen as a counter-culture. However, Şahin (2005) claims that these movements have nothing in common with the youth subcultures in Europe except for the time when they emerged. They were only imitations of the subcultures in Europe since they were neither effective in determining the internal dynamics of Turkey nor parallel Turkey’s social reality. Therefore, these youth cultures should be seen as developments imitating their Western equivalents.

As Hall et al. (2003) suggest, subcultures in the West resist through the rituals targeting the values and standardized lifestyle of the industrial society and this

resistance evolved into various socio-political developments in time. However, today youth cultures in Turkey go through a depoliticized and consumerist process as a consequence of relatively more moderate ideological separations and the experience gained from the negative results of *Sep. 12, 1980*.⁴ Thus, counter-culture movements, which used to appear as a reaction in respect to ideology and society, occur as individual rebellion today. However, this individual rebellion still could be organized in social movements. Gürakar (2014) argues that new social movements are based on local and cultural issues in respect to lifestyle and identity rather than traditional working class and class struggles. Their ultimate goal is producing or reproducing autonomous civil spaces against the state rather than conquering it. Therefore, under some circumstances, goals and interests are articulated to one another forming loose, substantially fragmental, centerless or obscurely centered identities (p. 236-237).

On the other hand, the *Gezi* upspring which was a countrywide revolt starting with a small group of young people trying to prevent the demolition of a city park in June 2013, has been an important turning point for the society, regarding the Turkish youth who used to be considered apolitical consumers. Yörük (2014) claims that millions of people who had never been involved in any street activism before challenged the authoritarianism of the Prime Minister *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* and changed deep-rooted and elite politics in Turkey by manifesting a spirit of resistance. He adds that the Islamist and authoritarian governance by the *Justice and Development Party (AKP)* against the *Kemalist*⁵ establishment and the secular lifestyle of the proletariat, along with a series of protests by some social and ethnic minority groups (e.g., Kurds, LGBT individuals, Alawites and so on) against the record of antidemocratic policies by the *AKP*, triggered the upspring.

According to *AndyAr Research Company* (2013), more than 8 million people (12,1% of the entire population) joined the protests. The findings indicate that especially the middle class had been the defining participants of the protests. However, the middle class of *Gezi* protests are defined in 2 categories: “*an emerging new middle*

⁴ A military coup d'état headed by Chief of the General Staff General Kenan Evren. The coup resulted from “Western supported nationalist far right elements” in the army for the purpose of so-called “restoring democracy” lasted for 3 years and caused numerous executions, arrestments and deaths in prison along with social and economic changes in the Turkish society (see e.g. Beki, 1997; Amnesty International, 1988).

⁵ A secular ideology adopting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s (the founder of the Turkish Republic) principles and reforms

class and declining/proletarianizing middle class” (Yörük, 2014, p. 424). Keyder (2013) cited in Yörük (2014) argues that a new emerging middle class consists of professionals who have extensive economic power and who demand political power to shape and limit the authoritarian and conservative policies of *AKP*. They aspire to have the same level of democracy as in developed countries since they are incorporated into the globalized world and positioned in the liberal market and economy. On the other hand, Boratav (2013) in Yörük (2014) claims that the majority of the participants considered as middle class are indeed either a different segment of the working class or they are becoming proletarians. Therefore, the second group stands for those who suffer from market conditions especially during *AKP* governance.

However, both types of middle class participated in Gezi protests and fought against the policies of commodification and privatization, “*reclaiming a right to the city*” (Kuymulu, 2013). Furthermore, Fukuyami (2013) cited in Yörük (2014) claims that even though the protests were originated and dominated by the middle class, they expanded into squatter house areas of the working class (e.g., neighborhoods where left-wing Kurdish and Alawite minorities live). Therefore, the arguments indicate that there are/were two waves of the *Gezi* protests: the first wave from the middle class to the working class and the second wave from the working class to the middle class (Yörük, 2014).

In his book *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Castells (2015) explains the *Gezi* protests underlining the importance of different contexts, different economic and political conditions, different institutional settings, and the level of development in emergence of political uprisings. In addition, he emphasizes that social movements are not direct effects of authoritarian regimes and economic crises, they are rather ways of looking for new alternative channels for direct manifestations resulting from needs and desires of people who cannot find adequate channels of expression in political institutions. He states that people during the *Gezi* protests constructed an autonomous urban space through an autonomous social network integrating into global capitalism. He also adds that people now have “*autonomous communicative capacity*” thanks to “*the digital social networks based on the internet and wireless communication*” (p. 223). He claims that younger groups of population (aged 16-34) hold the majority of this communicative potential since

they are both technically knowledgeable and more inclined to the rebellion against the dominant social order.

Thus, he approaches young people as rebels threatening the dominant power relations and underlines the importance of socio-political, and socio-cultural dimensions in the rise of networks formed through social media among young people. Today, virtual environments on which people can produce their own content and share it with others are also the environments which enable them to share information and opinions. People can form social communities, get organized and take actions through these virtual environments (Binark, 2007). Hence, these virtual environments not only take hold of our lives but also create new perception patterns. Like the uprisings in Tunis, Morocco, Egypt, and Lebanon, The *Gezi* uprising was organized and spread through virtual environments: especially social media networking sites. Burke and Şen (2018) argue that sharply increased social media used during the *Gezi* upspring became an environment which facilitated political participation and activist organization. Similarly, Güner (2016) emphasizes that social media use during the *Gezi* protests promoted “*contentious collective action*” and shaped the structure of politics in Turkey even though it did not result in a change of government.

Today, in Turkey 72.9% of the population use the internet. Every eight households out of ten have internet facilities, and 83.8% of Turkish families have internet access as of April 2018. In addition, the majority of the internet users (90%) consists of young people who are between 18-30 (Tuik, 2018). These results indicate an increase compared to the results of the same survey conducted in 2017 by *TUİK*⁶.

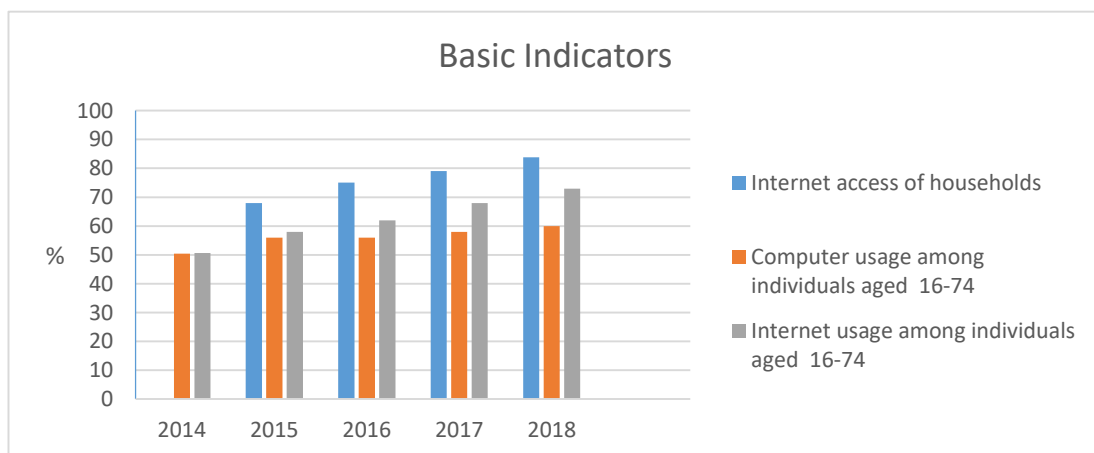


Figure 1.1 TUİK Digital in Turkey Statistics, 2017

⁶ Turkish Statistical Institute

Thus, the internet demographics of Turkish society are consistent with the globe's internet demographics Castells (2015) explains, and Turkish youth is becoming more and more prominent in the digital environment. The reports published by We Are Social and Hootsuite in 2018 indicate that 68% of internet users are mobile users using smart phones which enables social interactions and networking practices. The report also indicates that *Instagram*, as the third biggest social media platform with 33 million users in Turkey, ranks among *Instagram*'s top markets/ countries and it is mostly preferred by young people.

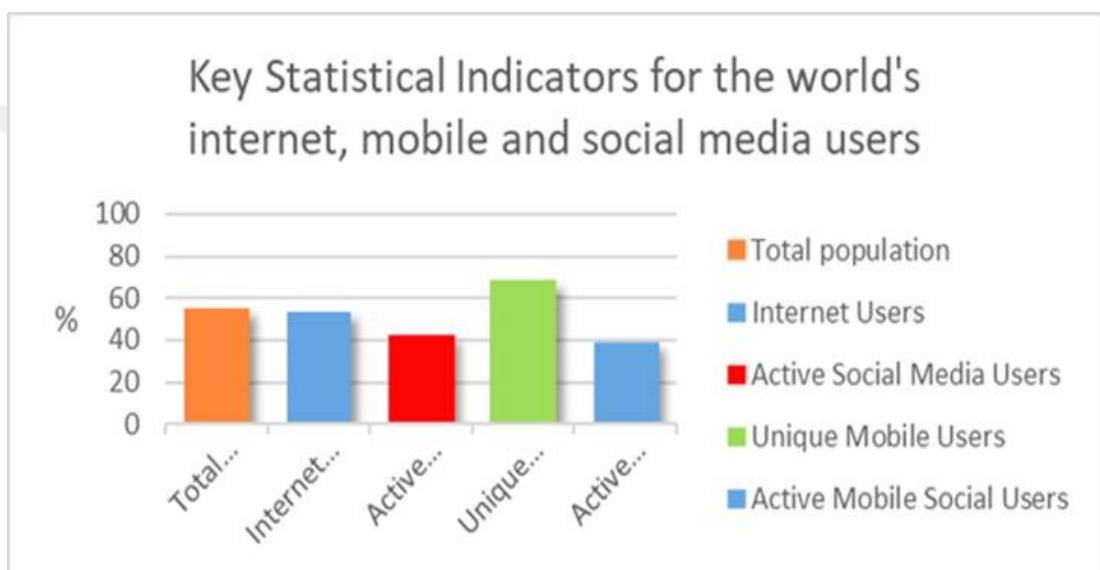


Figure 1.2 Digital around the world by We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2018

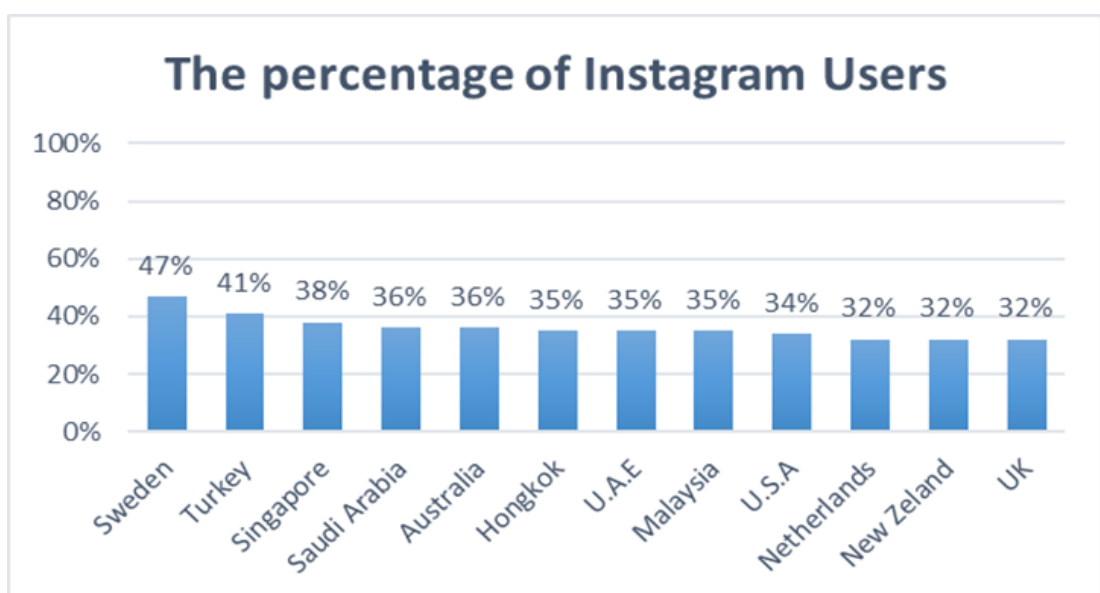


Figure 1.3 Profile of Instagram Users by We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2018

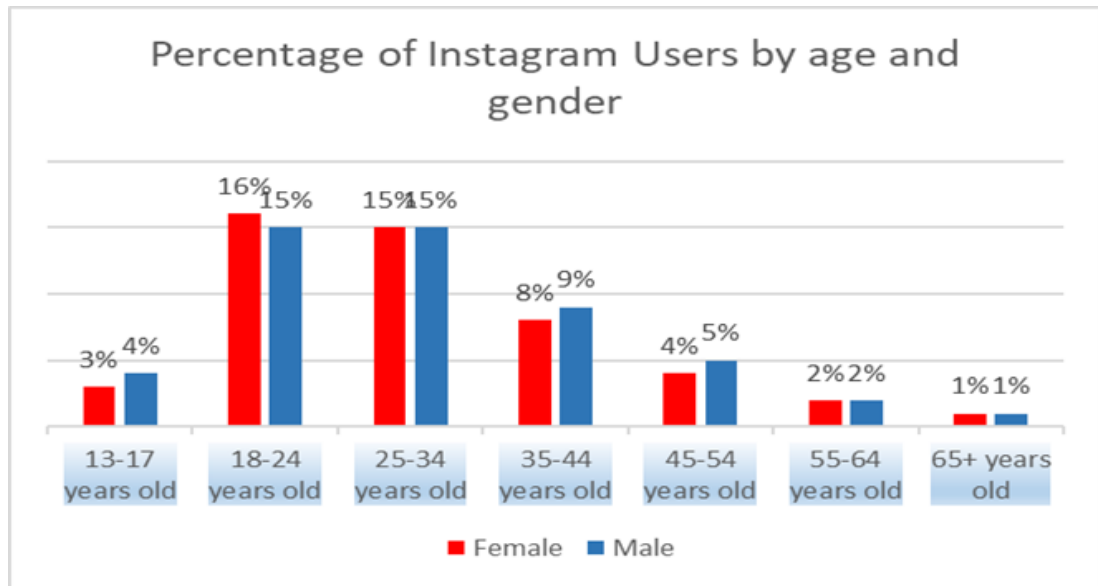


Figure 1.4 Instagram Penetration by Country by We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2018

Another research, *Next Generation*, conducted by *The British Council* in 2017 shows that digital environments are the main source of information and content for Turkish youth even though 90% of them still watch TV as a habit. In addition, social media connected through mobile devices (e.g., computers, smartphones, tablets and so on) is the most preferable digital environment they are occupied with even when the TV is on. The research also shows that 97% of young people in Turkey chat through *WhatsApp*⁷ and other social media and that 95% of them follow social media posts as a pastime. Turkish youth, who think that social media liberate and inform them about the developments around the globe immediately functioning as a new window opening to the world, commonly prefer *Instagram* (29%). *WhatsApp* (27%) and *Facebook* (26%) are the other commonly used social media after *Instagram*.

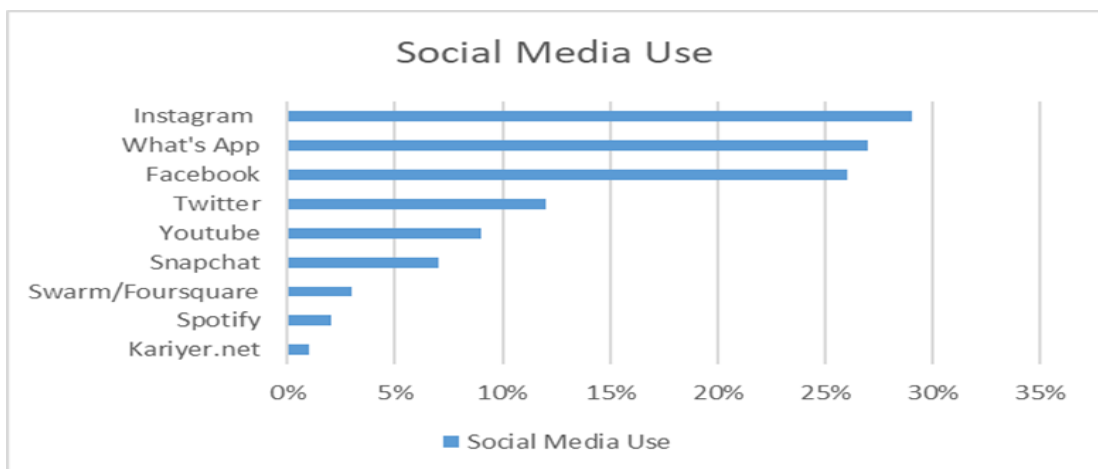


Figure 1.5 Social Media Use among Young People in Turkey by Next Generation, 2017

⁷ A free text messaging application for smart phones

According to the survey results, these young people state that they close their *Facebook* and *Twitter* accounts due to these social networking sites' political contents and limited viewpoints resulting from the interactions among only like-minded people. They add that they avoid discussions, arguments and conflicts on social media. Keeping this research data in mind, it can be claimed that information has been more accessible and available for Turkish youth more than ever for the last decade. Youth embodying the conflicts of post-capitalism are also described as world citizens since they function as an intersection point between local culture and transnational culture (Neyzi, 2004, p.100). People across the world, brands, companies, celebrities are to be easily connected especially due to the social media environments on cyberspace. Therefore, accumulation of follows, followers and friends on the social media, leading to new various interactions on and outside the cyberspace, provides a basis for new formations and transformations. Therefore, youth subcultures which have been always approached with respect to the conjuncture in which they occur can be discussed in a new socio-cultural environment based on consumption and virtual interaction in the network society.

1.3. Dynamics of Social Media Usage in Turkey

Karaca (2007) states that young people use the internet due to various reasons such as self-expression, identity formation, education, socialization, shopping, fun and so on. According to the survey conducted by *Global Web Index* in 2017, more than 40% of all internet users have social media accounts and the primary reason for having a social media account is to keep in touch with friends (42%), which is followed by another reason: staying up-to-date with current news and events (39%). Young people (16-24) also report that they use social media to fill spare time, as well as keeping in touch with friends. The survey also shows that 33% of the users are on social media since their friends are there. Thus, communication is the primary reason for social media use. In addition, social media users who have a huge interest in social media networking sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram* and so on basically look for entertainment purposes and information research.

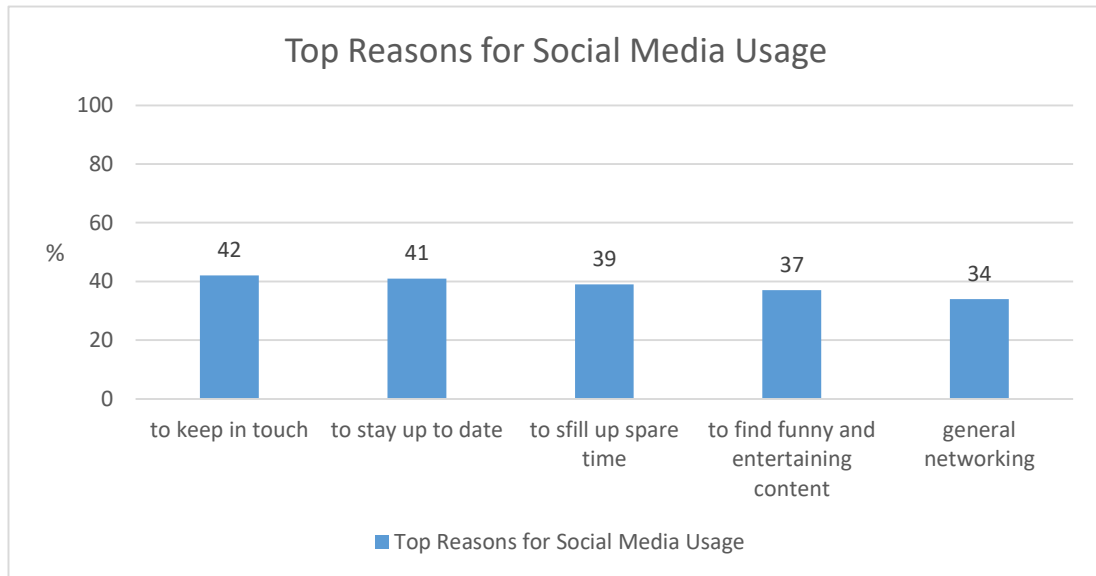


Figure 1. 6 Top Reasons for Social Media Usage by Global Web Index, 2017

Bolton et al. (2014) define social media as “any online service through which users can create and share a variety of content” (p.248). Similarly, Mills (2012) states that social media help to create content as well as sharing and consuming information by adding value to their content. Thus, social media provide users with some possibilities and opportunities such as consumer strength and liberation (Kozinets, 1999), more democratic content (Drury, 2008), and a form of social communication allowing constant interaction among those who have similar interests as well as flexibility and cost-free communication (Hemsley & Mason, 2013). Other scholars such as Shao (2009) and Krishnamurthy and Dou (2008) suggest that social media also allow self-expression and self-realization along with socializing. As a consequence, it can be claimed that social media primarily preferred for communication also provides opportunities and possibilities for identity formation.

On the other hand, there are plenty of studies arguing that new media characterized by interactivity, convergence, and digitization provide possibilities for a variety of alternative socio-cultural and socio-political practices (Wessel, 2014). Lievrouw (2012) states that social media could provide opportunities to create a counter-hegemonic environment which is against power, politics and the dominant culture. Loader et al., (2014) suggests a “networked young citizen” who interacts through social networks forming political attitudes and identities (p.143). Similarly, Velasquez and LaRose (2014) claim that social media could be an alternative space

for collective activism. In addition, Kahn and Kellner (2012) argue that new media spaces with a broad diversity of groups and individuals form new social relations and possibilities for democratic politics.

On the other hand, some scholars claim that social media or new media have a lot of influence on socio-cultural and socio-political practices even though they do not directly affect the social transformations. Dahlgren (2014) argues that social media foster engagement and political struggles but they do not automatically result in political participation, politics and protests. Similarly, in their comparative study on social media use among Turkish and American youth in respect to political activism, Burke and Şen (2018) suggest that new media technologies are mainly used for interpersonal and social needs and that they have revolutionary potentials as a source of motivation and they do not change the world as the other theorists have suggested. Yet, their power and impact on society cannot be ignored due to their rebellious and creative capacity. Thus, social media play an important role in networks of resistance and political debates against dominant power structures. In respect to the *Gezi* uprising, Güner (2016) also highlights the fact that social media use as an alternative press and an organizational tool is influential in political practices; yet, it does not lead to a radical result such as a government change.

Users enjoying facilitated social interactions as an everyday process become more engaged in social media networking sites and that social media gain popularity. Cyberspace allows its users to socialize with each other regardless of time, space and distance, so it leads to a huge amount of rise in the number of the virtual communities (Daniel, 2011). Social media with a growing popularity has become a virtual environment for everyday activities and these virtual communities that consist of like-minded users so that they can interact with their acquaintances and share their common tendencies (Gündüz, 2017). Thanks to the developments in communication technologies, today every culture of the world comes closer to resembling one another (Karaçor, 2009). Therefore, it can be claimed that social media are an influential medium for the emergence of cyber identities and virtual youth subcultures.

Within this context, it can be claimed that the dominant culture of Turkish society is the culture of the middle class who are already involved in global market practices or who are in the process of being proletarians who come from different segments of the working class suffering from the practices of globalized economy

practices. Both groups are already familiar with post-industrialized culture of consumer goods and internet technologies and they use cyberspace for the purpose of communication, and information mostly. Turkish youth who have a basically individualistic attitude and a consumerist identity through lifestyle on cyberspace commonly prefer social media with visual content (e.g. *Instagram*) while dropping the other social media (e.g. *Twitter* and *Facebook*) since they are more likely to reflect a political or religious ideology. Thus, visual content created on social media helps to create virtual identities which also sheds a light on “*a generalized shift from having to appearing*” (Debord, 1994, p. 16) The interactions among these image oriented virtual identities may result in new virtual subcultures centered around common interests and values. Hence, *Instagram* as the most preferable social media platform among young people in Turkey could be a viable environment for studies on virtual subcultures. Furthermore, a specific youth culture with distinctive characteristics like *RKOT* on *Instagram* could also be a viable sample which can help to understand virtual identity formation of youth and theorize contemporary subcultures on cyberspace by making comparisons between the youth cultures of the industrialized and post-industrialized network society. Therefore, it is important to shed a light on 3 main components of this study: *Instagram*, *RKOT* and Subculture.

1.3.1. What is *Instagram*?

Instagram is a social media app designed for sharing visual content (videos and photos) from smartphones. Like *Twitter* and *Facebook*, users need to have an account in order to share posts. There is a personal feed on which they can see the posts of other users whom they follow. Also, there is another feed (explore page) on which popular *Instagram* posts, which are open to the public, appear. Like on other social media platforms, *Instagram* provides its users with features such as liking, commenting, tagging and direct messaging (DM).

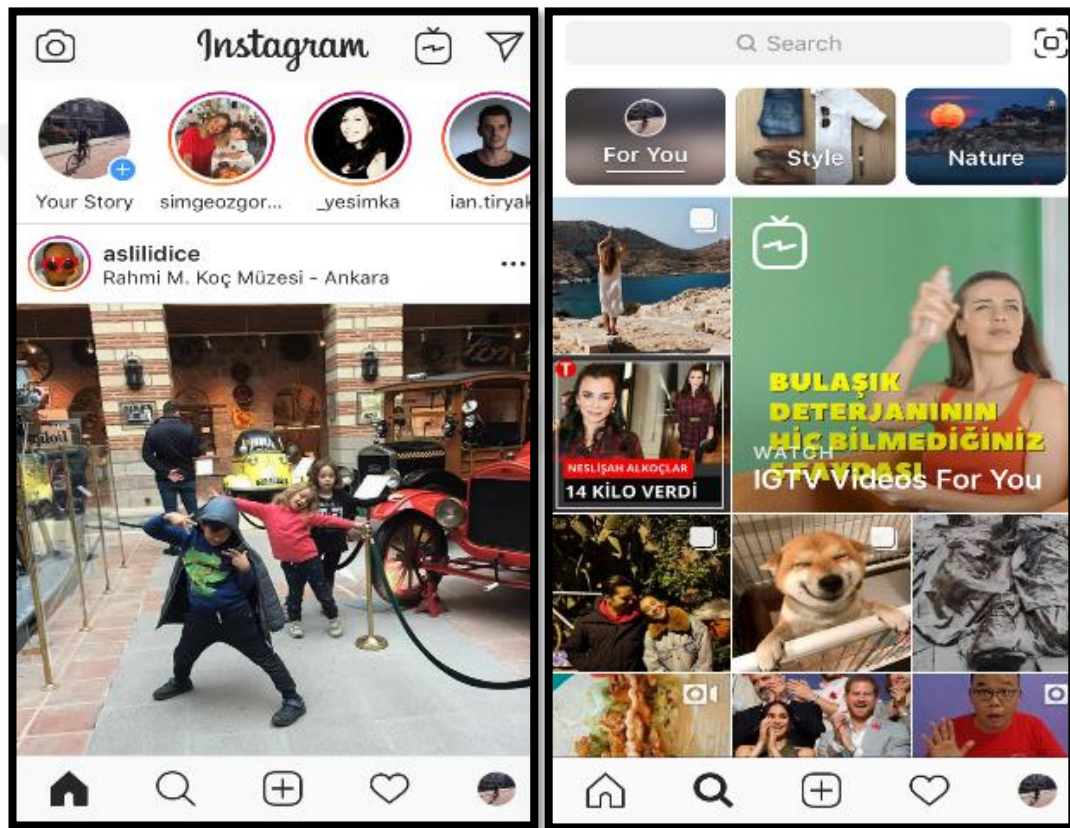


Figure 1.7 *Instagram* personal feed & explore page

Instagram, launched in 2010, has developed greatly with improved filters (up to 23) and editing features (Brightness, warmth, saturation, adjust and so on). Now, users can directly take photos on the app without using the saved photos on their smartphone. After applying the filters and the editing, users are directed to a tab on which they can type captions that explain or conceptualize the visual content they share. *Instagram* captions may also have hashtags (e.g. #RKOT) and tags. On this tab, users can also choose a geographical location, and share the posts simultaneously on other social media platforms (e.g. *Facebook*, *Twitter*) they are registered on. Once a post is published, it drops on the personal feeds of followers so that they can view it.

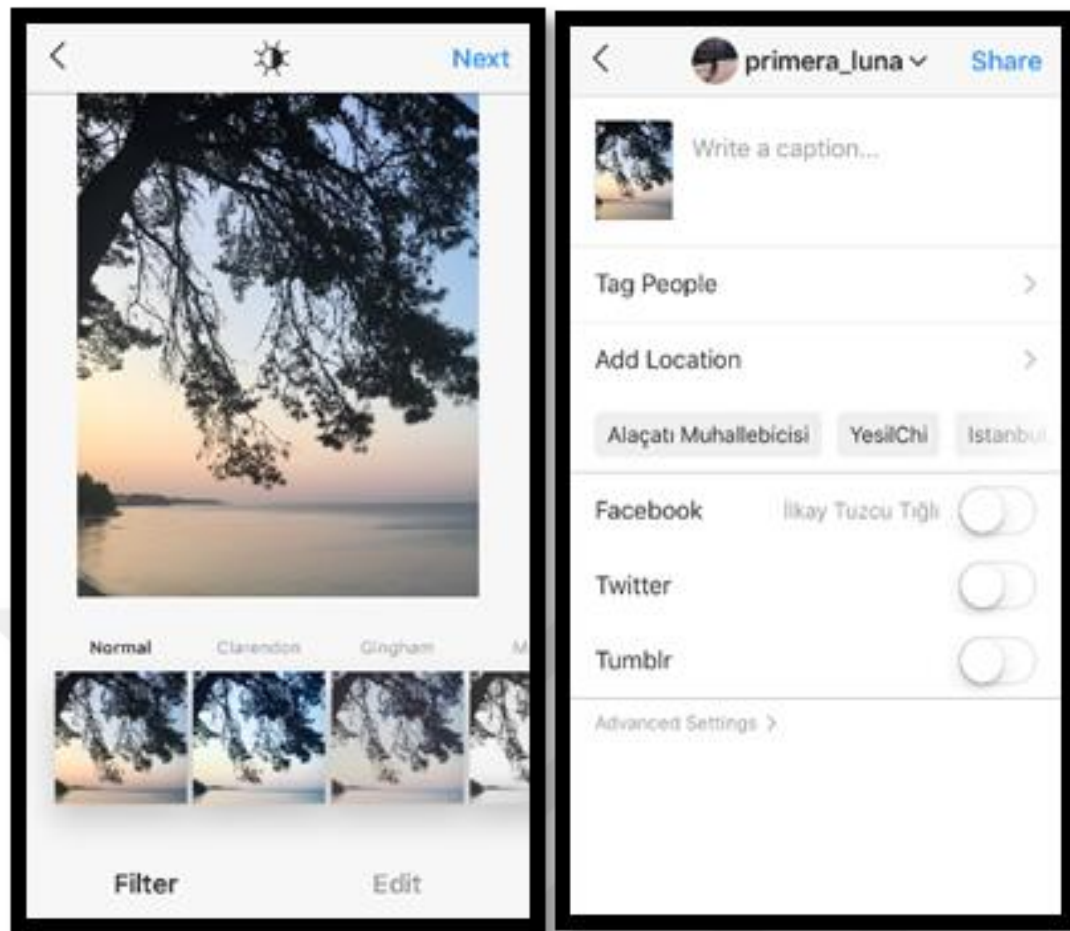


Figure 1.8 Instagram post sharing

As a recently introduced feature, “your story” (the profile photo of the user on the left top of the user’s personal feed) allows the users to share posts that disappear in 24 hours unless they delete it and live videos that the followers can view. However, followers have to click on “your story” to view what the user shares. Once someone views a “story”, the owner of the story can view who has seen it (Moreau, 2018). Also, *Instagram* users can close their account to the public or keep it open. However, they cannot close it to their followers although they can hide their “story” from some followers. Today, *Instagram* has become one of the most popular mass communication tools among users who have various needs and expectations. *Instagram* is a visual, fun, social, interactive social media which is free of charge; thus, not only individuals (e.g. bloggers, influencers, celebrities, common people) but also businesses that would like to maximize profits and groups of people holding similar interests and/or lifestyle use it for different purposes.

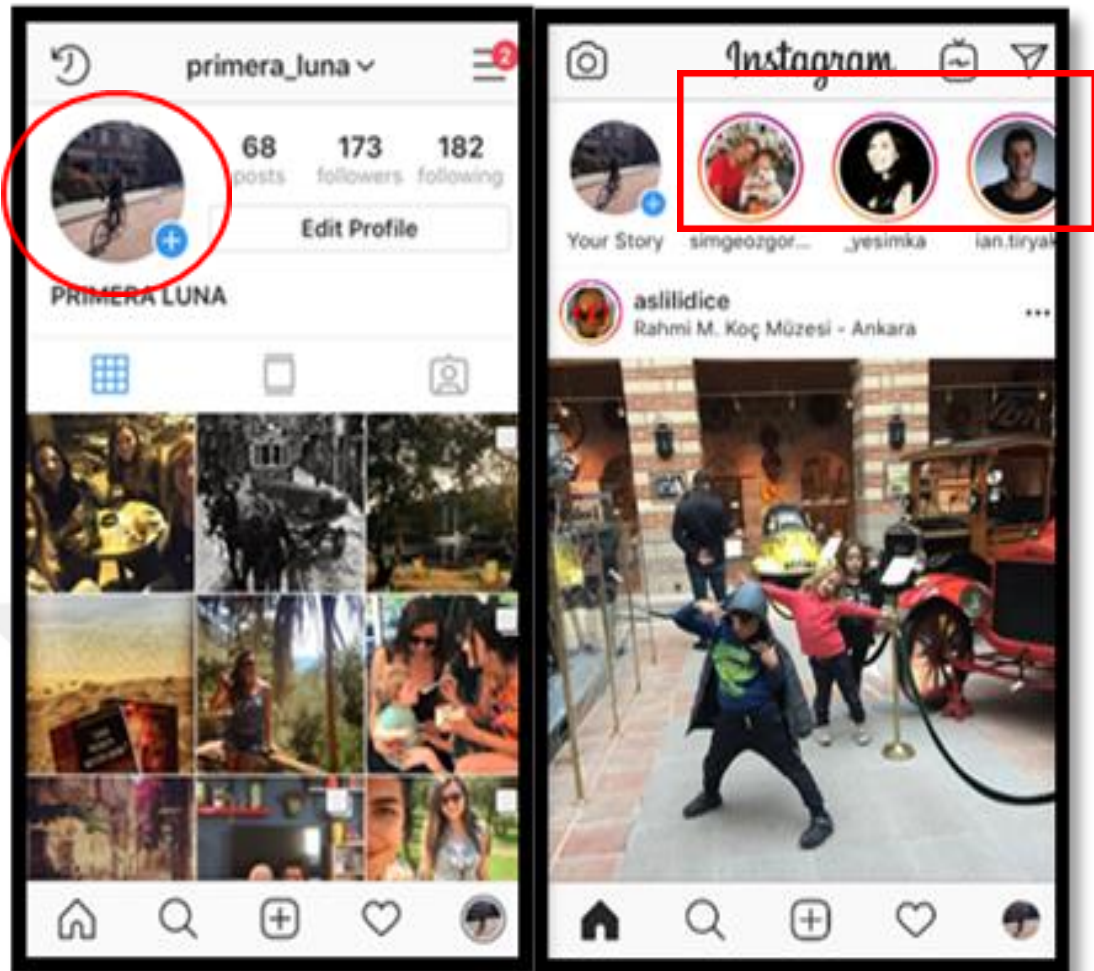


Figure 1.9 An anonymous Instagram profile & stories on the top

In brief, the interactive and user-friendly interface of *Instagram* along with its instant popularity gaining feature appeal to users. Also, its integration with other social media such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* makes it possible to showcase the users' talents to others. Thus, it becomes a platform for everybody (e.g. artists, photographers, bloggers, writers and so on). In addition, *Instagram* creates a marketplace for those who come up with interesting marketing ideas, so by just typing a few hashtags on the search, users can access to loads of products and designs or create and market their own. Furthermore, *Instagram* meets the desire of recognition and likes easily. Captions, hashtags, visual posts beautified with editing and filters, stories, and live videos provide an instant and convenient way of social networking. As a consequence, *Instagram* becomes one of the most popular image mediated social media platform especially for “the young in the network society” as described previously.

1.3.2. Who is *RKOT*?

RKOT (*Rich Kids of Turkey*), as a derivative of *RKOI* (*Rich Kids of Instagram/the Internet*)⁸ launched in England in 2011, is an *Instagram* account compiling photos that display lavish lifestyles of “wealthy”⁹ young people in Turkey. *RKOT* on *Instagram* display their everyday life through luxurious consumer goods and exclusive daily practices. The content of the posts resemble the content of the posts shared by *RKOI* but with fewer conceptualizations and explanations about the photos. Participants of the page consist of young people who are between 16-28. Furthermore, the interfaces of *RKOI* and *RKOT* are very similar although they slightly differ from each other in respect to design such as profile photos and information.

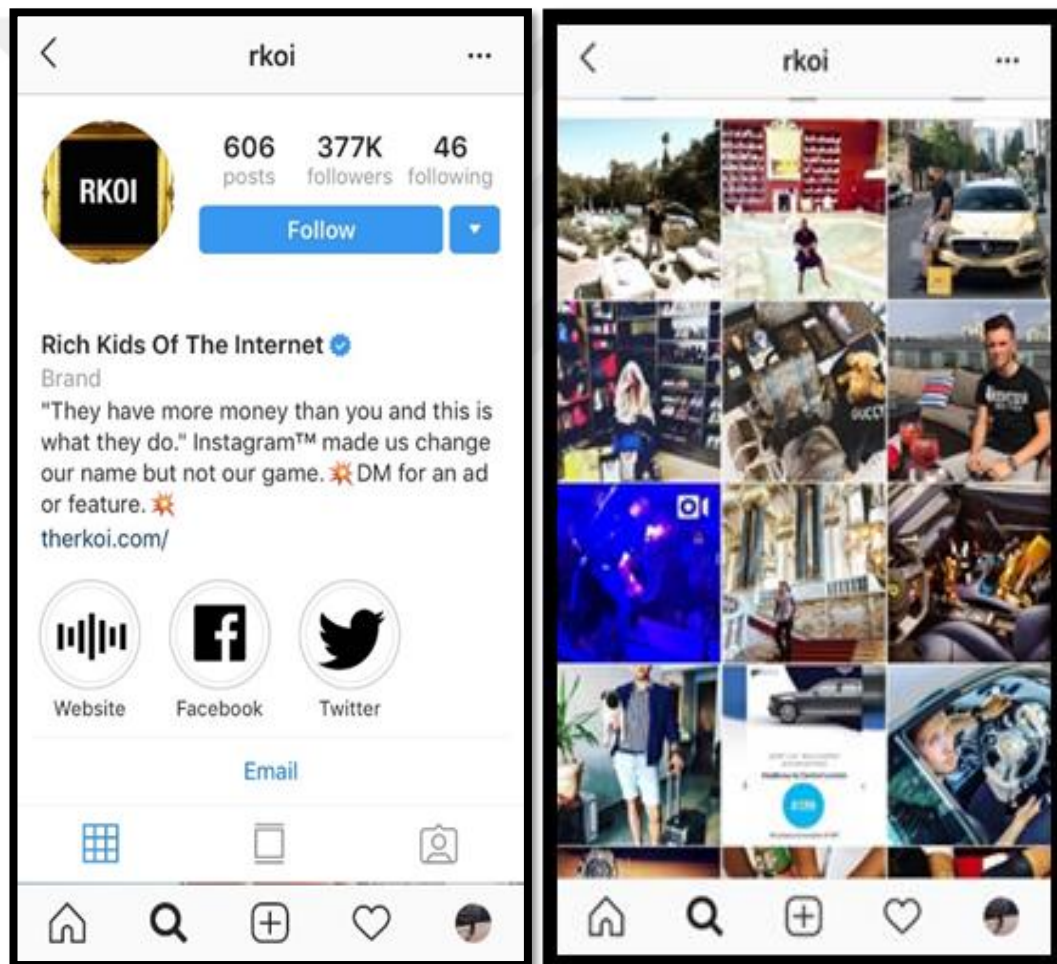


Figure 1. 10 RKOI Instagram profile, Access: 21.12.2018

⁸ Recently known as “*Rich Kids of the Internet*”

⁹ It cannot be claimed that they are literally wealthy in real life since virtual environment allows users to create virtual identities. Yet, the image of the participants of *RKOT* on *Instagram* are taken into consideration for the content analysis of the study in order to insightfully understand identity formation through subculture on cyberspace.

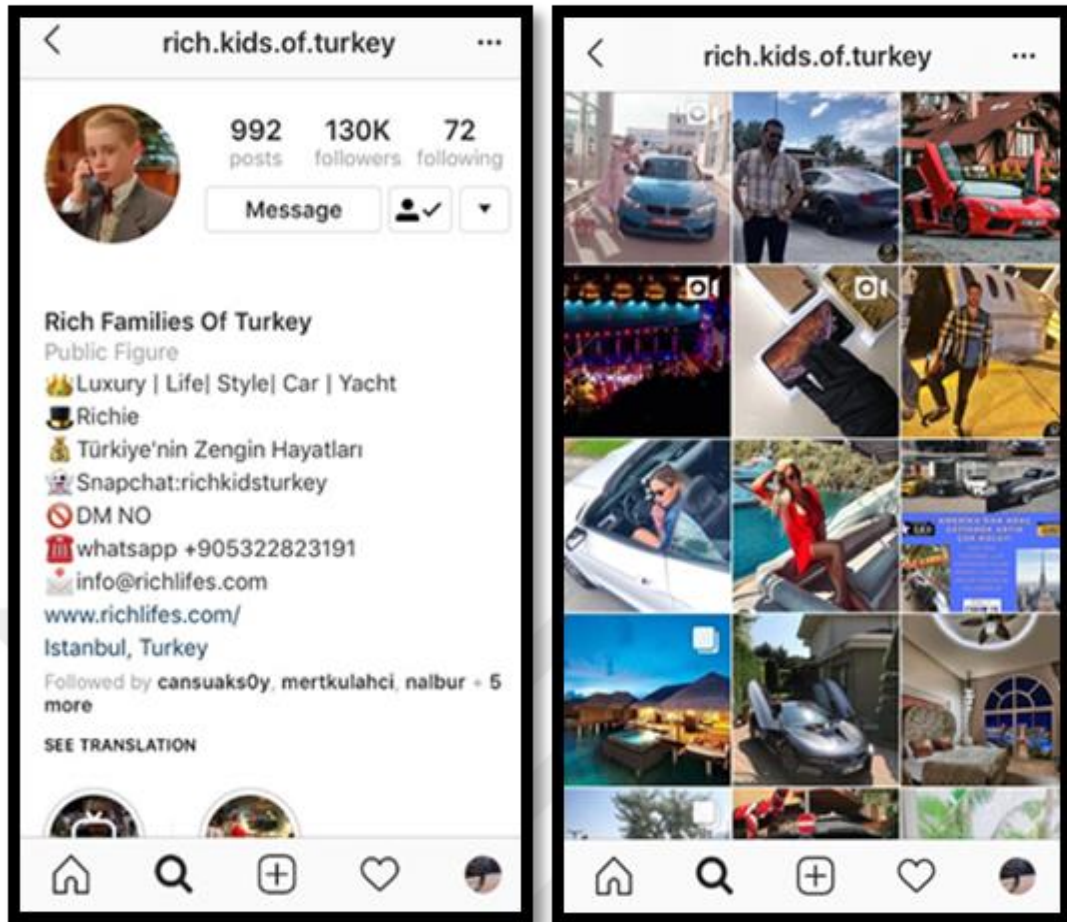


Figure 1. 11 RKOT Instagram Profile, Access: 21.12.2018

RKOT, having a collective identity and 130,000 followers, has been active since 2014 and featured on, not only mainstream media such as *Hürriyet*, *CNN Türk*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Haber Türk*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah* and *NTV*, but also alternative media such as *Onedio*, *Bigumigu*, *acunn.com* and *Ekşi Sözlük*.¹⁰ In addition, the lavish lifestyles of *RKOT* have been a subject for international media like *the Sun* and the *Daily Mail*. All these media have approached the phenomenon as an “outsider” highlighting its pretentiousness and culture of showing off. In order to have a clear typology of the *RKOT*, it is important to shortly describe its parent culture *RKOI*. Thus, in chapter 3, after giving a brief but precise description and media coverage of *RKOI*, *RKOT* is defined and analyzed in detail with respect to core components of subcultural theories.

¹⁰ One of the biggest user-generated online platforms with over 400,000 registered members in Turkey. On this virtual dictionary, anonymous users create and contribute to the content by giving their own definitions, explanations and arguments as well as referenced correct information of virtual socio-cultural and socio-political phenomena and agenda.

1.3.3. Defining Subculture

In the *Chicago School*, the concept of deviance is considered the prominent characteristic of subcultures. Becker (1963) argues that individuals who cannot fully fit into the norms and the values of the dominant culture are labelled as deviant and marginalized as “outsiders” in the society. Similarly, as a contemporary scholar working on subcultural theory, Haenfler (2014) adds that shared marginalization is the reason of emergence of subcultures due to the “outsider” status of participants even though they have different backgrounds in mainstream society.

In the *Birmingham School*, the scholars of CCCS argue that subcultures emerge from power relations and class struggles in the post-war society. Hebdige (1979) emphasizes that subcultures emerge from deviance which is inherent in working class cultures. Thus, lower class young people establish new set of norms which do not match with those of mainstream culture (the culture of the middle class). They do it through the forms of symbolic resistance such as clothes, music, lifestyle and so on. In brief, the notion of subculture in England is defined in respect to class, resistance and style.

Today, the notion of subculture is defined in respect to consumerism and individual identities due to reasons such as interconnectedness, mass consumption and scattering of cultures resulting from globalization (Bennett, 2011). Thus, post-subcultural theories claim that subcultural identities are more fluid today and that they are centered around consumerism and pleasure rather than shared identities and resistance. However, some scholars (e.g. Haenfler, 2014) point out that participants of subcultures can still be engaged in resistant activities even though they are engaged in commercialization and commodification since consumerism has been a part of everyday life.

Looking at studies on subcultural theory, it can be claimed that *RKOT* can be investigated in respect to core themes characterizing each phases of studies on subcultures. Firstly, similar to early American studies and Becker’s *labeling theory*, *RKOT* draws a marginalized “outsider” identity as a group of pretentious wealthy young on *Instagram* in Turkey. Even though early American studies and Becker (1963) focus on ethnicity, and deviance as *delinquency*¹¹, it should be kept in mind

¹¹ Crime among young people.

that social and economic circumstances of the era¹² shape the scope of the subcultural theory. Thus, for example, black marijuana smokers and jazz (dance) musicians became the sample of Becker's study.

Secondly, similar to the subcultures of Britain in the 1960s and 1970s, *RKOT* hold a *class identity* displayed through *style*. *CCCS* scholars and Hebdige (1979) suggest that working class young resist against the dominant culture (culture of middle class) through style. Even though, *RKOT* do not belong to a lower class, it cannot be ignored that they present themselves through their upper class identity which is carried out in a pretentious and spectacular style on *Instagram*. Thus, in-depth investigation of this identity (which is discussed in the interview analyses part) could be considered a new kind of resistance against the dominant culture(s).

Thirdly, similar to the core components of post-subcultural theory, *RKOT* displaying a consumerist identity could also be considered a fluid, pleasure and individual identity centered community engaged in commodification of everyday life due to interconnectedness of the network society. Hence, some post-subcultural theorists claim that today one cannot talk about resistance in respect to subcultures. Yet, some others (e.g. Haenfler, 2014) suggest that subcultures still could be investigated in respect to resistant activities and practices since consumerism is normalized and a part of everyday life in the post-industrial society. Therefore, whether resistant or not, *RKOT* could be still a viable sample to find insightful theorizations on virtual subcultures.

Within this context, regarding the *RKOT* case, for a deeper understanding of subcultural identity formations on cyberspace where interactive users, mediated by images, are actively involved as prosumers, this study seeks an answer to the following research question centering around the follow up questions:

- Can *RKOT* on *Instagram* be considered a cyber-subculture under the current social and economic structures of the network society?
1. How are *RKOT* distinguished on *Instagram*? What are the symbols and signs that display their “rich kids” identity?

¹² E.g. urbanization and increase in crime after Great Chicago Fire, ethnicity issues (Black vs. White) during the 1920s.

2. What subcultural components (e.g. style, resistance, marginalization and so on) are observed in *RKOT*?
3. What is the function of consumerism and social media (*Instagram*) in the formation of this subcultural identity?
4. How do *RKOT* communicate on *Instagram* as active participants?
5. What are the dynamics of subcultural identity formations? Does this subcultural identity relate to real life?

1.4. Methods & Research

After a brief literature review on several disciplines such as the network society, subcultural theory, conspicuous consumption and so on along with a content analysis of *RKOT*, a (n)ethnomethodology is applied in the study. Therefore, the study attempts to create classifications of the social identities and actions of individuals within groups through drawing on the experience of the groups directly, without imposing on the setting the opinions of the researcher with regards to social order, as is the case with sociological studies. Opening an anonymous account with genuine content consisting of personal photos and videos, the *RKOT* and *RKOI* accounts are followed and observed on *Instagram* regularly for having a typology of the subject, and making content analyses of the study. For the following step of the study, 20 participants of *RKOT* are interviewed individually and asked semi-guided questions. These participants are also followed and observed from their private *Instagram* accounts. Thus, the data gained from content analyses and the interviews are interpreted and conceptualized regarding the cyber subcultural identity of *RKOT*. For the designation of the sample and the subjects, the demographics of *Instagram*'s "rich kids" is taken into consideration in both global and local perspectives.

1.5. Importance of the Study

Despite many significant contributions from the Chicago School, *CCCS* and post-subcultural studies, all these theories have important limitations to the findings and theorizations of contemporary collective youth cultures. The Chicago school basically focuses on deviance, which cannot be applicable in all collective youth cultures today since the youth is facing a different conjuncture nowadays. *CCCS* scholars are also criticized for not adopting an ethnographic research methodology, but rather conducting their studies focusing on symbolic analysis of style

misinterpreting or over-emphasizing it. Today's virtual environments increase the risk of misinterpretations of new forms of collective youth cultures since the meanings are mediated through images. In addition, post-subcultural theories define contemporary collective youth cultures as *scenes*, *lifestyle* and *neo-tribes*¹³ centering around individual identities, consumerism, interconnectedness, fluidity, music and fandom. Furthermore, some claim that subcultures do not exist anymore due to these reasons. Thus, aiming to find out more about growing relevance between cyberspace (especially social media) and subculture, this study provides a further contribution to the understanding and conceptualization of virtual subcultural theory in the network society. Unlike the other studies on subculture, it also investigates the phenomenon of subculture compiling the core components of all-time subcultural studies. Most importantly, differently from many post subcultural scholars' netnographic research methods which are carried out through only online tracking and observations of the subject group on cyber subcultures, face to face and *Face Time* interviews with the participants of a virtual environment also suppress the limitations of non-ethnographic research methods of CCCS scholars.

Also, studies on collective youth cultures and subcultures in Turkey are very limited to Western conceptualizations of subcultural theory. In respect to youth subcultures, there is almost no ethnographic study and some subcultures which are shortly mentioned in the literature review such as *Rock'n Roll Gençliği*¹⁴ in the 1950s, *Çiçek Çocukları*¹⁵ in the 1960s, *Devrimci Gençlik*¹⁶ in 1970s, *Yuppie Gençliği*¹⁷ in the 1980s and *Kayıp Kuşak*¹⁸ in the 1990s are considered imitations of the youth subcultures in the west since they did not change the social structures in the society (Doğan, 2000). Yet, this approach representing a determinist attitude is not sufficient to make conceptualizations of collective youth cultures in Turkey. Thus, this study also provides a new perspective which includes core components of all-time subcultural theories and social and economic structures of Turkish society in an attempt(s) to explain new forms of collective identity among the young in Turkey.

¹³ To be explained in chapter 2.

¹⁴ Rock'n Roll Youth

¹⁵ Flower Children

¹⁶ Revolutionary Youth

¹⁷ Yuppie Youth

¹⁸ Lost Generation

1.6. Scope of the Study

In the introductory chapter, subcultural theory and its relevance to the current social and economic structures in society is argued giving a short background information of the network society, dominant culture and youth culture in Turkey. Within this context and setting, giving some definitions and concepts, it is argued that *RKOT* on *Instagram* could be a cyber-subculture in the network society in respect to core components of all-time subcultural theories. In the second chapter, the concept of subculture is explained through a brief literature review. Then, the argument is further developed and supported within the realms of consumerism and subculture making a brief content analysis of *RKOT* in the third chapter. In chapter four, the interviews are analyzed regarding *style, resistance, space and media, reaction, identity and authenticity*. Thus, the findings are conceptualized in respect to contemporary virtual youth subcultures. In conclusion, it is suggested that it is important to consider the relationship between youth subcultures and social and economic conditions of society in order to have an insightful understanding of subcultural theory. Therefore, in the network society, the role of social media cannot be disregarded; in contrast, it should be accepted as a valuable parameter for individual youth identities evolved out of interactions and opportunities in virtual environments.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Cultural Studies and Subculture

Cultural studies, which has a broad definition, focuses on everyday lives and experiences of individuals by practicing on the fields such as gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality in society. For this reason, it centers on research fields such as subculture, popular media, pop music, clothing and sports (Barker, 2004). Cultural studies investigates both mainstream and marginalized groups' uses and transformations of culture so that it can define social groups not only as consumers but also as potential generator of new values and cultural discourses. Bourse and Yücel (2017) argue that one of the key features of cultural studies is its focus on marginalized cultural forms which are excluded from traditional norms and values of society. They explain the appearance of cultural studies in two ways. First of all, cultural studies does not highlight popular culture by excluding politics since it adopts a Gramscian approach based on neo-Marxist theory which is not dogmatic but open to reconceptualizations and critiques. Secondly, it allows the use of symbolic terms to define culture rather than tangible terms. Since this symbolic definition is creative and generic, it does not only reflect economic relations like in Marxist theory does. In contrast, it embraces culture as an autonomous entity which shapes everyday life and a specific perception of society.

Cultural studies, which was born in 1964 with the establishment of CCCS at *Birmingham University*, was initiated by Richard Hoggart (1919-2014), Raymond Williams (1924-1993) and Edward Palmer Thomson (1924-1993) with their invaluable contributions to the field. After the 1960s, under the directorship of Stuart Hall, scholars such as Charlotte Brundson, Angela McRobbie and David Morley also contribute to the field with their studies. As a consequence of the protests in May 1968, a new generation of scholars such as Phil Cohen, Simon Frith, Paul Gilroy, Dick Hebdige, Dorothy Hobson and Paul Willis have become some leading contributors to the studies of CCCS. In the early 1980s, a new generation of cultural studies scholars emerge especially as a consequence of Lawrence Grossberg and Henry Jenkin's works

(Bourse & Yücel, 2017). After the 1990s, cultural studies goes through a fragmentation in various research subjects such as media studies, sexual behavior, women studies, and so on by being hybridized with different approaches. Thus, cultural studies which was born in England spreads over the world centering around media, reception theory and culture.

CCCS scholars Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams consider “*way of living*” as a cultural concept which manifests itself through popular practices, attitudes, uses, tactics and potential positions. This view enables scholars to redefine culture as a tool which allows individuals to make choices about their everyday practices. Within this perspective, cultural studies primarily investigates popular cultures with their social and political consequences by following a critical and interdisciplinary approach. For this reason, it has spread to other fields such as visual studies, postcolonial studies, gender studies and so on after the 1990s although the initial cultural studies focuses on popular culture. For example, Antonio Gramsci’s concept of “ideology”, Theodor Adorno’s concept of “alienation”, Michel Foucault’s concept of “power”, Jacques Derrida and Umberto Eco’s concepts of “text and textuality”, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray’s concepts of “feminism and gender”, Pierre Bourdieu’s... concept of “habitus” are only some works applied in the field of cultural studies. On the one hand, this absence of a specific disciplinary identity causes the emergence of different interest fields and methods. On the other hand, it allows it to have a common discourse and a set of common intellectual references (Bourse & Yücel, 2017).

Within this context, subcultures have been one of the key components of cultural studies since they represent the uses and transformations of culture by both mainstream and marginalized groups. The concept of subculture is usually associated with the minority groups who tend to adopt behaviors and values which contradict the behaviors and values of dominant culture. Numerous variables such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, music taste, aesthetic forms, etc. can bring individuals together under the roof of a specific subculture. However, one of the most significant features of subcultures is that they adopt a specific style which is established through clothes, rituals and practices. Hebdige’s (1979) book *Subculture: The Meaning of the Style* investigates post-war English youth cultures in terms of social class highlighting the significance of style in subcultural formations. In addition, Hall’s (1975) book

Resistance Through Rituals, highlights the fact that subcultures tend to be in relation to the dominant culture in their concerns, forms, practices and styles. In the book, working class youth cultures are analyzed in respect to their rituals as a kind of resistance to cultural hegemony suggested by Gramsci. Hall (1975) claims that power held by the bourgeoisie conducts its ideology through not only economic but also cultural hegemony in the capitalist society. Thus, resistance of subcultures happens to occur through “style” which distinguishes them from the other communities in society. Similarly, Cohen (1972) in his work *Subcultural Conflict and Working Class Community* focuses on generation conflicts of youth groups such as mods, punks, crombies and their way of resistance through “style” against their working class families. At this point, “style” as the key feature of youth subcultures plays an important role in identifying a specific youth group as a subculture at face value. For this reason, the style of *RKOT* on *Instagram*¹, has become the starting point of this study even though, apart from post-war English working class subcultures, they establish a “rich kid” identity on the specific social media.

As cited in Bourse and Yücel (2017), Canclini (2010) suggests that due to the rupture of relations between social classes, social layers and symbolic production, it is necessary to redefine cultures and hybridized qualities. Within this context, hegemony does not disappear but manifests itself in an indirect way. Also, dogmatic understandings of culture transform into critical understandings of it. Nevertheless, this heterogeneity cannot avoid old and new apparatuses of condensation and localization of hegemony. Rules governing the social relations change and require a different analysis since there is a direct relationship between identity and territory. Thus, collective identity which is irruptively established in geographical territory should/must be analyzed in respect to other geographical territories as well since the geographical borders along with cultural differences are considerably blurring and getting loose in the neo-liberal network society.

The basis of subcultural theory emerged in the US through empirical studies on deviant groups regarding delinquency and ethnicity since the socio-economic and socio-cultural structures of the American society then was going through a process of urbanization which caused an increase in the crime rate. During the 1960s and 1970s, the empirical studies of the *Birmingham School* scholars in post-war England opened

¹ To be discussed in chapter 3 and chapter 4.

a new era which focused on class and power struggles in English society. They centered around marginalized youth cultures who used style as a way of resistance. Then, especially after the 2000s, post-subcultural scholars adopted a turn which tends to disregard social backgrounds of members of subculture and rather focused on their individualistic, consumerist practices although some still advocate that social structures are important in relation to subcultures. Today, few scholars argue that the concept of subculture is still alive but should be investigated through a reconsidered conceptualization of the *Birmingham School*. Thus, it can be claimed that both geography and the social structures of the particular society play a crucial role in subcultural theory. Since *RKOT* is a Turkey based youth group which exists in relation to both local and globalized culture, it is important to take a look at the brief historical development of subcultural theory. Therefore, the following sections will briefly discuss the core components and critiques of each era by suggesting a new perspective on referring back to the subcultural theory of *CCCS*.

2.2. A Brief Historical Overview of Subcultural Theories

In the introduction, it has been mentioned that the subcultural phenomenon, emerged in the US first during the 1920s, predominantly centered around the deviant aspects of youth in terms of urbanization, crime and culture. Accordingly, the concept of subculture was further elaborated as counter-culture during the 1960s and the 1970s in the latter research conducted in the UK, centering around class and power relations by offering a neo-Marxist approach (Williams, 2007). Hence, the scholars of *CCCS* predominantly regarded the concept of subculture as the post-war resistance to cultural hegemony. However, almost unanimously, post-subcultural studies have attempted to explain new forms of youth cultural identity rejecting the centralized significance of class-based subcultures which were identified by *Birmingham School* scholars (Shildrick & Macdonald, 2006). Nevertheless, today, some subcultural scholars still emphasize the need to adopt a subcultural theory which is based on class struggles. In addition, very few scholars (e.g. see Jensen, 2017; Williams, 2018) highlight the importance of social structures and of going back to subcultural theory by adopting a neo-*Birminghamian* approach to understand contemporary subcultures.

Thus, a short historical overview of the theoretical framework prepares a good basis for a valid and credible analysis of the subcultural subject: *RKOT* on *Instagram* since the study aims to consider all-time subcultural studies and their core components

in order to prevent concerns on lacking aspects of subcultural theory. Hence, firstly, early studies and the *Chicago School*, secondly, subcultural studies of the *Birmingham School*, thirdly, post-subcultural theory and lastly, recent studies highlighting the importance of a grounding based on traditional subcultural theory are briefly contextualized in the following parts. Each era is also explained in terms of the critiques it gets from the latter subcultural theories. Under the consumerism and subculture part, the significance of conspicuous consumption is discussed to have a better understanding of the luxury consumerist style of *RKOT*.

2.2.1. Early Studies and the *Chicago School*

Chicago School scholars specialized in urban sociology, centering around social problems resulting from immigration and rapid population growth in the city during the 1920s and the 1930s contributed to sociology and later criminology studies by combining theory and ethnographic fieldwork. Hence, the concepts of urbanism, deviance and culture became the prominent components of *Chicago School* scholars. Numerous works such as *The City* (Park et al., 1925), *The Taxi-Dance Hall* (Cressey, 1932), *The Gang* (Thrasher, 1927), and *The Negro Family in Chicago* (Frazier, 1931; updated in 1967) are invaluable contributions to the early studies in? subcultural theory.

Based on Merton's (1938) work, Cohen (1955) develops a strain theory suggesting that inverted set of values and norms of particular subcultures are internalized by their participants. Hence, he brings a new perspective emphasizing that both socio-cultural environment and social structures shape the problems youth face. Yet, they also create an opportunity to find possible solutions to these problems, which means that members of a new subculture find both emotional and psychological well-being within it (Cohen, 1955; cited in Thornton 1997, p. 13). Therefore, both Merton (1938) and Cohen (1955) emphasize the importance of the linkage between the dominant social structures and the behavior of deviant individuals. Similarly, Miller (1958) claims that there is a delinquency subculture but it results from the lower class way of life.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, American scholars further elaborate on the concept of subculture. Cloward and Ohlin (1960) work on delinquent youth subcultures and emphasize the marginalized behavior and practices of working class youth in the mainstream (dominant) culture. They also add that participants of

subcultures are more likely to create new alternative references of subcultures. Matza (1964) considers subcultures as the youth's drift between conventional and unconventional behavior. Some scholars (e.g. Yinger, 1960; Roberts, 1978) focus on the concepts of contra-culture and counterculture. However, Williams and Hannerz (2014) argue that there is a clear distinction between subculture and counterculture. They explain this difference as follows: Countercultures stand for the groups who explicitly display a rejection of a dominant culture while subcultures are described through ascribed differences due to ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status and so on.

Becker's (1963) work on labeling theory suggests a misfit of the marginalized and deviant individuals in the dominant culture since individuals of the dominant culture determine "*outsiders*" based on their own shared values and norms. Hence, "*outsiders*" who fail to meet the values and norms of those in the dominant culture are marginalized from the mainstream society. As a result, "*outsiders*", despite their different backgrounds, can share a collective identity as a result of this marginalization and deviance. In addition, as a consequence of his ethnographic research on dance (jazz) musicians, he argues that there is direct correlation between the labeling experience and career deviance, which is also defined as secondary deviance (Becker, 1963). He suggests that people who are socially labeled as deviant begin to associate themselves with those who are similarly labeled. Thus, these people may undergo a change in their self-concept as a consequence of the labeling experience which may lead to a committed and stable pattern of career (secondary) deviance. In his study, the reason for dance musicians' career choice results from their labeling experience and exclusion in conventional group relationships. Hence, labeling theory and career (secondary) deviance may shed light on understanding subcultural formations.

All in all, the *Chicago School* has been the father of subcultural theories due to its heavy emphasis on an ethnographic and empirical approach to youth deviance and delinquency regarding ethnicity, immigrants and poor working class even though the scholars of the *Chicago School* do not explicitly define themselves as subcultural theorists (Williams, 2007). Accordingly, *Chicago School* approaches are categorized as functionalist and symbolic interactionist that focus on deviance issues. Earlier functionalist theories claim that deviance and criminal activity result from economic circumstances and needs. However, later theories based on symbolic interactionism

emphasize the importance of social class rationale since they claim that deviance is embodied as a subcultural participation as the consequence of socio-cultural and environmental problems rather than individual personal traits (e.g., psychological disorders, moral failings and so on).

Post-subcultural scholars (e.g., Williams, 2007; Baron, 2007) claim that North American subcultural studies which mostly focused on criminal work lack in-depth analyses of youth culture since they mainly focus on effects and correlations although some scholars (e.g. Ferrell, 1999) state that culture was still an analytical part of their studies. In addition, early studies of the *Chicago School* are considered to be suffering from their over-deterministic approach on the linkage between crime and subculture since they consider only desires and economic needs correlations while discounting or minimizing other variables (e.g. Holt, 2007; Williams, 2007). Also, studies are criticized for being limited to only poor and minority subcultures in the large cities. Nevertheless, sociological studies carried out in the *Chicago School* are considered the basis for the subcultural theories carried out in England after the 1960s regarding marginalized and collective youth identities emerging in the dominant culture.

2.2.2. Subcultural Studies of the *Birmingham School*

Unlike the work on criminally deviant subcultures of the *Chicago School*, the subcultural studies in CCCS at *Birmingham University* focused on social class differences and the resistance of youngsters in the 1960s and the 1970s (see e.g. Cohen, 1972; Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). Until the time when Willmott (1969) and Downes (1966) published work on the lives of working-class adolescents, there was no serious empirical studies on British youth cultures although Hoggart (1958) and Williams (1958) did some sociological initiative work on the working class and everyday life. Grimshaw's (1978) unpublished Ph.D. thesis on structures of masculinity in respect to family and politics, McRobbie's (1978) work on youth culture and gender socialization, Willis's (1977) work on cultural reproduction, labor processes and education, and Hobson's (1980) work on domestic experiences of housewives and media discourse are some examples of ethnographic studies of CCCS.

Cohen (1972) focuses on young individuals from the working class and suggests that youth groups in England attempted to compensate for the drawbacks of WW2. As a consequence of industrial revolution, the working class went through rapid

social and economic changes during the 1960s and the 1970s.² The British government which experienced the social unrest had to legislate for the rights of oppressed people in society (e.g. women, the working class). Thus, social laws in relation to education, divorce, abortion, women's rights, etc. were liberalized. As a consequence, the working class youth who were more educated and ready for a career had the opportunity for accessing consumer goods unlike their working class parents. Thus, they attempted to fill the gaps which remained from their parents' generation without completely breaking away from the roots of the working class but creating a symbolic relationship with the middle class lifestyle through style³ (Bourse & Yücel, 2017). In other words, the working class youth of England having more opportunities for access to consumer goods as a consequence of industrialization were frustrated due to socio-economic obstacles to achieve a better living standard. Subsequently, they joined together by being marginalized from the class structure and by resisting against it. The subcultures such as *beatniks*, *skinheads*, *hippies*, *mods*, *rockers*, *bikers* and others having emerged in the 1960s led to empirical studies of CCCS scholars who claimed that members of youth subcultures use style and rituals as a manifestation of resistance against the mainstream culture and parental power.

In his distinguished work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Hebdige (1979) suggests that subcultures represent “noise” (as opposed to sound) in reality and on media, thus subcultures are “*not only a metaphor for potential anarchy ‘out there’ but an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation*” (p. 90). Hebdige (1979) explains this system of representation as “style” which stands for an intentional communication form. Based on Willis's argument in Hall and Jefferson (1976) Hebdige defines “style” as a tool that provides an orderly system in a subculture even though it is considered disorderly by those who are outside the subculture. Subcultures generate style through commodity products in various ways because these commodity products are not sufficient to create a subcultural style. Thus, subcultures create a “style” through appropriation, subversion, and bricolage to display resistance against the dominant culture. Hence, scholars of CCCS emphasize the significance of power relations resulting from class division in respect to subcultures and social structure.

² See Introduction for further discussion.

³ Mods who wanted to look like white-collars established a style through tailor-cut suits, skinny ties, Vespas, etc. can be a good example of this.

Especially working class culture and the dominant culture are discussed regarding the symbolic resistance of subcultures against the dominant parent culture.

In brief, CCCS scholars follow a neo-Marxist approach centering around the implicit connections between hegemony and culture. Hebdige (1979) claims that deviance is the source of subcultures which usually derive from working class individuals and cultures. Thus, they need to create new forms that do not confirm to the norms and values of the dominant culture to manage their socio-cultural and socio-economic problems resulting from class and power relations. Accordingly, he adds that subcultures often taking the objects and styles of the dominant culture appropriate them into new ideological meanings and symbolic forms of resistance. However, CCCS scholars (e.g. Hall & Jefferson, 1976) find this symbolic subcultural resistance too illusory to change inherent socio-economic and socio-cultural structures since it has very little impact on the dominant culture.

In addition, English subcultural studies give a primary importance to mass media. Numerous studies and research highlight the fact that mass media which used to be seen as the one and only agent of dominant ideology is claimed to be interpreted differently by different groups and individuals due to social and economic structures (e.g., Hall, 1973 and Hobson, 1980). Hebdige (1979) claims that “*style in particular provokes a double response*” (p. 93), which means that commercialized culture makes it a celebrated fashion while academia and media feature it as a social problem. Subcultures attract the media’s attention due to their stylistic innovations and cacophony, subsequently deviant or anti-social acts (e.g., swearing, vandalism, fighting) which are exposed by the rule-makers. As a consequence, the combination of deviance and identification of distinctive behavior provokes and disturbs the authorized codes (Hebdige, 1979). Hence, the notion of deviance is also the very element of British subcultural studies since it is used to identify distinctive behavior of British youth subcultures through style (e.g., mods, beatniks, teddy boys, etc.).

However, the subcultural approach of CCCS scholars are criticized by post-subcultural scholars for overemphasizing and subsequently misinterpreting class, style and resistance (see e.g., Thornton, 1995; Gelder & Thornton, 1997; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003). In addition, lack of ethnographic methods (see e.g. Cohen, 1997) as well as lack of female and queer subcultures in subcultural studies of CCCS are

considered to cause potential misinterpretations of an individual's practices and style. Nevertheless, many post-subcultural scholars (e.g. Loader, 1996; Bose, 2003; Blackman, 2005; Shieldrick & MacDonald, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2015) claim that CCCS subcultural theory is still applicable since it examines cultural practices of young people in a particular socio-cultural and socio-economic context.

2.2.3. Post-subcultural Theory

In the late 1990s, the concept of subculture was replaced with an alternative theoretical paradigm: "post subculture" (Robards & Bennett, 2011). Although post-subcultural theory is claimed to be not unified, Muggleton and Weinzierl (2003) claim that there are two main approaches in the post-subcultural theory: one completely abandoning CCCS work and replacing the term subculture with other terms and another criticizing CCCS subcultural theories; accordingly, establishing a new framework centering around the core components of CCCS.

Scholars adopting the first approach attempt to use new terminologies replacing the term of subculture such as "*scenes*" (Straw, 1991; Shank, 1994), "*neo-tribes*" (Bennett, 1999), "*lifestyle*" (Bennett, 1999; Miles, 2000), "*subchannels*" (Singh, 2000), and "*temporary substream networks*" (Weinzierl, 2000). However, the majority of these new terminologies (e.g., lifestyle, tribes, scenes) remains limited to popular music practices of youth subcultures. Hesmondhalgh (2005) argues that these replacements for the notion of subcultures should be reconsidered even in the popular music practices of youth cultures since they are two plagued terminologies which lack an explanation for the relation between the music and the social. Although some scholars (e.g. Luckman, 2003; Cummings, 2006) have highlighted the importance of this new terminology in the post-cultural turn, the notion of subculture has remained important for others.

Scholars adopting the second approach (see e.g. Thornton, 1995; Muggleton, 2000; Chaney, 2004;) have suggested that contemporary youth culture is no longer considered as a direct reflection of "class background" but rather "a product of individual choice" with the heightened reflexivity in late-modern consumer societies. The concepts of resistance and incorporation of CCCS scholars are criticized to be too limited to explain the significance of media, commercialization and internal stratification in subcultural formation (Gelder & Thornton, 1997). In addition, they add that the homological and illegitimate approach of CCCS scholars to the working

class and the concept of subculture ignores the individualistic bias. Cohen (1997) criticizes CCCS subcultural studies for lacking a legitimate explanation for the reason of different responses of individual youths to the same circumstances and pressures although they come from the same class.

Muggleton (2000) suggests that post-subcultural studies largely focus on the view that *“youths from different social backgrounds can hold similar values that hold their expression in shared membership of a particular subculture”* (p. 31). Furthermore, they highlight subculture style formed by only consumption regardless of the *“modernist structuring relations of class, gender, ethnicity or even age span of youth”* (Muggleton, 1997, p. 199). Nevertheless, some scholars still highlight the importance of class even though they claim that it should not be approached as deterministically as CCCS scholars did. Hodkinson (2004) and Shildrick & MacDonald (2006) suggest that the critical role of class-based inequality in many neighborhoods and regions in youth identity and leisure resources is still inherent in subcultural studies although post-subcultural studies are mostly based on an increasingly uncertain, individualized consumer society with shifting, fluid identities (Hodkinson, 2015). Jensen (2006) claims that the significance of class position in subcultural theories today has shifted; yet, not lessened. Similarly, Macdonald (2001), Nayak (2003), Bose (2003), Pilkington (2004) have carried out studies on “deeply divided youth cultures” especially with economically disadvantaged young people, which shows that social class still must be an element of subcultural studies.

Accordingly, post-subcultural scholars center around individual participation in subcultures rather than the collective identity of a particular subculture. However, social structure remains one of the fundamentals of defining subcultures even though the categories of age and class are abandoned (see e.g. Williams, 2011). Similarly, Xiao (2015) highlights the significance of the social context in understanding the formation of subcultures. Therefore, despite an individualistic non-determinist approach of post-subcultural theorists to subcultures, social structure is the key element defining subcultures.

In addition, post-subcultural theorists critique CCCS subcultural theory for overlooking the commercialization and consumption patterns and practices of the contemporary society. Hodkinson (2015) claims that post-subcultural theories influenced by Gidden’s (1991), Beck’s (1992), Bauman’s (2000) and Maffesoli’s

(1996) post-modern works center around loosely bounded and ephemeral groupings which consist of individual young consumers in an individualized and increasingly uncertain society in which identities are fluid. For example, Muggleton (1997) argues that subculture style is merely formed through consumption regardless of other variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, class and so on.

2.2.4. Back to Subculture: Rethinking Subcultural Theory of CCCS

Some scholars still claim that the concept of subculture should be reconsidered and continue to be used as a traditional framework and terminology in youth cultures. Williams (2018) explains that Australian scholars of subcultural theory (see e.g. Osgerby; Kelly; White; Woodman & Wyn in Baker et al., 2015) do “*not only refer to the CCCS subcultural theory but also to its distinct development and deployment*” (p. 3). Similar to Kelly and White, he thinks that some post-subcultural theorist’s (e.g. Bennet, 1995) definition of subcultures is only centered around the CCCS framework so neglect a big amount of non-CCCS literature that helps to make a richer analyses of subcultures. For example, Bennett (1995), Maffesoli (1996), Malbon (1999) highlight individuals’ temporal identities by shifting away from fixed group identities of subcultures suggested by CCCS. They argue that since the identities are fluid, the groups around which these individuals merge are also fluid. However, there are some scholars who do not agree with those who support this post-subcultural turn, since they state that strongly imposing the necessity of applying a post-subcultural conceptual framework damages the validity of other subcultural perspectives which are equally interpretive.

White’s definition of subculture draws on the integration of other traditions, for example. Thus, he claims that the concept of subculture is still applicable. Woodman and Wyn in Baker et al. (2015) draws attention to and criticizes the post-cultural studies’ approach to youth cultures that emphasizes subjectivity regardless of social structures. They claim that social structures are a significant component for the study of subcultures; thus, the subcultural theory of CCCS is a reflexive and dynamic process. In addition, Noble in Baker et al. (2015) claims that subcultural theory still offers a precise tool to analyze identity formation through marginalization.

Similar to Williams and Australian scholars, Hodkinson (2002; 2015), Greener and Hollands (2006), Blackman (2005), Shildrick and MacDonald (2006), and Gelder (2007) oppose the idea that the concept of subculture is outdated and not efficient

anymore. They argue that with a little updating, the subcultural theory of CCCS can still be viable in subcultural studies since there is enough merit in the CCCS's theory (Lohman, 2017). For example, Hodkinson (2002; 2004) focuses on the four indicative criteria of "*identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness, and autonomy*" (2002, p. 26) since he argues that subcultural theory can go beyond working class resistance considering diversity of cultural practices and individual identification and cohesiveness. For this reason, he considers goths in the UK in the 1990s as a subculture. Similarly, Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) critique post-subcultural scholars for overemphasizing the structure. They argue that post-subcultural scholars tend to dismiss the interaction between agency and the structure in subcultural theory since they misinterpret the individual's agency. Thus, Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) advocate a subcultural theory by stating "*social divisions still shape youth cultural identities*" (p. 126). They also highlight the importance of culture and biography along with structure.

By adopting a post-subcultural perspective, Bennett (1999) suggests that subcultures today should be called "*neo-tribes*" since they are fluid, unstable and consumerist individuals. However, like other scholars who oppose the post-subcultural turn, Blackman (2005) critiques Bennett's thinking due to its dangerous proximity to neo-liberalism. He later claims that "*post-subcultural theory is unable to provide depth and relevance at a structural and cultural level of analysis*" (Blackman, 2014, p. 508). In addition, Pilkington and Omel'chenko (2013) emphasize the significance of social structures rather than structure or culture since they argue that individuals' negotiations of these social structures that include and exclude young people are key to subcultural studies.

Furthermore, some theorists oppose post-subcultural theorists since they ignore the element of class in current studies on subcultures. For example, Hollingworth (2015) and Jensen (2017) draws attention to the importance of class in subcultures even though it should be considered and theorized differently today due to its highly different and complex structures resulting from neo-liberalization and post-industrialization (see also Lazzarato, 2009; Wacquant, 2012). Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) also critique the post-subcultural scholars' attempt to dismiss the notion of social class by ignoring any potential of class background in youth culture.

As a consequence, like Williams (2011; 2018) and others, Lohman (2017) also advocates going back to subcultural theory by highlighting a model of intersubjectivity suggested by Crossley (1996). She claims that the meaning which is created and shared through the relationships among members of a subculture can help to have a better understanding of the connectivity and the foundations of subculture. Thus, drawing upon Williams's (2011) "*communication interlocks*", which means that subcultures are not restricted to specific areas or groups since they can spread through any type of interactions, she adopts the view of going back to subcultural theory.

Taking a step further, Jensen (2017) suggests a neo-Birminghamian conception of subculture and claims that such a conceptualization is useful for analyzing subcultures since it has the potential to "*maintain the theoretical richness and analytical depth of the subcultural theory*" (p. 6). He states that the work of the CCCS's has been considered lacking gender, race and ethnicity issues in relation to class. For example, McRobbie and Garber, (1975) and McRobbie (1980;1990) have criticized CCCS for its male dominant theoretical work which does not critically focus on misogyny and masculinism in subcultures (Frosh et al., 2002). Similarly, Gilroy (1993) and Frosh et al. (2002) have argued that scholars of CCCS legitimized racism among young people who belong to the white working class. In addition, Jensen (2017) claims that its reliance on Marxist theory even though it was not reductionist led to an overestimation of class by romanticizing young individuals as working class rebels. Thus, taking these critiques into account a neo-Birminghamian conception of subculture which allows a way of grasping this complexity is necessary.

In brief, subcultural theory and methodological approaches towards it continue growing although the concept is utilized more critically. Scholars adopting the idea of rethinking and reconstructing subcultural theory criticize post-subculturalist assumptions by rejecting to accept youth as only hedonist and consumerist individuals since a variety of studies (see e.g. Shildrick et al., 2009; Hannerz, 2016) advocate that young people still collectively distinguish themselves from the mainstream society. Therefore, the concept of subculture remains important due to its analytic potential for many youth culture studies even though it is not the best concept for every project (Williams & Kamaludeen, 2018).

As discussed through the historical overview of subcultural studies, particular socio-economic and socio-cultural structures have been key to research the scope(s) of

subcultural scholars. *RKOT* as a virtual and collective youth group are exposed to the established norms and values of the neo-liberal and globalized society. Based on the fact that the emergence of *RKOT* results from a globalized and consumerist virtual and collective identity of *RKOT*, it is important to have a brief overview of globalization and its effect on the individuals of post-capitalist society. Accordingly, based on this and the contemporary literature of subcultural theory, the following part centers around globalization which triggers individualization and consumerism in subcultures.

2.3. Globalization Individualization and Consumerism

Based on the concept of late-modernity, Lohman (2017) argues that the emphasis on the individual along with the issues of globalization have been key to post-subcultural studies. As a consequence of deregulated and privatized economies, people's roles as citizens have shifted onto the individual (Bauman, 2000). Thus, everyday practices of individuals have gone through a change as well. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue that *"people spread their lives out across separate worlds. Globalization of biography means place polygamy; people are wedded to several places at once"* (p. 25). Therefore, the establishment of individualized identity in late-modernity results from the consequences of globalization. Within this perspective, Smart's (2007) theory of "connectedness" can explain the cultural implications influenced by globalization and individualization since she does not find this change radically different from the manifestation of the individual agency in the past.

Appadurai (1996) claims that with the rise of mass media and increased migration in the late 20th century, the way of experiencing culture has gone through a shift due to the features of mass media such as interrogation, subversion, transformation of other literacies. As a consequence, mass migration of people and these new media possibilities have created *"diasporic public spheres"* (p. 4) by making the US only a part of *"a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes"* (p. 31) rather than allowing it to remain as the puppeteer of a world system carried out through images. In other words, globalization has caused culture to flow in multiple directions. Thus, lots of scholars have studied on the issues of "shrinkage" of the world, of continued locality, and of contingent uneven interactions between the west and the rest of the world (Lohman, 2017).

For example, Robertson (1995) has put forward the concept of “glocalization”⁴, borrowing the word from the business sector and grounding it on sociological discourses of globalization regarding the realm of post-subcultural studies. He suggests that “local” identities are constructed in relation to the understandings of the “global”. Thus, the two terms are considered as mutually dependent concepts since they allow a refocusing on the everyday practices of individuals from both local and global perspectives. Drawing attention to its drawbacks, Pries (2005) highlights the fact that the new dimensions which result from the increase in cultural flows and movements are unequally distributed over the globe. Similarly, Hannerz (1992) argues that the multiplicity of the cultural sphere causes an unequal cultural flow even though it enables a deeper understanding of it due to the retention of the center/periphery conceptualizations in the global context.

Like others, Massey (1993) puts an emphasis on the importance of the multifaceted feature of globalization since globalized mobility has a considerable impact on social relations and cultural flow. Thus, Massey (1993) argues that *“Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway-differentiated mobility: some are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it”* (p. 61). Hence, she highlights the potential of globalization for leading inequality rather than the egalitarian aspect of it. Especially this multifaceted feature of globalization is important to understand *RKOT’s* identity construction in relation to the west-based (London) original phenomenon *RKOI*. As a glocalized form of the globalized entity of *RKOI*, *RKOT* will be investigated in the following chapters regarding multiple cultural flows in different territories despite the common virtual media (*Instagram*).

Since subcultural conceptualizations of *CCCS* was considered *“rigid and fixed around structurally determined group identities”* (Lohman, 2017, p. 13), some scholars (see e.g. Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004) developed a post-subcultural theory based on individualization and consumerism. For example, Muggleton (2000) highlights concepts of self-expression, cultural diversity and individual autonomy in relation to subcultures. Thus, he mentions the concept of post-modern “hyperindividualism”, which means the tendency of acting in a highly

⁴ To be discussed in chapter 4.

individualized way rather than in a collective way. Similarly, with his term of “neo-tribe” Bennett (1999) puts an emphasis on the “fluidity” of youth cultures in contrast to the cohesive group identity of subcultural theory by highlighting the fact that youth groups no longer have a rigid style and tastes. He explains this as a consequence of modern consumer society in which individuals consume to get “pleasure” rather than to “symbolically resist” as CCCS suggested. Although he is critiqued by Blackman (2005) and Hesmondhalgh (2005) for uncritically focusing on the practices of consumerism, he counters these views since he also considers everyday practices (e.g. listening to radio, dancing, watching TV, etc.) of youth groups as a form of consumerism.

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the concept of consumerism in subcultures is not a new component that has emerged with the post-subcultural turn. Even though it was considered as a collective practice of post-war Britain, subcultures, consumerism and commodification of subcultures were also inherent in the *Birmingham School*. Since this study aims to be grounded on subcultural theory by drawing upon some conceptualizations of post-subcultural theory the following parts will discuss consumerism, conspicuous consumption and subcultures as *RKOT* display a collective consumerist identity which is associated with conspicuous consumption based on luxury.

2.3.1. Consumerism and Subcultures

Schouten and McAlexander (1995) argue that as a consequence of identifying with certain objects and activities people also identify with other people and it results in a subculture of consumption. Thus, a set of common values and a unique ethos determine the group’s unifying consumption patterns. Post-war subcultures during the 1960s and the 1970s (e.g. skinheads, punks, hippies, etc.) were defined through symbolic boundaries that differentiate them from the mainstream society. These symbolic boundaries were established through consumer goods and clothing that represent a distinctive style. In other words, post-war subcultures of England established a fundamentally different identity from youth groupings before the war as a consequence of consumerism and mass media.

Arnold and Wallendorf (1994) argue that translating “*abstract values into a variety of actual meanings in practice*” (p. 495) helps to understand culture, so subcultural consumption is a way of creating contested meanings and idealizations

(Kates, 2002). Traditionally, subcultures display different or oppositional lifestyles and shared meanings towards the mainstream, dominant culture, so they invent and attribute recognizable and easily interpretable oppositional meanings through consumer signs and style (Brake, 1985). Hence, consumption in subcultures is not only a way of collective-distinguishing from the dominant, mainstream society but also a way of being commercialized.

Although he rejects this traditional approach of consumerism in his later study with Potter⁵, Hebdige (1979) explains this standard view of consumption like this: first, subcultures arise around particular subverted and rebellious consumption patterns, then they start to pose a threat to the dominant culture. However, the more popular subcultures become, the more corporations realize this “coolness” and sell it as a non-threatening version of them to society. This is defined as co-optation. Post-war subcultures of England (e.g. mods, punks, beatniks and so on) became the targets of commercial companies since they attempted to create identity through consumer items and clothing. Therefore, past studies emphasize that identities, shared meanings and boundaries of subcultures are accomplished and reinforced through the consumption patterns and the practices of the participants of spectacular subcultures.

With the post-subcultural turn, the concepts of consumption and identity formation have gained a different perspective. Consumption patterns and practices of subcultural participants are considered a way of establishing collective values and norms within the group but also a way of establishing social status. Thornton (1995) claims that subcultural participants distinguish themselves from the larger social world of middle class sensibilities, media and parents by maintaining a distance and division through consumer patterns and practices. Thornton (1995) does not consider media as oppositional to subcultures and she adds that these young rave consumers; in contrast, are fashionably celebrated by the media for their formation and maintenance. Similarly, Kozinets (2001) highlights the significant role of media for propagating and institutionalizing the meanings of consumption since commercialized practices and patterns of both markers and consumers serve as interactive processes between the subcultures and quasi dominant culture or mainstream society by establishing fluid and unstable boundaries (see e.g., Barth 1969; Costa and Bamossy, 1995).

⁵ To be discussed in chapter 4 regarding the concept of ‘coolness’ in subculture.

However, some scholars (e.g. Blackman, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2005) critique this individualistic consumerist determinism of post-subcultural theory since it fails to provide a critical view of consumer culture. They claim that it contributes to the celebration of consumerism, in contrast. For example, Both Blackman (2005) and Hesmondhalgh (2005) oppose Bennett (1999) since he underestimates class and other social structures, focusing rather on individuals as active consumers who have self-constructed life styles and choices. However, those who oppose this approach of post-subcultural scholars fail to consider that subcultures of the twenty first century do not only consist of underclass youth who suffer from the problems that belong to the working class.

In addition, Bennett (2005) claims that both Hesmondhalgh (2005) and Blackman (2005) conceptualize youth consumption ignoring a wide range of activities that require passive consumption and participation rather than an active and creative one. Thus, they do not need a particular disposable income for the activities such as watching TV, listening to the radio, dancing and so on. Nevertheless, Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) argue that post-subcultural theorists fail to consider social divisions and class structures that shape leisure activities, subcultural practices and identities of youth. Similarly, Martin (2009) draws attention to the continuing importance of class structures and emphasizes that marginalized “chavs”⁶ with limited material prospects and job opportunities being excluded from the mainstream economic system “*are subject to the endless enticement of consumerism and an aspirational culture of acquisitiveness*” (p. 141). Therefore, whether they belong to the lower class or not, subcultures have been a subject to consumerism and commercialization.

Hence, despite differences in their approaches towards consumerism, subculture scholars claim that consumption has a significant role in identity formation and boundary maintenance of subcultures. Kates (2002) states that consumption patterns of subcultures provide insights to understand “*subculturalists*”⁷ *capacity for constructing reflexively understood symbolic boundaries, a topic that requires some theoretical revisiting*” (p. 384). For example, Hebdige’s (1979) mods, teddy boys,

⁶ “A young person, often without a high level of education, who follows a particular fashion’, and who hangs around in shopping centers, wearing designer labels, who sees wearing branded baseball caps as a status symbol and, if they are girls, wearing big gold jewelry or ‘bling’” (Martin, 2009, p. 135).

⁷ Members of a subculture.

skinheads and so on, Fox's (1987) punks, Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) *Harley Davidson* enthusiasts, Belk and Costa's (1996) mountain men, Kozinet's (2001) *Star Tek* fans, William's (2006), straightedge subculture, Brodin et al.'s (2016) *Sapeurs Parisiens* stand for a variety of consumers who come from different social structures.

Today, the biggest difference between the consumerism perspectives of post-war subcultural scholars and post-subcultural scholars is the way they see resistance. While post-war scholars see symbolic style established through consumer goods and clothing as a way of resistance (see e.g. Stuart & Jefferson, 2003), post-subcultural scholars argue that consumerism is carried out for pleasure and individual identity formation rather than a shared identity of the participants of subcultures (see e.g., Bennett, 2011). Nevertheless, some others (see e.g. Haenfler, 2014) point out that participants of subcultures can still be engaged in resistant activities even though they are engaged in commercialization and commodification since consumerism has been a part of everyday life. Similarly, Hebdige and Potter (2008) draws attention to the culture of "quirky" which is the prevailing aesthetic of today. However, rather than approaching it as a way of political counterculture, they invite us to think about the possibilities for political resistance under the circumstances of neo-liberal society. They do not suggest a particular answer to the question they have raised but leave room for any kind of possibilities in the networking society.

Within this context, *RKOT* who form an upper class identity and who tend to display conspicuous consumer behavior is a research-worthy subject since the participants establish a highly consumerist identity and a spectacular style through luxurious consumer goods, lifestyles and choices. This identity and style marginalized in the mainstream culture through media makes *RKOT* an outsider, potentially a subculture. Thus, although *RKOT* do not show any kind of overt political resistance through their consumerist acts and behaviors, a detailed explanation and analysis of this marginalization is discussed in the following chapters. Yet, before starting that, it is important to briefly explain how conspicuous consumption and luxury consumption are effective in subcultural formation.

2.3.2. Conspicuous Consumption and Subcultures

Western society has viewed consumption as a basis to happiness seeking since possessions are considered the biggest source of satisfaction in life (Ger & Belk, 1990). Thus, the concept of materialism which is defined as the significance consumers

attribute to possessions has expanded in other parts of the world throughout the last century (Podoshen et al., 2011). As a consequence, materialism has manifested itself in different ways. The consumer society believes the importance of having more possessions to define the meaning of life and their identity (Annamma & Wallendorf, 1996). Hence, consumption culture, which dignifies goods and services rather than humanitarian values, is associated with private lives and choices by indicating the needs which are unlimited and unsatisfiable (Slater, 1997). In other words, consumption culture and individualization are two important components which mutually depend on one another in today's society.

Cleveland and Chang (2009) argue that the desire for luxury items has taken over the desire for the things for survival due to the need to display wealth to others since people are able to maintain and move up in status. In other words, showing wealth has been assumed to bring societal power. In his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen (1994) points out the significance of discretionary income to publicly manifest one's wealth to gain social status and prestige defining it as conspicuous consumption. Accordingly, consumption is approached not only commercially but also sociologically since it is defined as acquiring services and buying goods to satisfy a need. For this reason, in the following chapters both symbolic and interview analyses of *RKOT* will help us to conceptualize this theory.

Veblen (1994) argues that the psychological mechanisms of a consumer society in which people believe in the necessity of abundant and various types of goods and services in a developed economy is related to conspicuous consumption which is the spending of money to buy goods and services for their own sake. As a result, conspicuous consumption becomes a means of attaining or maintaining social status through discretionary economic power. Like Veblen, Shukla (2008) argues that conspicuous consumption is determined by and carried out through social needs which are mostly based on prestige gaining. Similarly, Trigg (2001) states that individuals' luxury disbursements on consumption and services display their social status. In addition, Goldsmith and Clark (2012) claim that there is a positive correlation between purchase of consumer goods that display status and materialism.

Goldschmidt (1990) states that individuals acquire and display conspicuous goods in order to maintain their status. Consistent with this, Podoshen and Andrzejewski (2012) argues that conspicuous goods as status symbols are used to sustain social order

in a hegemonic process. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) argues that conspicuous consumption patterns and practices have increased over the world, especially in growing economies beside multiple American subcultures. Recent studies especially on Black communities' conspicuous consumption practices have revealed that the socio-economic position of the individuals within the reference group is the determiner of conspicuous consumption spending (see e.g. Charles et al., 2009; Mazzocco et al., 2012; Kaus, 2013). For example, in Mazzocco et al.'s, (2012) study, black consumers identified with the lower class tend to spend more on upper class consumer goods compared to other black consumers identified by race.

Podoshen et al. (2014) in their study on American hip-hop subculture and conspicuous consumption suggest that hip-hop could have an impact on materialism and conspicuous consumption attitudes regardless of race. Like Rucker and Galinsky (2008), they advocate that consumer groups could engage in conspicuous consumption behaviors in lower social hierarchies. Thus, in American hip-hop subculture which is basically constituted by African American youth, the significance of materialism and conspicuous consumption cannot be overlooked.

Another study conducted by Brodin et al. (2016) highlights the fact that *Sapeurs Parisiens*, a subculture of African dandies, create a grotesque genre by the process of hybridization and utilization of luxury consumer goods. Kapferer (2008) advocates that the authoritarian discourse of luxury brands traditionally governs the conformist and ostentatious consumption which lays down social distances. However, Heilbrunn (2004) in Brodin et al. (2016) claim that luxury practices are developing and easily and widely accessible due to international varied and evolved luxury practices. Brodin et al. (2016) focus on marketing strategies regarding subcultures, luxury and mimetism⁸ and aim to collect data which help luxury brands to deal with the problem that results from offending their traditional clients since they may give up using their brand after it is adopted by a specific subculture. Brodin et al. (2016) claim that the idea of subcultures as subversive and oppositional collectivities that cannot be dominated by brands can be deformed since as Cohen (1972) states, subcultures cannot be seen as only minorities since they actually come from dominated cultures.

⁸ Imitative behavior in humans, which reproduces (consciously or not) the characteristics of another person or group (Oxford Dictionaries, Retrieved Nov 14, 2018)

Especially, Brodin et al.'s (2016) work is invaluable for the study since it focuses on luxury consumerist practices like in the *RKOT* case.

Within this context, *RKOT* displaying conspicuous consumption behaviors is analyzed in the interviews to have a deeper understanding of importance of social status in subcultures since they have the potential or possibility for adopting an upper-class identity in spite of having a lower social status in reality in order to ascend their status in society. Thus, the following chapter focuses on their spectacular style established through luxury consumer goods, thus their lifestyles and choices are analyzed through photographic and netnographic observations and centers around a deeper understanding of their marginalization from the dominant, mainstream culture symbolically. Chapter four attempts to analyze interviews grounding on subcultural theory to see the relevance between the symbolic and real identity of *RKOT*.

All in all, this section of the study aims to provide a theoretical basis for the scope of subcultural theory in relation to *RKOT*. Since subcultures have always been discussed as a part of cultural studies, the first part of the section focuses on the field of cultural studies and subcultures. In the second part, a brief historical overview of subcultural theory provides a broad theoretical framework for a wholistic approach which is grounded on a reconsidered version of *CCCS*'s neo-Marxist methodology to have a deeper understanding of the collective identity formation of *RKOT* in the following sections. In addition, the last part aims to explain the importance of consumption in subcultures. Thus, especially focusing on individual consumption practices of today's youth cultures, it dwells on the conspicuous consumption rituals of subcultures by linking it to Veblen's (1994) theory which suggests that discretionary income is important in terms of publicly manifesting one's wealth in order to gain social status and prestige. Therefore, these aspects set the ground for both symbolic content analysis and interview analyses of the study.

3. RKOI & RKOT: MARGINALIZED OUTSIDERS

3.1. Marginalization, Subculture and Media: RKOI and RKOT phenomena

Most scholars (e.g., Giddens, 1990; Waters, 1995; Pieterse, 2009) argue that the role of media and communication in the theorization of globalization and the transformation of human society is incontrovertible. Especially with the rapid development of new media, the trend of globalization in human society has accelerated over the last few decades (Chen, 2012). Hence, the borders of subcultures in different locations and under different circumstances are removed by preparing a way to more interconnected and hybridized interactions. Despite this interconnectedness and these hybridized interactions, subcultures remain and function as “outsiders” in the dominant culture.

Haenfler (2014) defines members of subculture as “*marginalized*” individuals who share the same “*outsider*” status regardless of their backgrounds, since they contradict with the values, beliefs and norms of the mainstream society. Accordingly, as all subcultural theorists suggest, media play a central role in the process of this shared “outsider” status by marginalizing and excluding them from the mainstream society through particular labels and discourse. However, media which function as an authority figure to label subcultures also feed subcultural formations by allowing new formations. In other words, on the one hand, media continue marginalizing and commercializing subcultures (Hebdige, 1979), while on the other hand, new media provide more oppositional environments while allowing diffusion of subcultures (Chen, 2012).

Becker (1963) argues that moral entrepreneurs, responsible for rule creation or rule reinforcement, are “*crusaders*” of those who represent outsider identities. In his study, he highlights the fact that marijuana users are labeled as deviant by these moral entrepreneurs: primarily *The Federal Bureau of Narcotics* since they form and shape the public opinion about marijuana users by crusading them. Their campaigns carried out through “*fully pre-written articles to ‘popular magazines’*” (Jones, 1997, p. 3)

function to create an outsider image of marijuana users. In other words, the media of America function as moral entrepreneurs that crusade against “deviant outsiders”.

Hebdige (1979) argues that subcultures symbolically violate the social order of the society that is considered “*normalized*” (p. 19). He adds that this “*normalized*” social order is established by the ruling class and that mass media plays an important role in propagating the ideologies of this ruling class. Hebdige defines subcultures as a form of “noise” that captures the attention of the media. Moreover, he claims that although they are ultimately commodified and appropriated by the hegemonic culture through media, they still have the capacity to transform dominant cultural codes. Thus, like the “deviant outsiders” crusaded against by moral entrepreneurs through pre-written articles and popular magazines, British subcultures are labeled as marginalized identities. In this marginalization process, media center on the subculture’s collective and “symbolically resistant” identity which is regarded as being contrary to the “*normalized*” social order of the society.

Cohen (1972) draws attention to the significance of news media during the 1960s in England that frame the clash between two subcultures: Mods and Rockers. He argues that mass media is the main source of society’s knowledge about social problems and deviance. Hence, borrowing the term from Marshall McLuhan (1964), he defines “*moral panic*” as the public’s concerns about a potential threat that would damage social values and interests. According to Cohen (1972) “*moral panic*” leads to the emergence of the “*folk devil*” that means (an) individual(s) or a group that constitute a threat to societal values or interests. He further claims that certain assumptions of the mass media are linked to “*moral panic*” and help to create the “*folk devil*”. First, media select socially problematic and deviant phenomena that is seen newsworthy to set the agenda and transmit the images and claims by using a discourse of moral panic(s). Then, what “*folk devils*” have done breaks the silence and a claim or accusation is made. Barron and Lacombe’s (2005) *nasty girls*, Marsh and Melville’s (2008) *hoodie-wearing youth* and Lumsden’s (2009) *Scottish boy racers* are some examples of recently studied “*folk devils*”.

Despite her approval of the “*moral panic*” theory, Thornton (1995) criticizes Cohen for only centering on the mainstream publishing media and she investigates the *British dance club* subculture regarding their responses to the impacts of both mainstream and alternative media. Gross (1991) in his study on gay men’s and lesbian

women's media exposure, claims that they are portrayed as “*abnormal*”, “*weak and silly* or *evil and corrupt*” or as “*victims*” or “*villains*” by the mainstream TV shows and newspapers (p. 412). Similarly, Hodkinson (2002) claims that the mainstream media mislead the public opinion by portraying *goths* as a united energized companionship that triggered the *Columbine High School* shootings of 20 April 1999. Griffiths (2010) in his *goth* study on the same topic approves of Hodkinson by emphasizing *goth's* incorrect representation on mainstream media.

Thus, media play an important role in the general conceptualization and acceptance of social values and norms; accordingly, marginalization of subcultures. The terms that define media such as “*moral entrepreneurs*”, “*crusaders*”, “*rule makers*” used by subculture theorists explain the fact that media function to serve the interests of the dominant ideology in the established society. On the other hand, subculture is defined as “*deviant outsiders*”, “*resistant youth*”, “*folk devils*” by the media and so, accordingly, by public functions as a collective identity with shared interests, values and tastes in relation to this dominant ideology. As a consequence, it is important to analyze the media exposure of *RKOI* and *RKOT* and their marginalized identity that challenges social norms and values in the established society within this framework.

3.1.1. *Instagram's Rich Kids and Their Marginalized Media Exposure*

In the introduction, the phenomena of *RKOI* and *RKOT* was briefly introduced by highlighting the fact that they are both *Instagram* accounts compiling photos that display lavish lifestyles of a group of “wealthy”¹ young people both in Turkey and around the world. Excessively used luxurious consumer goods and their exclusive daily practices displayed on *Instagram* are their common characteristics and refer to their “rich kids” identity. In order to have a clear typology of the *RKOT*, it is important to shortly describe its parent culture, *RKOI*.

RKOI , having 377,500 followers and using the caption “*#We have more money than they do, this is what we do*”² , has been featured by numerous media such as *Atlantic Wire*, *Buzzfeed*, *NY Daily News*, *CNBC-E*, *MSNBC*, *The Telegraph*, *Chasejarvis*, *Mailonline*, *Mirror*, *The Washington Post* and so on since a 19 year-old

¹ See the footnote in the introduction

² The account has edited its hashtag: “They have more money than you and this is what they do.” Instagram made us change our name but not our game. ✨DM for an ad or feature✨”

Instagram user Annabel Schwartz's interview article was published in the *Huffington Post* on 20th July 2012. Therefore, the more the media coverage of the phenomenon increases, the more attraction *RKOI* draws.



Figure 3.1 *RKOI* phenomenon Annabel Schwartz
Source: Mailonline, 2012, Access: 20.12.2018

Not only the individual, anonymous new media users but also the mainstream and alternative media have critically reflected on this phenomenon highlighting their ostentatious styles and its contagious effect all over the world. Despite all these critiques, the concept of “rich kids” is carried on by these young individuals with a huge number of followers, contributions and reflections across the world. It has become so popular that a plenty of localized “rich kids” have emerged on *Instagram* labeled with geographical locations where they exist (e.g., *#Rich Kids of Beverley Hills*, *#Rich Kids of London*, *#Rich Kids of Istanbul*).

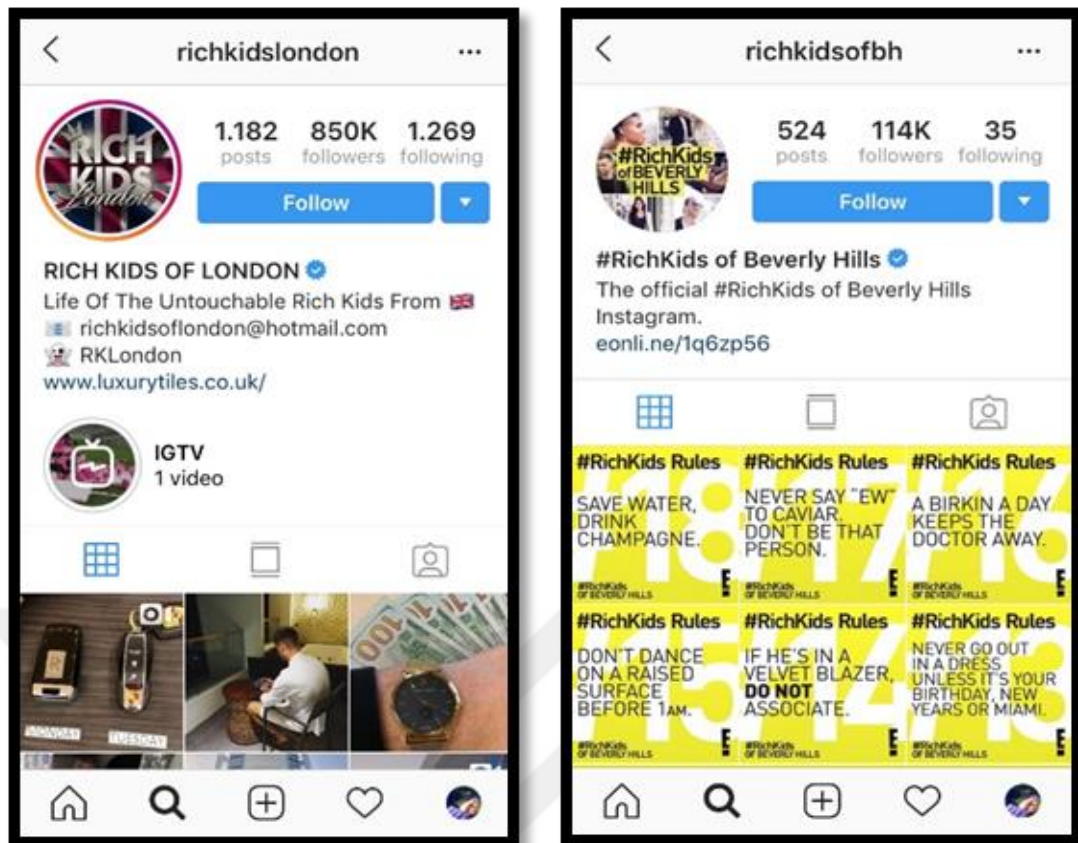


Figure 3.2 Some examples of glocalized RKOI
Source: Official accounts of RKOL & RKOB, Access: 20.12.2018

Martha Cliff has published several articles on RKOI for *Mailonline* pointing out their envy-inducing snapshots, photos of them flaunting their possessions and of destroying possessions for fun, by labeling them as *Instagram's* most outrageous moments. In her article on *Rich Kids of Tunisia*, Cliff (2017) has also put emphasis on their endless holidays, designer gear and supercars stuffed with cash. Similarly, Bobby Palmer (2016) in his article for *THE TAB* critically reflected on RKOI asking “if they are really happy?” and suggesting that “they sponge off their parents since a part-time job won’t coat your Mercedes in Swarovski”.

Daniela Sternitzky-Di Napoli (2017) has also written an article for *Sfgate* saying that “While we may not be able to afford even thinking about the kind of lavish vacations these young people take, there is no harm in living vicariously through their *Instagram posts*”. Chasejarvis (2016) has stated that “But if art (or curation) is aimed to send a message, make a claim, create a reaction, my take is that this Tumblr is worthy of your time – even if it’s to feel the weirdness” and defined them as a “worthy disaster”. Drawing upon Peggy Drexler’s more empathetic psychological work on

these kids, Justine Chen has written another article for *Elitereaders* claiming that *RKOI* are “*insane*” and that “*we should get ready to be jealous*” by drawing upon some captions *RKOI* use³.

Sarah Barns (2016) has written another article on *RKOI* for *the Sun* by defining them as “*spoilt*”, “*jaw-dropping*”, “*pampered*”, “*ostentatious*” due to their “*mind-bogglingly lavish lifestyles*”. Jay Akbar (2016), another author in *MailOnline*, has highlighted their “*shamelessly*” shared photos on social media and mentioned a new social media app for *RKOI* (a photo sharing club app for only exclusive members - £1000 - a month). He also quoted some sentences from *RKOI* members who enrolled in the exclusive club.⁴

Like others, Simone Olivero has also reflected on the photos of *RKOI* defining them as the “*most obnoxious photos of Instagram*” in her article for *Slice*. Rihanna Brinded (2016) from *Business Insider UK* has written another critical article on the “*insanely extravagant life*” of *RKOI* star Julia Stakhiva. Lastly, Natasha Vargas-Cooper (2014), in her article *The Acquisitive Self, Minus Self* has made a critical reflection on the “*exhibition-friendly canons of social media and flaunting*” culture of *RKOI*.

<i>Some headlines on the international media</i>
“ <i>Outrageous photos show how the 'Rich Kids of Instagram' spend their parents' fortunes</i> ” (<i>Business Insider</i> , 2018)
“ <i>INSTA-SHAM Rich Kid who flaunts his wealth on Instagram is hiding a BIG secret... can you guess what it is? This Rich Kid of Instagram shows off his fast cars, wads of cash and Rolex watches... but something's not right</i> ” (<i>The Sun</i> , 2018)
“ <i>It's a hard knock life! Rich Kids of Instagram flaunt their first-world 'problems' - from spilling champagne to choosing which Lamborghini to take for a spin</i> ” (<i>Mailonline</i> , 2018)

Table 3.1 Some media exposures of *RKOI*

Source: *Business Insider*, 2018, *The Sun*, 2018, *Mailonline*, 2018, Access: 21.12.2018

³ “*They see me rollin, they hatin...*”

“*I'm showing off, what are you gonna do about it? Are you gonna stop me?*”

⁴ “*I was surprised that there is no service or social network for rich people, that is not private.*”

“*We think that being rich is boring when nobody sees you.*”

“*I am finally going to be able to find like-minded, young entrepreneurs with who I can connect with.*”

“*I am 100 per cent sure people will download the app to have a sneak peak of our lives.*”

“INSTAGRAM is packed full of spoilt Rich Kids flashing the cash left-right-and-centre. And this guy is no different.”

“This posh guy happily poses propped up against extravagant fast cars, puffing on cigars and even lining his TOILET with \$100 bills.”

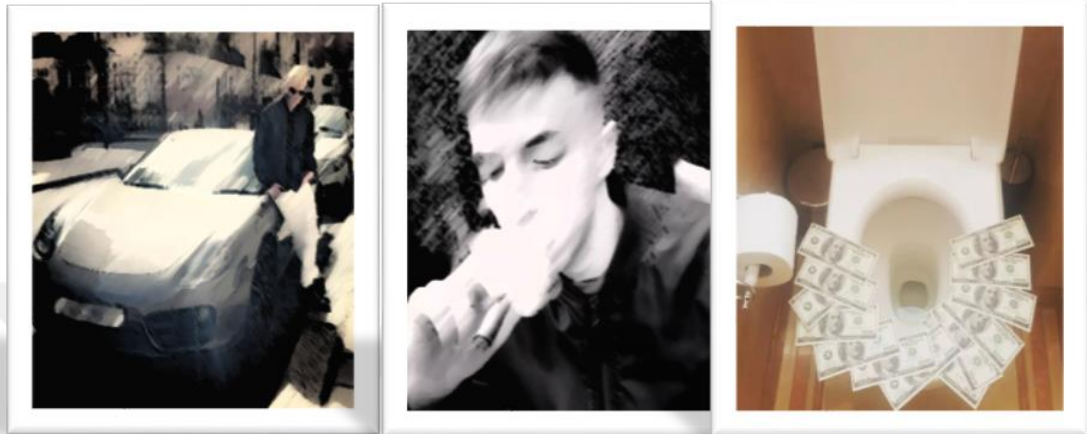


Figure 3.3 A Sample media exposure of RKOI
Source: *The Sun*, 2018, Access: 21.12.2018

The phenomenon also manifested itself on TV with a reality-show “Rich Kids of Beverly Hills” in January 2014. Despite the fact that 586 *IMDb*⁵ users have given a weighted average vote of 3.1/10, the show was on display gaining in popularity for 4 seasons during 2 years. In addition, *Channel 4* made a series of 47-minute full “cutting edge” documentary films of *RKOI* featuring everyday lives of these wealthy young people in 2016 and 2017. Both series centered around rich kids who share posts showing how they spend their money (e.g. in the most exclusive stores, nightclubs and so on).



Figure 3.4 Rich Kids of Beverly Hills
Source: *E-online*, 2018, Access: 17.12.2018



Figure 3.5 RKOI A Cutting Edge Documentary
Source: *The Independent*, 2015, Access: 21.12.2018

⁵ Internet Movie Data Base

In addition, as the fictional adaptation of the culture, the book *Rich Kids of Instagram*, authored by Maya Sloan, who also worked on a book project with the *Kardashian family*⁶, was published in July 2014 after she interviewed the anonymous creator of the account. She describes *RKOI* as “a dishy and hilarious tale about the intersecting lives of the world’s most extravagant, uber-rich teenagers” (Knibbs, 2013). Sloan (2014) also highlights the fact that *RKOI* is a group of “spoilt” young people who could vary from “nouveau riche outsiders” and heirs of old money to children of media moguls in a members-only universe of the uber-rich (they make 1% of the entire society) emphasizing the scandalous consequences of their actions.

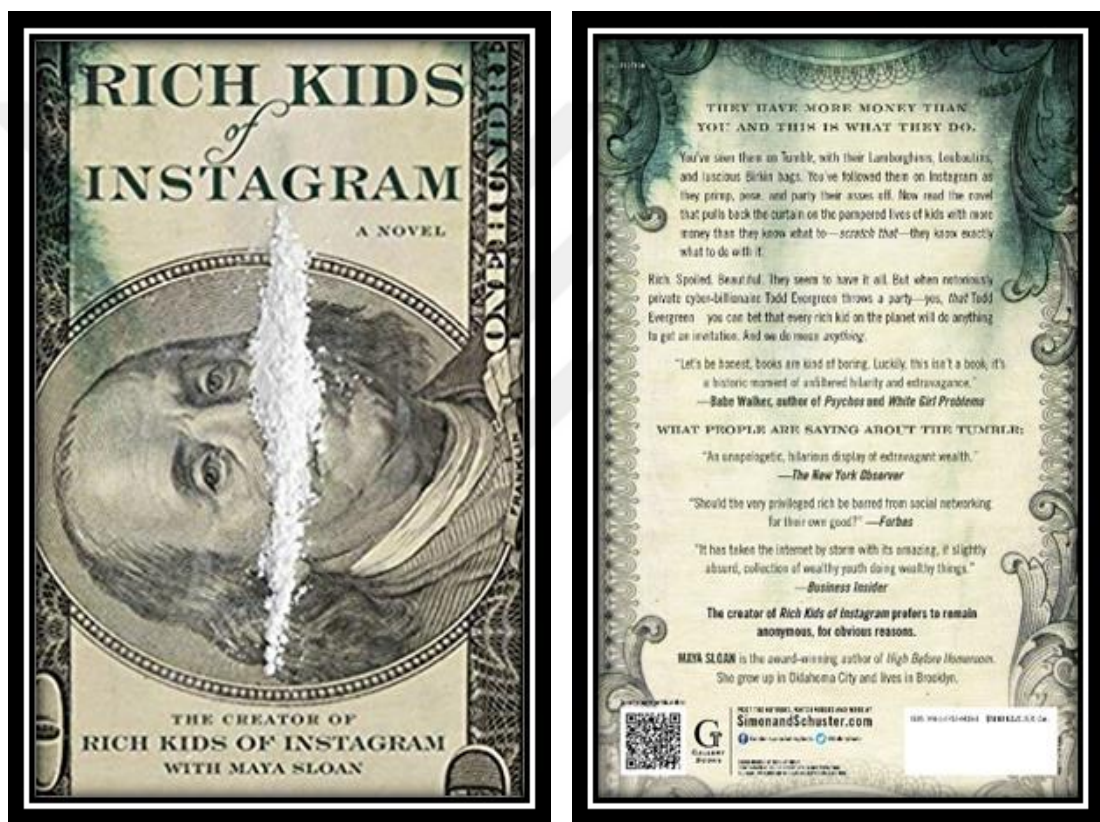


Figure 3.6 The book cover of *RKO*

Lastly, the phenomenon has become so popularized that an identical culture: *Rich Parents of Instagram*, on which wealthy parents display their lavish lifestyles has emerged. Similar to *RKOI*, numerous media such as *the Business Insider*, *the Sun*, *the Daily Mail*, *the Independent* and so on have featured the page highlighting their marginalized identity as uber-rich parents displaying their lavish lifestyles. They also have emphasized that *RPOI* intentionally avoid showing their kids on the posts even

⁶ A high profile, Armenian-American family who are known for their popular reality shows: *Keeping up with Kardashians*

though they may display limitless allowances they give to their kids and nannies they take on holidays (see e.g. Lakritz, 2017).



Figure 3.7 An anonymous RPOI post & RPOI Instagram profile
Source: RPOI Instagram account, 2018, Access: 21.12.2018

More surprisingly is the Iranian reflection of the phenomenon, *Rich Kids of Tehran*, which gained wide attention in the international media but which was shut down in October 2014 since “*The exhibition of wealth and sexuality came as a surprise to inside and outside the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is subject to strict international sanctions and Islamic laws that prohibit alcohol and immodest dressing.*” (Winsor, 2014). Page administrators stated that the aim of their page was/is to abolish the negative image of Iran in the international media by “*trying to show the good side*”. Meanwhile another disclaimer claimed, “*This page is in no way political and we never had any bad intentions. We never thought the page would make headlines all over the world.*” (Winsor, 2014). Therefore, as a reaction to the government’s censorship, the anonymous administrators of the page have created a counterculture: *Poor Kids of Tehran* on Instagram highlighting the poverty in Iran. Although *Rich Kids of Tehran* is back with a more controlled content without sexuality and alcohol,

The Poor Kids of Tehran continues its existence with 4,730 followers sharing photos that display the lives of poor people in Iran.

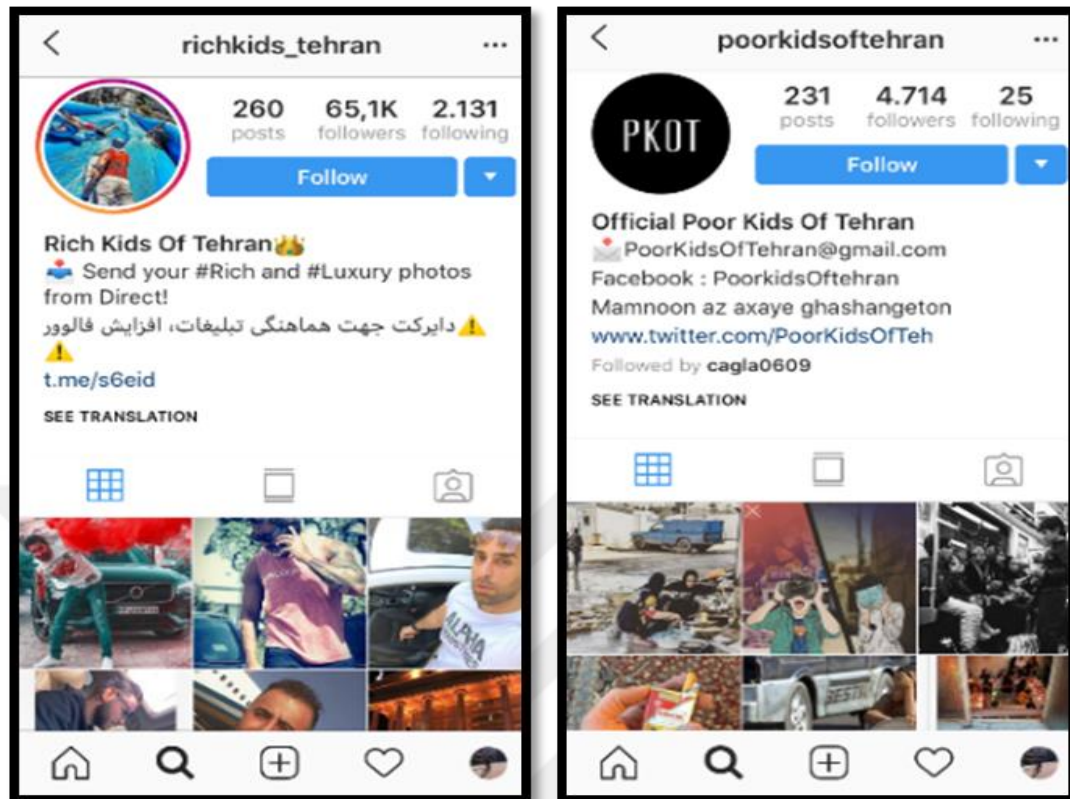


Figure 3.8 Instagram profiles of RKOT (Tehran) & PKOT
Source: Instagram accounts of RKOT & PKOT, Access: 26.12.2018

Along with its broad coverage on both alternative and social media, *RKOT* have become an interesting subject to very limited empirical work as well. Marwick (2015) in her work *Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy* has examined the Singaporean socialites of showing off regarding the tabloid and celebrity culture drawing upon the examples of *RKOT*. Gallagher (2015) in her bachelor of art thesis analyzed “the social and economic inequality of image sharing and production of power through self-promotion” drawing upon *RKOT*. Abbott, et al., (2014) has done research on discovering trends in the use of *Instagram* by libraries suggesting “*RKOT* epitomize everything wrong with *Instagram*”. Finally, Spieler (2015) published an article titled *Our Everyday is Better Than Your Best Day: spectacle and the Politics of Ambiguity on Tumblr Blog: Rich Kids of Instagram*, which argues that *RKOT* is an issue of “ambiguous uncertainty” due to the “unequal distribution of capital and power”. Therefore, the image of *RKOT* drawn by both mainstream and alternative media have created such a limelight that even academia has used the phenomenon as

a subject in a few number of studies even though they are limited works and carried out in different disciplines (e.g. psychology, business, marketing, etc.).

RKOI featured by numerous media represent an “outsider” identity marginalized by the dominant culture. The media discourse that defines *RKOI* as “insane”, “weird”, “spoilt”, “jaw-dropping”, “pampered”, “ostentatious”, “abnormal”, “weak and silly”, “evil and corrupt”, “victims”, “villains”, “worthy-disasters”, “shamelessly extravagant” and so on functions as a moral entrepreneur and both reproduces and maintains the public opinion on *RKOI*. Accordingly, *RKOI* as a group of young people who have “a collective ostentatious rich kid” identity fit into the concepts of marginalization, outsidership or alternativity of subcultural studies due to the disturbance in the established society resulting from their own “spectacular style”.

As the Turkish leg of the *RKOI* phenomenon, *RKOI* on *Instagram* stand for a group of upper class young people who display their everyday life through luxurious consumer goods and exclusive daily practices. The content of the posts resemble the content of the posts shared by *RKOI* rather with fewer conceptualizations and explanations about the photos. Participants of the page consist of young people who are between 16-28. Furthermore, the interfaces of *RKOI* and *RKOT* are very similar although they slightly differ from each other in respect to design such as profile photos and information.

Like *RKOI*, *RKOT* have also been featured on not only mainstream media such as *Hürriyet*, *CNN Türk*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Haber Türk*, *Doğan Haber Ajansı*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah* and *NTV* but also alternative media such as *Onedio*, *Bigumigu*, *acunn.com*, *Tarafsızhaber*, *Mynet*, *Karnaval*, *Lifestyle* and so on. In addition, the lavish lifestyles of *RKOT* have been a subject for international media like *the Sun* and the *Daily Mail*. All these media have approached the phenomenon as an “outsider” highlighting its ostentatiousness. *NTV* (2015), for example, claimed that the owners of the account will commercialize luxurious consumer goods along with sharing the lavish lifestyles of rich kids. Yunus Emre Erk in his post for *Listelist* displays the photos of *RKOT* with the headline “*RKOT that make you say a heavy purse makes a light heart*”. In addition, he ends his post with a short interview video by stating “*if you had money, you would do the same. Yet, you don’t have money, so it turns into a hate figure for you.*”

Both *RKOI* and *RKOT* as a group of uber rich kids that display “*an insanely extravagant life*” have drawn attention of local and international media. Yet, it is important to highlight the fact that the international media have labeled them using more openly imputative words (e.g. “*spoilt*”) while Turkish media (both mainstream and alternative) adopt a more neutral attitude by indicating that they are marginally rich and ostentatious (i.e. They have flashy lives). However, it should be kept in mind that Turkish media have suffered from freedom of press recently more than ever especially since the coup attempt in 2016⁷. According to the 2018 World Press Freedom Index, Turkey ranks 157th (dropping 2 spots) out of 187 countries regarding media independence (Reporters Without Borders, 2018). It also takes the lead in the number of journalists and academicians in prison across the world.

RKOT ON TURKISH MEDIA

“*They are playing with money! Welcome to the flashy lives of Rich Kids of Turkey*”⁸ (Onedio, 2017)

“*Kids of Istanbul has made a fuss!*”⁹ (Habertürk, 2017)

“*42 photos of Rich Kids in our country that make one say “a heavy purse makes a light heart”*”¹⁰ (Listelist, 2015).

RKOT ON FOREIGN MEDIA

“*TURKISH DELIGHTS This is how the Rich Kids of Turkey are spending their summer holidays – with Champagne guns, seaside villas and flash yachts: Their envy-inducing snaps have been swamping social media*” (The Sun, 2017)

Table 3.2 Some sample media exposure of *RKOT*

Sources: Onedio, 2017; Habertürk, 2017; Listelist, 2015, The Sun, 2017, Access: 21.12.2018

⁷ “...a section of the Turkish Military launched a coordinated operation in several major cities to topple the government and unseat President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan” on July 15, 2016. However, the coup attempt was defeated by the public in several hours. (Aljazeera, 2017)

⁸ Original in Turkish: “Parayla Oynuyorlar! İşte Karşınızda Türkiye'nin En Zengin Çocuklarının Gösterişli Hayatları”

⁹ Original in Turkish: “İstanbul'un zengin çocukları olay yarattı!”

¹⁰ Original in Turkish: “Ülkemizden Para Var Huzur Var Dedirten 42 ‘Zengin Çocuk’ Fotoğrafi”

Yet, two user-generated online dictionaries *Ekşi Sözlük*¹¹ and *İnci Sözlük*¹² consisting of anonymous people who create the content display a more critical and disputative attitude towards *RKOT* which is similar to the international media's. Therefore, media coverage of *RKOT* is investigated considering the current media freedom in Turkey. As more independent and anonymous content contributors, users of these dictionaries post entries that include harshly critical reflections of *RKOT*. According to an anonymous entry on *Ekşi Sözlük*, Christine Lagarde, the French managing director of the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)*, stated that “*We have always heard that there are rich Turkish kids somewhere; however, we had to wait until Instagram emerged in order to see how uncouth these kids are*”. Another anonymous user states that “*An Instagram account that makes me think “Why am I posting photos on Instagram after seeing theirs. I am so pissed off, I swore, I said ‘Oh God such lives...’ but still I can’t help looking at them*”. Compared to the discourse of *Ekşi Sözlük* users, the users (only 11 comments) of *İnci Sözlük* share their personal opinions on *RKOT* rather than their emotions towards them, which are basically about their “*kezo*”¹³, “*kamil*”¹⁴ and “*uncouth*” image. Thus, both *RKOT* and *RKOT*'s “extravagant” and “ostentatious” identities featured by the media shape public opinion and anonymous internet users like *Ekşi Sözlük* and *İnci Sözlük* contributors harshly criticize and marginalize these kids.

RKOT on İnci Sözlük (Pearl Dictionary)

- “*There is no change in kezoluk¹⁵ and kekoluk¹⁶! One is crossing their legs on a Tofaş¹⁷ while the other one is doing the same in a Porsche*” (*İnci Sözlük*, 2015).
- “*F...k it! Even our rich are wannabes. After the Ottomans, there is nothing left of elitism, my old friend*” (*İnci Sözlük*, 2015).

Table 3.3 *RKOT exposure on İnci Sözlük*
Source: *İnci Sözlük*, 2015, Access: 21.12.2018

¹¹ One of the biggest user-generated online platforms with over 400,000 registered members in Turkey. On this virtual dictionary, anonymous users create and contribute to the content by giving their own way of definitions, explanations and arguments as well as referenced correct information of virtual socio-cultural and socio-political phenomena and agenda.

¹² Another popular online social community website on which users constitute the content (similar to *Ekşi Sözlük*)

¹³ Aka Kezban: A young lady who is a brand slave and who tries to move up the social ladder, who thinks that she is beautiful but in fact she is a little ugly and disorderly in Turkish slang (Wiktionary, Accessed Nov 18, 2018).

¹⁴ The equivalent of Kezo (Kezban) for male in Turkish slang.

¹⁵ See the footnote 13

¹⁶ See the footnote 14

¹⁷ A domestic, cheap car brand made in Turkey

RKOT on Ekşi Sözlük (Sour Dictionary)

- “An Instagram page thanks to which we have had the chance of learning the fact that there are lots of lombards¹⁸ in Turkey” (*Ekşi Sözlük*, 2015)

- “The social media thing of those who are anti-social nouveau-riche and Dan Bilzerian¹⁹ wannabes. Thus, it is funny: The man (I don’t know if I should call them men. Furthermore, driving a Ferrari does not necessarily make someone a man) presumes that he is Dan Bilzerian with his spindle shanks²⁰ and a fucking rented Ferrari...” (*Ekşi Sözlük*, 2015)

Table 3.4 RKOT exposure on *Ekşi Sözlük*
Source: *Ekşi Sözlük*, 2015, Access: 21.12.2018

In brief, looking at both international and national media exposure and the discourse used to identify and define these kids, similar to other *RKOI*, *RKOT* attract the attention of the media in a negative way although media criticism is not as harsh as *RKOI*’s except for the entries on *Ekşi Sözlük* and *İnci Sözlük*. Accordingly, drawing upon the concepts in the literature in respect to labeling and exclusion of both *RKOI* and *RKOT* by the established society would help to understand the reason why these kids are approached from the perspective of subcultural theory even though they do not exactly fit into traditional definitions of subcultures and post-subcultures at face value.²¹

Cohen’s (1972) “*moral panic*” defines the characteristics of those who are the agents of social control, public and media towards disturbances of young people:

Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their

¹⁸ A British slang used for uncouth people

¹⁹ An Armenian-American Internet personality known for his lavish lifestyle and addiction to gambling, women, and guns.

²⁰ Very thin legs

²¹ Traditional subcultural theory focuses on the working class and interprets their lifestyle and choices as a solution to their working class problems. Many post-subcultural theorists abandon the element of ‘class’ and rather adopt a perspective on subcultures that centers around individualism and consumerism.

diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. (Cohen, 1972, p. 9)

Within Cohen's context, both in the cases of *RKOI* and *RKOT*, defining the influence of the discourse constituted by the media on the society as "*moral panic*" would be beyond the pale since these kids cannot be claimed to constitute a substantial threat that could lead to serious changes in the society at face value despite a common disturbance by their existence and excessively ostentatious style in the dominant culture. For example, *The Today Show* has featured the *RKOI* as a potential threat to the well-being of mainstreamers' children.

RKOI's exposure on The Today Show

- "With super rich kids flaunting their wealth on @Instagram, should we be worried for our own children's well-being?"
- "Do our kids feel like they are missing out?"

Table 3.5 A sample of media discourse forming public opinion on *RKOI*
Source: Scoopnest, 2016, Access: 21.12.2018

However, without witnessing concrete societal reactions regarding the public opinion of *RKOI* as a dangerous ensemble for (the) society, it cannot be concluded that *RKOI* cause a "*moral panic*". In addition, the *RKOI* phenomenon has been an international issue due to globalization. Accordingly, lots of *RKOI* have emerged in different geographies and contexts. Although they are localized, they should not be considered as local folks since they still have a collective and contagious identity and style in the global context. Therefore, defining *RKOT* as "*folk devil*" would be too assertive. In this sense, both Hebdige's (1979) concept of "*marginalized youth*" and Becker's "*outsiders*" for subcultures and collective deviant behavior are more likely to be viable to *RKOI* and *RKOT* cases.

Becker (1963) suggests in his book *Outsiders* that situation and the kinds of behavior are defined by social rules, "*specifying some actions as "right" and forbidding others as "wrong"*" (p. 1). Therefore, the person who breaks an enforced rule may be considered "*a special kind of person*", in other words, an "*outsider*" (p. 1). In addition, Hebdige (1979) claims that subcultures are reproduced and reinforced

through media while being marginalized. Accordingly, media constitute and domineer cultural and ideological realms:

The media not only provide groups with substantive images of other groups, they also relay back to...[marginalized]...people a “picture” of their own lives which is “contained” or “framed” by the ideological discourses which surround and situate it... [the media] has colonized the cultural and ideological sphere. (Hebdige, 1979, p. 85)

Consistent with Hebdige’s theorization, the media expressions used for *RKOI* and *RKOT* (e.g., *envy-inducing*, *outrageous*, *jaw-dropping*, *mind-boggling*, *shocking*, *insane*, *spoilt*, *pampered*, *ostentatious*, *shameless*, *worthy-disaster*, *uncouth*, *lavish*, *ostentatious*, *Kezo*, *Kamil*, “*shamelessly extravagant*” and others) indicate how the dominant culture excludes them by these labels. Accordingly, it can be inferred that the ideology both *RKOI* and *RKOT* represent at face value through their extravagant and ostentatious lifestyle and choices is against the ideology of the dominant culture that is reproduced, reinforced and maintained by the media.

Furthermore, Holland and Spracklen (2018) associate alternativity with marginalization emphasizing the significance of belonging, identity and community expressed through shared interests, fashion, tastes, politics and collective memories. They argue that being alternative is still chosen by individuals and used to label subcultures by the dominant culture (e.g. academics, authorities, actors). Similarly, Ross Haenfler (2014) states that subcultures “*relatively diffuse social networks that have shared identities, distinctive meanings around certain ideas, practices, and objects, and a sense of marginalization from or resistance to a perceived “conventional” society*” (p. 16). In other words, exclusion or marginalization of particular groups with a set of collective style and of values indicates that *RKOI* or *RKOT* do not exactly comply with the ideologies of the mainstream society although they can survive “within” the society by reproducing and reinforcing the consumerist ideology of the mainstream. At this point, it is important to remember the difference between subculture and counterculture. Williams and Hannerz (2014) argue that subcultures are distinguished in relation to the mainstream; however, countercultures display “*an explicit rejection of a dominant culture*”. Nevertheless, they add that such a distinction between subculture and counterculture is problematic since experiences

of Becker's "outsiders" are framed as "*subcultural rather than countercultural and deviant rather than political*".

As a consequence, *RKOT* as a derivative of *RKOI* must and should be considered as a "marginalized outsider" that carries a different kind of deviance from Becker's marijuana users and dance (jazz) musicians. In other words, both *RKOT*'s and other *RKOI*'s "marginalized outsidersness" results from their "extravagant style", "excess" and "ostentatiousness" that is disapproved by the dominant culture. Williams (2014) states that only a little literature uses the notion of "*deviance*" in subcultural studies since it is a superficial concept for political economic discourses and subcultural studies are based on marginalization and non-normativity as resistance. Accordingly, he suggests abandoning the notion of "*deviance*" while keeping the notion of subculture although most individuals participating in youth cultures are more likely to be labeled as deviant by their peers, families and other subscribers to the dominant culture (Williams, 2014). Hence, both *RKOI* and *RKOT* labeled as "insanely extravagant", "excessive" and "ostentatious" others in the mainstream society can be defined as "marginalized outsiders".

3.2. Distinction of *RKOI* and *RKOT* through Style on Cyberspace

Hebdige (1979) starts his famous work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* with some extracts from Genet (1967) and he explains why he has chosen his extracts to begin with:

...Like Genet, we are interested in subculture - in the expressive forms and rituals of those subordinate groups...
Like Genet also, we are intrigued by the most mundane objects... Finally, like Genet, we must seek to recreate the dialectic between action and reaction which renders these objects meaningful. (Hebdige, 1979, p. 2)

Hereby, he emphasizes that even the simplest objects are meaningful in subcultures that have expressive forms and rituals that are marginalized in the established society. He questions how subcultures make sense to their members and signify disorder. Accordingly, he intentionally chooses to use Roland Barthes' distinction claiming that the aesthetic image chosen by a subculture has intentional meanings to point out the differences between "normal" styles and subcultures. In

other words, Hebdige (1979) adopts a semiotic approach for signification of subcultures and highlights the fact that even non-explicit signs could be an intended communicative object. He explains that traditional outfits of ordinary people on the street are selected under the pressure of preference, finance, “taste”, etc. These choices are meaningful since they carry a set of graded distinctions such as “*class and status, self-image and attractiveness, etc.*” (p. 112). Since they are distinguished by their expression of “*normality*” which means “*naturalness*”, and “*appropriateness*”, they stand for an opposition against “*deviance*”. Hence, an ordinary man or woman, whether rich or not, makes meaningful and conformist choices that do not constitute a deviant image as an opposition to the established society’s norms and values. Even though the dominant culture is the culture of the middle class, being rich and having some symbolic distinctions such as wearing designer clothes, owning luxurious cars, going on expensive holidays, living in mansions and so on do not form an “*oppositional deviance*” to the mainstream culture since it is viewed as a “*normal*”, “*appropriate*” and “*natural*” consequence of belonging to the upper class. Yet, to have a good understanding of *RKOI* and *RKOT*’s culture in relation to the mainstream culture, it is important to have a brief overview of the dominant ideology.

3.2.1. Understanding the Dominant Ideology

In Marxist theory, dominant ideology is the set of values, norms, attitudes and beliefs (e.g. honor, militarism, chivalry, etc.) shared by the majority of the people in the feudal society. Therefore, the hegemonic aristocratic class was the beholder of the ruling ideas. Avoiding the determinist approach of Marxist theory and drawing upon Max Weber’s broader understanding of social inequality, neo-Marxist theory explains dominant ideology as established norms, values, beliefs and attitudes of the majority of the society imposed by the ruling class which “*plays a direct and active role as it participates in the formation of exploitative and oppressive economic relations...*” (Wilson, 2011, p. 211). Both Marxist or neo-Marxist studies suggest that cultural hegemony held by the majority of the society and serves for those who have the economic power. Hence, dominant ideology functions as a mechanism that provides social control by framing the nature of the society like people’s place in the society and their connection to social class (Bullock & Trombley, 2000).

In (the) industrialized society, the dominant ideology was the values and norms (e.g. individualism, profit, market, competition, etc.) of the emergent bourgeois.

Today, in the network society, governing elites of the global economy are the beholders of the hegemony. Ideas promoting globalization, high- technology, digitalization and unstrained market society are the mechanisms that shape and control the norms and values of the majority of the society (Kellner & Durham, 2011). Therefore, the producers and the agents of the dominant culture (e.g. media, academics, etc.) reproduce and reinforce this cultural hegemony determining what is appropriate and natural, and what is not in the established society.

In the social class structure of Turkey, the bourgeoisie makes only 6,7% of the entire society (Bahçe et al., 2009) and social stratification in Turkish society is not divided in the same way as the post-war or current British society²² is. Bahçe and Köse (2017) suggest that the class composition of Turkey consists of 22 categories from retirees to urban propertied classes. During their research between 2002 and 2011, they have found that there is “*a very rapid proletarianisation and resolution of peasantry*” (p. 9) and a negative transformation in the socio-economic structure since there is widespread impoverishment and deprivation for lower classes, especially.

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<i>Urban Propertied Classes</i>	12.71	12.29	12.95	12.19	12.58	11.53	12.58	12.26	11.62	11.35
Capitalists	6.45	7.69	7.06	6.44	6.62	6.57	6.76	6.26	5.62	6.01
Urban Professionals	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.28	0.44	0.22	0.17	0.24	0.23	0.33
Small Enterprise Owners	5.55	4.21	5.17	5.03	5.06	4.45	5.26	5.26	5.17	4.67
Urban Rentiers	0.45	0.11	0.46	0.44	0.46	0.29	0.39	0.51	0.60	0.35
<i>Petit Bourgeoisie</i>	8.23	8.10	7.04	7.23	8.40	6.34	6.16	7.14	6.66	5.67
<i>Rural Propertied Classes</i>	6.20	6.23	5.28	4.32	3.42	3.18	1.99	2.06	3.37	3.00
Large Peasants	2.79	2.26	1.98	2.50	1.44	1.52	0.87	0.45	0.27	1.86
Peasants	3.20	3.84	3.13	1.72	1.78	1.63	1.01	1.16	2.58	0.97
Rural Rentiers	0.21	0.13	0.16	0.10	0.20	0.04	0.11	0.45	0.51	0.17
<i>Landed Subsistence Peasants</i>	8.50	6.15	6.65	7.52	5.67	4.33	4.92	7.88	5.65	5.82
<i>Urban Working Classes</i>	49.58	49.67	50.57	51.70	52.28	57.71	56.81	55.42	56.00	57.72
Skilled Labourers	6.67	6.32	6.64	6.64	5.81	6.80	7.60	7.05	7.88	8.94
Labourers	29.87	26.61	29.61	29.72	30.52	32.53	28.87	27.62	26.46	27.20
Propertyless Labourers	8.98	12.51	10.5	11.27	12.74	15.24	16.7	15.79	17.88	17.94
Urban Unemployed	4.05	4.23	3.82	4.06	3.2	3.15	3.63	4.96	3.78	3.64
<i>Rural Working Classes</i>	4.30	3.83	4.75	4.24	5.08	4.02	4.27	5.56	4.96	4.82
Agricultural Labourers	2.22	1.35	2.45	1.97	2.20	1.46	1.69	1.51	1.45	1.81
Landless Subsistence Peasants	0.89	0.88	0.75	1.16	1.32	1.31	1.18	1.51	1.41	1.30
Rural Unemployed	1.19	1.60	1.54	1.11	1.56	1.25	1.41	2.54	2.10	1.71
<i>Out of working population</i>	1.89	1.56	1.75	1.44	1.36	1.95	1.85	1.12	2.35	2.30
Retirees	8.60	12.18	11.02	11.36	11.21	10.93	11.41	8.56	9.39	9.32
<i>Total</i>	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3.6 Household Class Composition (%) 2002-2011

Source: Bahçe & Köse, 2017, Access: 23.12.2018

²² Unlike the post-war social classes, there are 7 social classes in England in the 21st century: elites, established middle class, technical middle class, new affluent workers, traditional working class, emergent service workers and precariat. (Savage et al., 2013). Also, aristocracy has always been a determining factor for the class distinctions.

As explained in the introduction, the larger culture in our context is the culture of the consumerist middle class that is defined in 2 categories: “*an emerging new middle class*” that consists of professionals who have extensive economic power and a “*declining/proletarianizing middle class*” who suffer from current political and economic circumstances in society (Yörük, 2014, p.424). Accordingly, those who have the hegemony in Turkey consist of individuals of upper class categories and individuals of the middle class categories who reproduce and reinforce this hegemony through the values of neo-liberalism (globalization, high-technology, restrained market society, etc.). Accordingly, both middle class and upper class categories in Turkey hold the hegemonic ideology despite their differences in terms of lifestyle and choices resulting from their social status and class.

Hegemonic ideology distinguishes subcultures due to their visual collectivity from those who are favored in the established society. Hebdige (1979) draws attention to punks’ fabricated style between the straight and the deviant. They go against the norms and values of the mainstream culture through their own codes such as ripped clothes, music, argot, etc. Barthes (1972) argues that the mainstream culture tends to establish laws to substitute a “normalized” natural order. Accordingly, both *RKOI* and *RKOT*, having a set of codes which are distinguished from the codes of the mainstream society, own a spectacular style that goes against this “normalized natural order”. Even though both they seem to reproduce and reinforce the values of the neo-liberal economy and the post-capitalist society (e.g. consumption, globalization, digitalization, restrained market economy, etc.) at face value, they display a kind of deviant identity through their style as an intentional communicator. To have a better understanding of the reasons that makes *RKOI* and *RKOT* “marginalized outsiders”, first it is important to understand the norms and values expected from the “rich” in the surrounding culture.

3.2.2. The Culture of the Rich and Style as an *Intentional Communicator*

Rachel Sherman (2017) in her book *Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence* based on interviews with rich people states that these liberal elites suffer from anxiety and self-doubt in a highly unequal society due to their positions since they believe in qualifications and diversity. She adds that the most distinctive findings of her interviews from the earlier American studies on rich people is that these people (liberal

elites of 21st century) do not want to be identified as “rich” or “wealthy” and flaunt their money. However, they find it acceptable to be interpreted as the “*hardworking wealthy*” who “*consume prudently*” so that they can be the “*good rich*” who appear “*middle class*”. In her interview for *The Economic Times*, with Goyal (2018) she says that:

...They tend to downplay their income and their spending, and they talk about not wanting to be ostentatious. So they prefer that their wealth not be loudly "marked" in the world. Among wealthy people themselves they probably use fairly similar markers to recognize and differentiate themselves; their homes, their taste, their clothes, how they spend their leisure time, and their philanthropy are some markers. (Sherman, 2018)

In other words, she means that rich people of the 21st century display modest lifestyles and choices towards the mainstream society even though they may differentiate themselves from each other in respect to fairly similar markers that indicate the level of wealth. Thus, the common attitude of the aristocratic upper class of the past who idealized and celebrated being visible as wealthy is not a valid approach for the post-capitalist society of the 21st century. The “rich” of the 21st century do not want to be considered “*different*” but “*normal*” due to their social class since they see themselves “*normal*”.

Sherman also adds that these liberal elites are mostly concerned about their children and they do not want them to be “*entitled*” more only due to their class advantages. They believe that their children have to work more and be polite to others in (the) society while avoiding materialism but giving back to the community. In this regard, the images of both *RKOI* and *RKOT* display a contrary interpretation. These kids that flaunt their wealth with assertive and satirical captions and extravagant and ostentatious photos on *Instagram* cause disturbance in the surrounding culture. Thus, they seem to adopt a materialistic approach favoring their class advantages rather than being hardworking and generous in contrast to what wealthy parents desire.

Most surprisingly, Sherman (2017) suggests that the rich see themselves as middle class in order to deal with the guilty conscious resulting from having so much. It also helps to manage the perception within the outside world. Another reason why

they assume themselves as middle class is that they think that there are people who have as much or more than they do. Accordingly, they avoid talking about their wealth since it is a taboo in the US to talk about class and money. Sherman (2017) claims that it also helps them to avoid facing their privilege explicitly and justify it by being “*good rich*” who “*consume prudently*”, who “*work hard*” and who become “*polite to the community*”. In her article *What the Rich Won't Tell You* in *The New York Times*, Sherman (2017) also states that these rich people define themselves as “normal” by distinguishing themselves from other “stigmatized wealthy” who are ostentatious, privileged, selfish and snobby. Hence, avoidance of talking about social class constitutes a norm that restrains the excessive and pretentious display of wealth.

Sherman's study, of course is conducted in the territories of the US and limited to the dominant culture of American society. However, as discussed in the introduction, globalization, neo-liberal economies and widespread adoption of the internet have created a globalized dominant culture in which Americanization and consumerism are idealized and Turkey has become a territory in which middle class consumerist culture is the dominant ideology. Accordingly, based on the semiotic analysis of *RKOI* and *RKOT*, it can be claimed that they are eager to show their class privilege by displaying an “extravagant” and “uncouth” youth identity that is far away from being prudent and hardworking. In contrast, they reproduce and reinforce a collectively consumerist identity that avoids working and helping others. This identity rather celebrates rather the lavish lifestyle gained through class privilege. However, it is still important to make a final remark about their “rich kid” identity after the analyses of interviews in the next chapter since their semiotic inferences regarding their subcultural identity may not coincide with the real identities and intentions of the members.

Perrucci and Perrucci (2014) explain that being wealthy and greedy is viewed negatively in the eyes of society since it is associated with ostentatious displays of lifestyles of billionaires and millionaires, which indicates consumerist behavior. Thus, these people are identified as despicable and not worthy. However, Perrucci and Perrucci (2014) claim that it is important to recognize the potential of the greedy to serve as a common good as long as the wealth is used “correctly”. Allowing these people to be themselves through their lavish consumption patterns and styles, enterprises and philanthropy, they can create opportunities for increasing the welfare

of (the) society. Especially philanthropy and projects in regard to high culture contribute to the “common good”. Hereby, “common good” means the benefits and interests of those who constitute the society. However, neither *RKOT* nor other *RKOI* shows any sign of such philanthropy or high culture projects like music and art for the sake of the society. In contrast, they feed and reinforce frustration, disturbance and jealousy through their spectacular style as an intentional communicator by representing an attitude that seems not only indifferent but also provocative to societal problems (e.g. politics, income inequality, poverty, etc.).

Like all semioticians, Hebdige (1979) claims that “*signification needs to be intentional*” (p. 101). Unlike “normality” as an opposition to “deviance” in the mainstream society, intentional communication represents “*a different order*” that includes “*a visible construction and a loaded choice*” (p. 101). Thus, it becomes a limelight to be read. In other words, intentional communication manifests itself through the “*visual ensembles of spectacular subcultures*” (p. 101), so style as an intentional communication in subcultures distinguishes them from those who are favored in the dominant culture. Similar to spectacular subcultures of post-war England, *RKOT* and *RKOI* reposition and recontextualize luxury commodities and lifestyle by subverting the conventional ways of wealth representation. They construct new uses and meanings as subcultural style which may open up new covertly oppositional readings. Hence, neither *RKOI* nor *RKOT* exactly complies with the social norms and values which are “normal”, “natural” and “appropriate” for the “rich” in the dominant ideology since they do not consume in a way the society expects from them.

3.2.3. *RKOI* and *RKOT*’s Style as *Bricolage* and *Homology*

Hebdige (1979) defines subcultures as cultures of consumption that conspicuously refuse certain types of consumption through their rituals and style that reveals the “*secret*” identity of subcultures’ communication and its “*forbidden meaning*” (p. 103). Hence, subcultures differentiate themselves from more “*orthodox cultural formations*” in regard to use of commodities. He refers to the concept of bricolage to explain the use of these commodities in subcultures suggesting Levi-Strauss’ definition of bricolage as a variety of improvised combinations that generate new meanings.

Similarly, Clarke (1976) emphasizes radically adapted, subverted and extended forms of discourse by the participants of a subculture. He advocates that the significant object is relocated by constituting a new discourse that has different messages. Punks and skinheads' ripped off clothes, teddy boys' theft, mods' appropriation of a range of commodities (e.g. riding a *Vespa*, wearing Italian-cut, tailor-made clothes) could be examples of bricolage. Hebdige (1979) claims that the transformation of Edwardian style in wealthy young men of the city can also be considered as bricolage. Therefore, the style of *RKOI* and *RKOT* constituted through bricolage of luxury consumer commodities (e.g. giant champagne bottles, expensive cars, designer clothes, private jets, etc.) may carry new meanings and messages since these commodities are not displayed as a "normal", "natural" and "appropriate" form as expected from the upper class but rather in "subverted", "radically adapted" and "extended forms".

Brodin et al. (2016) emphasize that *Sapeur Parisiens* as a subculture sublime their body through luxury clothes as a form of "*individuation*". Hence, *Sapeurs* reflect a kind of identity that is established through luxury brands and symbolizes well-being and strength of these African dandies. *Sapeurs*' choice of luxury is explained with its capability to generate an intrinsic value that confirms to the aesthetic and erotic realm. *Sapeur Parisiens* mix, adjust and harmonize colors, brands, labels and patterns in suits so that they can form a masculine power and a submission to the norm. Mixing and harmonizing clothes requires a process that follows specific rules. By obeying these rules, they show their capacity for elegance. However, this understanding of elegance is different from the traditional understanding of elegance. Since they find traditional elegance dull, they prefer flashy colors that are associated with wealth, joy, safety, ostentation and so on. Even though they differentiate from each other in terms of subculture such as *Playboy*, *Drakkar* or *Complete Sapeur*, they all obey the rule of mixing with harmony.

This subversive form of creativity in respect to blending and mixing is defined as hybridization (Brodin et al. 2016). *Sapeurs* propose to establish creative meanings and relationships through this hybridization. Hall (2008) in Brodin et al. (2016) suggests that hybridization in subcultures allows an egalitarian opportunity for all members of the subculture. Similarly, Hebdige (1979) argues that bricolage in subcultures generates new rapports. These also explain the symbolic fit between the subcultural values and lifestyles of subcultures and individual experiences of the

members. Like Willis (1978), Hebdige prefers to use the concept of homology to describe subcultures' "*extreme orderliness*" inside the group in contrast to their "*lawless*" image in the society. Referring to Hall et al.'s (1976b) work, he exemplifies homology in subcultures:

The subculture was nothing if not consistent. There was a homological relation between the trashy cut-up clothes and spiky hair, the pogo and amphetamines, the spitting, the vomiting, the format of the fanzines, the insurrectionary poses and the "soulless", frantically driven music. (Hall et al., 1976b, p. 114)

Hereby, Hall et al. emphasize that consistency in style including values, practices and rituals is one of the most significant keystones. Based on Hall et al.'s words, *RKOT* and *RKOI* have a set of common shared interests, values and rules that establish "*extreme orderliness*" in the group despite their non-normative image in the established society like in all subcultures. Not only in *RKOT* but also in all *RKOI* around the world, the photos posted on *Instagram* tend to display a homological style (e.g. ostentatious, extravagant display of wealth through luxury consumer goods, provocative captions, etc.). Consistent with the literature, "rich kids" reproduce and reinforce their style as bricolage and homology even though they are located in different parts of the world due to cyberspace, within this context: *Instagram*, which allows more immediate and fluid interactions which ease the process of emergence and diffusion of subcultures.

Hebdige (1979) also discusses style "*in revolt*" and "*as signifying practice*", yet as discussed in the theoretical framework, he is criticized for centering around only semiotic analyses of subcultures and following a determinist and superficial process in respect to class struggles and resistance. For this reason, these aspects are discussed in the interview analyses both to make more valid and credible conclusions about subcultural resistance and to make a comparison with Hebdige's semiotic interpretations.

4. *RKOT*: A NEO-SUBCULTURE

4.1. Method

In the former chapter, the concept of subculture has been approached and symbolically analyzed like in *CCCS* regarding both *RKOI* and other *RKOT* since the “rich kids” on *Instagram* has become a globalized issue. Even though the initiator of the phenomenon is *RKOI* who are located in London, lots of localized *RKOI* have emerged and diffused around the world in different territories within different socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts. Thus, although it seems more sensible to have interviews with the original creators of this “rich kid” culture on *Instagram*, embracing the phenomenon from a localized perspective would contribute more to the field of cultural studies to show how social and economic circumstances of a particular society impact the culture, accordingly everyday life practices of youth (e.g. socializing, social media usage, leisure, work, etc.). Also, the fact that geographical distance between Turkey and London would prevent face-to-face interviews has prompted me to do my research with the “rich kids” on *Instagram* tagged on *RKOT*. Therefore, I chose *RKOT* as my universe to study subculture and cyberspace in the network society.

To begin with, I would like to say that convincing my subjects to interview with me was the most difficult part of this research. Since there was no other direct contact information and since the administrator of the account did not want to share the contact information of *RKOT* members with me¹, I had to get in touch with them through the direct messaging system (*DM*) of *Instagram*. After writing a template message briefly explaining the study and introducing myself as a university lecturer and a Ph.D. scholar, I visited profiles of the people tagged on the page and sent *DMs* to their private inbox. For those who did not notice my *DMs*², I wrote in the comment

¹ During the interviews, I was highly convinced that he had gained their trust. All interviewees remarked that Tolga (the administrator) is a trustworthy person.

² *Instagram* users who have a big number of followers may not recognize *DMs* coming from the users who are not their friends on *Instagram*. Also, since they keep receiving lots of *DMs* from strangers, they may ignore the messages coming from strangers.

section under their posts on *Instagram* requesting them to check their inbox. Almost one third of my subjects recognized my messages this way.

I texted 96 people tagged on the profile and only 20 of them³ accepted to interview with me. Among the rest, 17 subjects kindly rejected my interview request (generally girls), some read my messages and first seemed curious but then stopped texting me back without any explanation and ignored my messages. 18 subjects directly blocked me and cut my access to them while 12 subjects first accepted the interview then gave up without any explanation or reply to my messages. Lastly, 20 subjects did not recognize my messages and 9 subjects saw my messages but did not reply them.

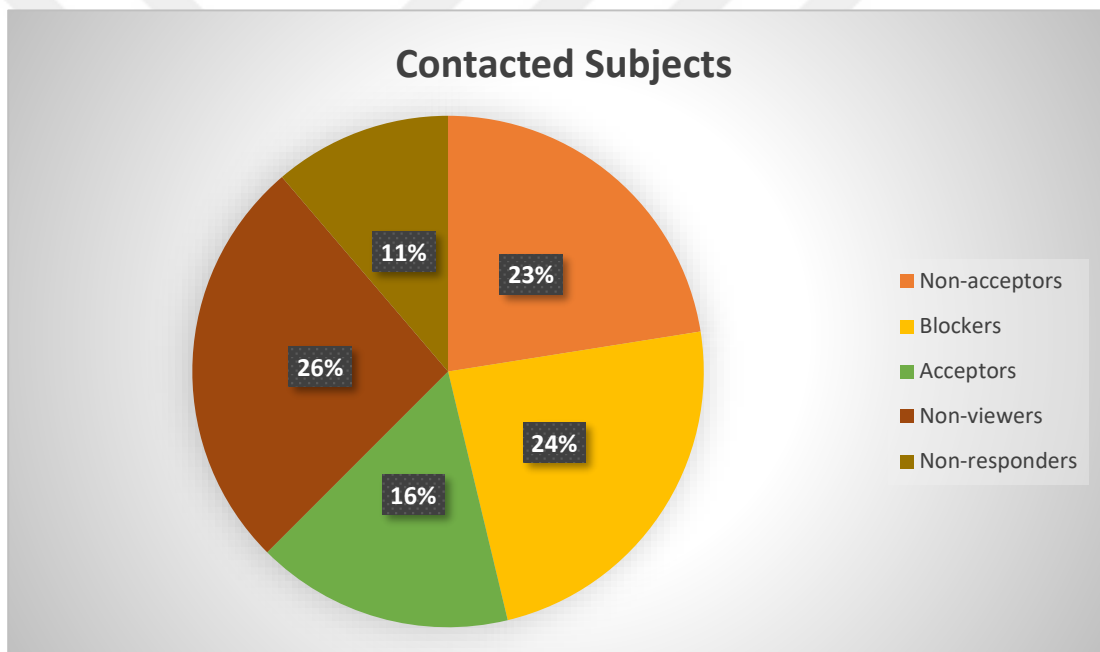


Figure 5.1 Subject Interaction data

During this time, I got some messages and calls from the administrator of *RKOT* about not being too insistent on interviewing with those who do not want to interview, so I did what he asked for. He said to me that “*some are afraid of potential problems that might result from these interviews with you*”. Almost all the interviewees asked the administrator first whether I was trustworthy or not. Almost all of them accepted to talk with me after getting his reference about me. The administrator of the page told me that he had to lie to some of them saying that I was

³ Including the administrator of the profile.

his cousin to convince them to interview with me; otherwise, they would not accept an interview.

Two subjects who accepted to meet up with me and gave me an appointment in places they chose did not show up and did not reply to my messages anymore. None of the subjects I interviewed with gave the contact information of any other *RKOT* member although almost all of them knew at least a few people tagged on the page. A quarter of my interviewees (all boys) was very easy to convince to interview with. Some even offered me to meet up in their favorite places like *Nusr-Et*⁴ and *Beymen Brasserie*⁵. Based on both my personal experience and what *RKOT* members told me, I can say that being a female was an advantage in convincing them to interview with me. None of them accepted my request without adding me as a friend and seeing my *Instagram* profile, which is closed to the public. During the interviews, almost all of them said that they would not have accepted my interview request if they did not like Tolga⁶, and/or if I was not a female.

After the interviews, I learnt that there are basically four different reasons why they accepted to interview with me depending on the feedback I received from them. First, boys wanted to socialize with me as a woman who is interested in their lifestyle. Especially those who chose the meeting place belong to this group. They wanted to meet up with me in a place they enjoy going to (e.g. a restaurant or a café). They seemed reluctant to talk about the study even though they answered my questions. They usually asked for my approval of the place, food, atmosphere, etc. In other words, they treated me as a person they had already known, so we had light and friendly chats during the interviews. Second, I was a friend of Tolga and they “*like Tolga very much*”. To be honest, without Tolga’s help and contributions, I could not have done this research since nobody would have accepted my interview request without his invaluable reference. Third, those who are more educated said that they gave a lot of importance to education and that they appreciated what I was doing. For this reason, they wanted to contribute to my research. They also explained that they knew the difficulty of doing a research study since they had similar experiences during their bachelor’s degree education. Thus, it was the empathy that convinced them to

⁴ An expensive meat restaurant where generally *RKOT* eat

⁵ A luxury café-bar in a “posh” neighborhood called Nişantaşı in Istanbul

⁶ The administrator of the account. Since he allows me to use his open identity in the study, I will use his name at times.

interview with me. Last but not least, for the majority of the interviewees, curiosity was the main source of motivation to interview with me. They remarked that the topic attracted their attention and wanted to learn more about the study. They also wanted to be notified once the study is completed so that they can read it.

Since the subjects were first contacted through only *Instagram DM*, and my universe was limited with *RKOT* on *Instagram* (a virtual environment), not all my interviewees could meet up with me face to face due to living in different cities and countries. For this reason, I had to make *FaceTime*⁷ chats with those who live abroad or in other cities. Thus, I had 2 *FaceTime* interviewees from the USA and Canada and 1 from Ankara although I also had face to face interviews with 2 *RKOT* who are from Antalya and Kayseri when they came to Istanbul for a visit. During my interviews, I tried to be as friendly and honest as I could be and chose an environment where they could feel comfortable. Thus, I always first asked them to choose the meeting place and time. When they did not come up with a certain idea or gave me the priority to choose the place, I suggested the most convenient places for them, which is generally *Zorlu Center*⁸, since most of them live nearby and often go to this place for shopping and hanging out. In other words, I avoided putting any kind of pressure on my subjects so that they could feel more comfortable while answering my questions, which I believe, would increase the validity and credibility of the research.

Within this context, I interviewed with twenty *RKOT* between the ages of 17 to 28, although I had 1 interviewee above 30 and most of the subjects were in their early and mid-twenties. Consistent with the number of posts of female and male *RKOT*, I interviewed with 5 females, 15 males including Tolga. McRobbie and Garber in Hall & Jefferson (2003) state that in subcultural studies, girls have always been the secondary or subordinate to the male dominance of the subculture since “*they are central and pivotal to a subordinate area, which mirrors, but in a complementary and subordinate way, the “dominant” masculine arenas*” (p. 211). They were present but they were marginalized. Girls who were most present in teddy boys subculture were a different subcultural pattern sustained as a complementary with the subculture of the girl/pop idol *Teeny Bopper*. Girls had to spend more time at home or at work in Britain

⁷ A particular app to iPhone which allows free video calls. All *RKOT* had iPhones.

⁸ A shopping mall which largely consists of stores that carry luxury brands and upscale restaurants and cafes. Especially female interviewees go to this place for shopping and lunch almost every day. Girls shop almost every day. Male ones usually prefer to go to this place when they meet (a) friend(s) and for shopping.

during 1960s-1970s since they were responsible for looking after the family and making a living for them (Hall & Jefferson, 2003). Heidensohn (1985) emphasizes that girls have been perceived and portrayed through the eyes of men in subcultural studies. They have been seen as sex objects and skinhead girls in *Smethwick, Sunderland* or the *East End* were dismissed like those in Boston. (p. 140) Nevertheless, there are some post-subcultural studies that focus on subcultures that consist of only female participants. Yet, these studies center on subculture regarding gender-related issues (e.g. feminism). Thus, there is still a lack of female participation in mixed-gendered subcultures and in the analyses, this concept is discussed in respect to subculture.

Today, in the 21st century in which the internet allows girls to have more freedom to be a part of a community or group without having to go out, boys still outnumber girls in the *RKOT* case even though none of the girls in *RKOT* has to take care of the family and earn money. Thus, the number of the female interviewees is smaller than the number of male interviewees, which results from 2 reasons: First, the number of the photos shared by girls is almost a quarter of the all photos tagged on *RKOT*. Second, girls tend to be more cautious when it comes to face to face interviews. Although I got in touch with 26 girls to have an interview through *Instagram DM*, only 5 accepted my request after a lot of effort on my part to convince them. Since they did not feel secure about meeting a stranger, I introduced myself in a more detailed way and explained what the study centers around is not their private life but subculture and usage of social media in subculture. In order to convince some, I had to ask Tolga to talk to them to have an interview with me.

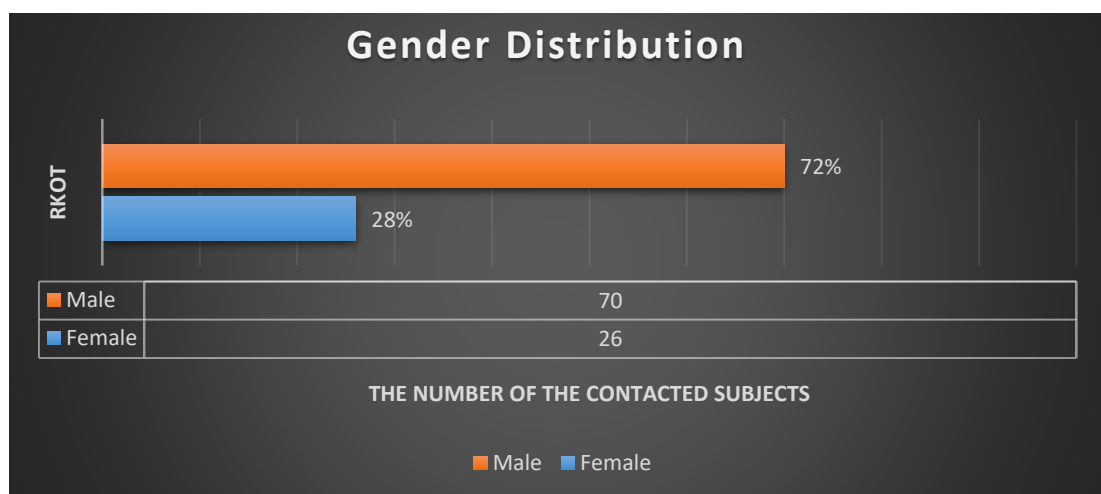


Figure 5.2 Female – Male Participation in *RKOT*

Almost 8 girls apart from my female interviewees got very curious about it and asked to be informed more about it. However, after they realized that the interviews were needed for a Ph.D. dissertation, they gave up on having one and sharply cut the communication with me. For this, I assume two reasons: First, they were not literally rich. Second, they would not receive any benefits out of it since they would do it as a favor to me. *Instagram* is a platform which has the potential of bringing instant fame and money. As far as some *RKOT* who I interviewed with and who know these girls in real life said to me that these *RKOT* girls are tagged on the account although they are not “that” rich in reality but they wanted to be more popular and famous and earn lots of money through this medium. In short, some female *RKOT* who seemed very interested at the beginning, especially on the social media aspect of the study, either rejected my request saying “*Thank you, I am not interested*” and “*Sorry but I have no time for that*” or blocked me on *Instagram DM* so that I could not text them anymore.

Nevertheless, I managed to have interviews with 19 *RKOT* and the one and only administrator Tolga within the frame of the semi-guided questions I had prepared regarding *RKOT* as subculture and use of social media to communicate this identity. Importantly, I found out that sharing a post on the *Instagram* profile of *RKOT* is not for free for all members. Tolga (the administrator) charges a specific amount of money per photo he shares on the profile from those who belong to a specific category⁹. Due to the fact that this research is not only a social media but also a subcultural study regarding class, I categorized my interview questions regarding 3 concepts: socio-economic and socio-cultural typology of *RKOT* in real life, subculture, and cyberspace (*Instagram*) usage. Since the concept of class is important for both post-war subcultural theorists and some contemporary scholars (e.g. Shildrick and MacDonald, 2006; Hollingworth, 2015 & Jensen, 2017) who advocate adopting a new subcultural perspective based on class and socio-cultural and socio-economic structures unlike post-subcultural theorists who focus on fluid interactions, individual and consumerist practices of youth groups, the first part of my analyses center on class and its importance in *RKOT*.

⁹ To be discussed in detail in the data analyses.

4.2. Social Class and *RKOT*

In the first part of the interviews, I focused on the questions which can draw a framework on the socio-economic and cultural typology of *RKOT*. Previously, it has been discussed that class plays a major role in subcultural studies. Thus, this part has provided me with the opportunity to make comparisons between the virtual “ostentatious” rich identity of *RKOT* to their real life identities. Therefore, it has been indicated to what extent virtual life and real life identities of *RKOT* coincide with each other and how *Instagram* could be used to construct their “ostentatious” rich identity.

Griffin (2011) suggests that *CCCS*’s specific perspective on power, class and politics was rather an unorthodox theoretical move in respect to interpretation of subculture. For this reason, *CCCS*’s subcultural studies are complex or creative versions of Marxism since contemporary Marxist scholars tend to approach class politics from “*a traditional forms of union activism*” perspective (p. 246). However, some scholars (e.g. Lazzarato, 2009; Wacquant, 2012 & Jensen, 2017) argue that there are highly differentiated and complex class structures today due to the transformations from capitalism to neo-liberal and post-industrialized society. Accordingly, relevance of class remains significant in subcultural theory (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006; Hollingworth, 2015). As Jensen (2017) states even though class should not be considered as the only and the most important social structure to understand subculture, it may still play a central role in the analyses of subcultural theory. In other words, class consciousness which seems rarely available among youth should not be interpreted as socio-economic inequality since it is not relevant to subcultural formation and participation. However, it should be theorized in a different way compared to post-war England during the 1960s and the 1970s (Jensen, 2017).

Bourdieu (1984) offers a perspective that focuses on multidimensional and cultural understanding of class since distinctions such as taste, lifestyle, preferences, and distaste actively produce and reproduce class along with reflecting preexisting class structures. In other words, there is a strong link between preexisting class structures and contemporary cultural preferences. Thus, class becomes a requirement for not only its relevance to subcultural theory but also its flexibility to understand the contemporary social structures in the surrounding culture (Jensen, 2017). For example, Devine et al. (2004) come up with the term “*cultural class analyses*” and Hollingworth (2015) suggests that “*class works through culture*” (p. 1239).

Bourdieu (1984) also suggests the term of “*habitus*” as the embodiment of social dispositions since “*class shapes and conditions the social agents*” (Jensen, 2017, p. 9). Thus, both cognitive distinctions such as taste, lifestyle, preferences, etc. and practical competences in the society are important variables to understand the central role of class as culture in subcultural formation. Young people who enter subcultures do it “*with their habitus already conditioned by their class position*” (Jensen, 2017, p. 9). Accordingly, even though subcultural affiliation is not determined by class dispositions and classed habitus, the choice of subculture, differentiation between subcultures and hierarchies and differences in subcultures are likely to depend on these factors (Tolonen, 2013; Hollingshead, 2015). Therefore, *RKOT* who display an upper class identity through “ostentatious richness” on *Instagram* should be first approached to understand their social structures, class dispositions and classed habitus. Even though it is different from the traditional understanding of class in subcultural theories¹⁰, it can be argued that class is a central element to analyze *RKOT* since it makes the biggest part of their “*subcultural capital*” which means the value produced through positioning of subcultural participants as an opposition to the mainstream culture (Thornton, 1995).

Regarding the definitions of their own “understanding of richness” and some signs of wealth such as the places they wanted to meet at, the cars they own, their monthly expenses, *RKOT* can be divided into 3 categories in terms of wealth: The super-rich, the rich and the upper-middle class unlike Tolga (the administrator), the second child of a middle class family who has been greatly interested in the tabloid press, social media, money and consumer commodities since his childhood:

“...*I was interested in wealth and tabloid magazines. I was in high school and didn't work. We used to buy Posta*¹¹ *and I was always watching magazine programs. I was following some famous and wealthy people. And I was already good at the internet world. For example, I was googling “the best villas in Istanbul”, and searching for the location of these places on the GPS afterwards. I shared these photos that I found on the internet without any demand. Then I realized that there was a*

¹⁰ In traditional subcultural theories, working class youth and their societal problems and the way of resistance have become the central of the studies. However, it cannot be claimed that “rich kids” have neither any societal problems nor any resistance. Also, *RKOT* may not hold the same class identity as they display in the virtual environment in real life.

¹¹ A popular Turkish newspaper known with its poor content which is full of tabloid magazine and visuals.

demand. I have earned 45-50.000 TRY so far. Tomorrow I will share 2 photos and will be paid 800 TRY. ”

The initiator of the account was a middle-class young man in his mid-twenties who is interested in luxurious lifestyles and social media. However, he believes that he will move up the social ladder like *RKOT* in the future:

“I am not a part of this group but I am making progress in becoming a part of this group and I am doing quite well. When we moved to Istanbul, we only had a TV and a flat, now we have established our business here in Cyprus¹² and it is going well. I bought the most beautiful car of my life. A BMW... ”

“...We came from Kars... From a small village of Kars. I had a strong Turkish accent when I first arrived in Istanbul but later I corrected it. ”

Tolga as the initiator and the administrator does not belong to this group as a part of the virtual identity of the group, however, he is the person who brings all these participants together under the roof of a particular identity: *RKOT*. Nevertheless, in terms of his contributions to the interviews both as a reference person and as the brain-father of the *Instagram* account, he has eased the work for me in terms of determining the social class of *RKOT* in real life, their motivations and the criteria needed to be tagged on the page.

1. The Super-Rich

This group makes almost one third of the all interviewees. They all have private jets, yachts and properties abroad (e.g. the USA and Italy) especially in expensive cities (e.g. New York, Milano, Miami) and neighborhoods (e.g. Manhattan). Although some wanted to be modest about it, they all defined themselves as “rich” and seemed to be grateful and happy about it:

(Are you literally rich?)

“We cannot decide how rich a person is just looking at his/her property but let me tell you this: I used to fly to Las Vegas by my private jet (from Miami). I go to the Bahamas for dinner by my private jet. ”

¹² A few months later after the interview, he moved to Cyprus with his brother to run a café/restaurant.

"I do not describe myself as rich... It is very rude to call yourself rich but yes I am regarded as a wealthy person by people."

"Yes. Literally but I cannot show it now because I am too young (17years old). But in a year's time, I can show it because I will be 18 and my dad will buy me the car I want. For example, our house costs 20,000,000 TRY but nobody knows it because I haven't shared it but I will next year."

Although my interviewees were honest about their wealth, Tolga also helped me a lot in identifying their social status and wealth level:

"For example, there is M. K. have you met him? He is so crazy."

(Why are you saying that?)

"He is very rich... very..."

2. The Rich

These interviewees make the biggest part of the interviewed RKOTS. They have high life standards, expensive cars (e.g. *Camaro*, *Lamborghini*, etc.), live in the same posh neighborhoods (e.g. *Bebek*, *Tarabya*, *Etiler*, *Maslak Plazas*), hang out in the same restaurants and cafes (e.g. *Çırağan*, *Nus-ret*, etc.) and shop from designer stores (e.g. *Chanel*, *Armani*, *Fendi*, etc.). Some preferred to explain their life style and life standards rather than labeling themselves rich or not while some were quite precise about it:

"Having lots of free time is the biggest richness for me. I can say that we have a family business to be run on a lot of money but we have lots of expenditures too. ...I have a BMW."

"My dad has 70 cars and 10 properties but he is still paying for the debts on the cars."

"I am rich but not much... Just average."

Like the participants of the first category, this group also has a class-consciousness. They know that they are upscale in the society but they are also aware of the fact that their wealth is not tremendous. They mostly define their wealth as the "normal" consequence of the business their family run. In brief, this category consists of young people who are aware of the fact that they are economically above the majority of the

society even though they claim that they have as many expenditures as their income but just at an upscale standard.

1. The Upper-Middle Class

These *RKOT* were the smallest group among the interviewed subjects and they had different motivations to be tagged on the *Instagram* page. They live in good neighborhoods, shop from more mediocre stores sometimes from the expensive ones and earn their own livings:

“I do not think I am financially rich... I have a well-paid job in a very good company. I live in Bebek in a very nice apartment with my flat-mate. I spend 8-12.000 TRY per month. I have lots of friends... There are lots of people I am in touch with... That’s why my life is going very well... Thus, socially, I feel very rich.”

This *RKOT* defines wealth as having lots of friends. However, his follow-up sentences indicate that it is not about only the abundant number of friends but also the lifestyle, and choices of these people. Even though he is not a *Boğaziçi University*¹³ graduate, he reports that he has very beautiful people around from *Boğaziçi University* and that he voluntarily works as the head of the *Boğaziçi* American football team. Thus, as a high-value university, *Boğaziçi* makes a distinction for him in terms of friends’ selection since good education means good social status in Turkish society even though it is not directly linked to the economic power of the individual. However, it should be kept in mind that this university is located in Etiler which is one of the most expensive neighborhoods in Istanbul and this *RKOT* and his friends tend to do upper class activities (e.g. playing American football, going out in Etiler) in their leisure time. Hence, this *RKOT*’s social richness is somehow relevant to the economic wellbeing of his milieu.

“I don’t know what’s the definition of “the rich”. If a person goes above the standards that he/she determines in his mind, he/she can be regarded as rich. I think for the last 4-5 years I have been above this standard. My family is not rich. They are middle class. I started from scratch thanks to my social milieu.”

Jensen (2006) shows that young men gain social status and recognition through a specific strength-related form of style in the subculture due to their shared low social

¹³ One of the top universities in Turkey which is also known for its social activities and American way of lifestyle.

status in the society. Thus, expressive masculinity and bodily capital in the subculture become a collectively shared criteria of status as a practical answer to the shared problem of lack of social status. In his later work, Jensen (2017) suggests that “*those who have little capital in general and therefore little to offer in society’s conventional fields*” (p. 10) may need the production of subcultural capital more than privileged youth groups since hierarchical struggles and subcultural status are achieved in subcultures for those who are at the margins. Thus, this upper-middle class *RKOT* who are well-educated and have successful careers may want to gain (a) social status and recognition in the world of the “rich” by forming an expressive wealth-related capital in the subculture.

The interviews have shown that the rich identity of the *RKOT* mostly coincides with their real-life rich identity despite the upper-middle class *RKOT* who make the minority in the group. Besides, there was no interviewee belonging to lower class although the moderator accepted that he would share a “good” photo as long as he is paid for it regardless of the social class of the person who shares it:

“If a person represents wealth in the photo, I share it even if this person is not wealthy... I share a very “special” (rich) person’s photo for free but I wouldn’t share the photo of a low class person’s photo for free.”

Thus, *RKOT* on *Instagram* are mostly wealthy young people in their real life as well. Most of them are students or university graduates although there are only a few who quit school because they do not like going to school and they prefer working in their family businesses. Most make their living with the money coming from the family¹⁴ while the upper-middle class ones are earning a living by themselves without any financial family support. Especially girls prefer not to work but just to get the money they need from the family (generally the father) while some boys regard themselves as working although they cannot all give a clear description of the work they do:

(How do you get the money you need?)

“I ask from him (father). He doesn’t want us to use credit cards. We spend cash only. He doesn’t ask what I am doing with the money he gives me.”

¹⁴ Mostly the father is responsible for the income.

“Dad is a ship engineer. I work with my dad.”

“My dad built up everything from scratch. He is very hardworking. I work with him.”

(What do you do?)

“I am helping him (father) now. But they will give me a worksite in the future.”
(His father is in the construction sector)

“Basically my dad looks after the family but everybody in the family works... Not mom... She never went to school. Nobody spends money without dad’s permission.”

The educational background of the families differs and directly reflects the rich kid’s life philosophy and tastes. Those whose families are educated (undergraduate degree and higher) tend to talk about themselves more modestly avoiding talking about the importance of money while others whose families are uneducated or undereducated tend to talk about the success “the father” has achieved by himself by starting from scratch thanks to a lot of hard work, devotion and dedication:

“Dad is very hardworking. He went to Germany when he was young with his father and worked in various jobs. He built everything from scratch.”

“My dad has various businesses. Mining, construction, real estate... He owns the land where the third airport is being constructed. He is very close to Tayyip (the President of Turkey). They get along quite well.”

Also those who come from more educated families enjoy doing “life-experience” activities while the others enjoy spending their money on more mundane entertainments like eating out and shopping:

“I am a golf player. People say I am good at it. I used to play golf in Italy in the first league as the captain of the team.”

“I travel a lot. I have been to almost everywhere in Turkey. I use my money for travelling.”

“I go to Şile, Ağva with my friends. I go to Çırağan (a five-star hotel) to smoke shisha, Nus-ret to eat meat. I used to go to Reina (an expensive night club) and Billionaire (an expensive night club) but not anymore...”

“Drinking raki (a traditional Turkish alcoholic drink) with my friends or by myself is my favorite activity.”

“I like shopping. I definitely buy something every day. Bags, shoes, clothes... especially shoes...”

To conclude, in subcultural studies “class” plays a central role in relation to subcultural participation and social dispositions. With this in mind, *RKOT* on *Instagram* have a specific upper class structure which is coherent with the class of the subjects in real life since no *RKOT* interviewed belongs to the lower class. Nevertheless, unlike the homological working class approach of *CCCS* scholars in subcultures, the “richness” in *RKOT* displays hierarchical segregations even though the posts do not explicitly indicate these segregations at face value. As a consequence, the heterogeneity in terms of educational, social, cultural and economic backgrounds has an influence on the worldviews and life perspectives of *RKOT*. In addition, some *RKOT* do not have the same economic power and capital as they display on the page in their real lives.

Lastly, some contemporary scholars turn their attention to the concepts of gender, ethnicity and race in respect to class. *CCCS* scholars are criticized due to their inadequate theorization of these concepts, which could be very relevant to class struggles (e.g. Gilroy, 1993; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). Bjurström (1997) also draws attention to the need of sensitive analyses of class, ethnicity, and gender. However, in the case of *RKOT*, 3 Kurdish and 1 Circassian subjects interviewed have indicated that being rich has nothing to do with ethnicity. They all have stated that they have a sense of belonging to Turkish identity although one of them has stated that his father is a clan leader and their wealth comes from the culture of feudality in the Eastern part of Turkey. Hence, the dominant ideology and the cultural assimilation of specific ethnicities in Turkish society also shape the ideology and the culture of the members of *RKOT* who belong to different ethnicities.

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that *RKOT* exist as an upper class youth that have easier access to consumer goods and high standards of living than the working class youth that are more likely to suffer from the neo-liberal economic and social structures in the 21st century. Yet, it does not necessarily mean that *RKOT* who belong to the upper class do not struggle with any problems resulting from the current

socio-economic and socio-cultural structures in Turkish society. For this reason, in the resistance part, their revolt is discussed in respect to the problems *RKOT* face.

In the interviews, along with the moderator 15 interviewees out of 20 stated that they already knew about *RKOT* before *RKOT* although they were not actively involved in it. Only 2 of them had not heard about or followed *RKOT* although the others added that they used to follow *RKOT* or that they still follow *RKOT* but not regularly. They find *RKOT* similar to *RKOT* in terms of images and concepts. Yet, they believe that the case of *RKOT* is different since in Turkey the culture and the viewpoint of the society would not allow certain aspects of *RKOT*:

“Of course... The main themes on the pages are similar like the representation of wealth, expensive cars... mansions, private jets... But it can't be the same. You know...”

*“Of course, I started it by being inspired by this page. I saw it and said to myself “it is good” but it doesn't work the same way as it does with *RKOT*. Here in Turkey, things are different. For example, I shared the photos with golden frames at the beginning but I received lots of reactions from the members. They asked me to take the golden frames out. They found it cheesy. Or when I shared the photos with provocative captions, I received negative reactions from the owners of the photos... They asked me to delete the caption. In Turkey everybody wants to be “cool”. So the same system does not work here.”*

Kabaş (2017) argues that “cool attitude” is “the most distinctive subcultural reflex of the youth” since it is regarded as an individual opposition “rather than a collective political reaction” (p. 57). Hence, cool shows itself by eliminating social rules, norms and values which do not allow the individuals to discover themselves. Therefore, cool stands for hedonism which results in the point of self-destruction frequently. Consistent with what Kabaş (2017) suggests, *RKOT* show coolness as an individual opposition by eliminating the norms of being rich in the established society. In the former chapter, it has been discussed that neither the rich nor the rest of the society approves of the ostentatious display of wealth in the 21st century. However, *RKOT* known for displaying lavish lifestyles construct their coolness by the destruction of the dominant culture which approves of “good rich” in the established society. Nevertheless, they oppose this dominant culture up to a certain extent since they do not allow a kind of hedonism that will result in the point of self-destruction

frequently. Therefore, the difference of “coolness” between *RKOT* and *RKOT* sheds light on the influence of socio-cultural and socio-economic structures in different established societies even though both phenomena are regarded as the diffusion of the same shared ideology.

RKOT also represent some distinctions from the culture of *RKOT* in terms of their “focal” concerns and activities. Even though in traditional subcultural studies, the working class culture is defined as the “parent” culture of the spectacular subcultures, this study focuses on both the culture of the “rich” and of *RKOT* as the “parent” culture. About the distinction from the parent culture, Hall & Jefferson (2003) suggest that:

Sub-cultures must exhibit a distinctive enough shape and structure to make them identifiably different from their “parent” culture. They must be focused around certain activities, values, certain uses of material artefacts, territorial spaces etc. which significantly differentiate them from the wider culture. But, since they are subsets, there must also be significant things which bind and articulate them with the “parent” culture. (p. 13-14)

Hall and Jefferson’s (2003) words are important to analyze the symbolic and intentional relations between *RKOT* and *RKOT* cultures since *RKOT* has emerged as a derivative of *RKOT* with some differences. Although the culture of the “rich” and the values given to luxury consumer goods and lavish lifestyles are represented similarly both on *RKOT* and *RKOT*, there is still a crucial distinction of style between them that highlights cultural differences. For example, a male *RKOT* shares a post in which he smokes a shisha in an expensive car, which is an element of the Middle Eastern culture. Some may argue that these distinctions are not enough to make *RKOT* a subculture derived from their “parent” culture *RKOT*. Yet, Hall & Jefferson (2003) suggest that some subcultures do not possess a distinctive world of their own due to their loosely-defined strands or “milieu” within the parent culture while some others do. Thus, not only *RKOT* but also other *RKOT* such as Tehran, Dubai, India and so on can also be regarded subcultures derived from the “parent” culture: *RKOT* although they all have their own specific wealth-related coherent identity and structure. Besides these gestural and discursive differences, *RKOT* are Turkish citizens speaking the Turkish

language in the territory of Turkey unlike the England based *RKOI*. Thus, even this difference from *RKOI* is more likely to be adequate to define *RKOI* as a parent culture.

In addition, *RKOT* have the caption of “*Rich Families of Turkey*” whilst *RKOI* have “*We have more money than you, this is what we do. Instagram made us change our name but not our game*”. Thus, the provocative motto of *RKOI* does not appear in the Turkish leg of the culture since most members of the page are reluctant to be “explicitly” provocative towards people following them:

(Why don't you use provocative hashtags and captions in the photos like RKOI?)

“It is not like England. They don't like it when I share provocative or too ostentatious things. For example, I put a golden template framing the photos like the RKOI do but they didn't like it. They found it too uncouth. When I write a provoking caption or a comment under a post, they call me and ask me to delete it.”

Nevertheless, all *RKOT* like to exist on this page as “rich” even though it is not always “them” who asked to be tagged on the page:

“I wanted more followers... That's why I wanted to be tagged on RKOT. It was popular then and it was very difficult to be tagged on RKOT. It didn't accept any photos from ordinary men. You had to pay for it but I was tagged without paying anything. RKOT was only following 20 people and I was one of them.”

“Tolga texted me first and asked me if he could tag my photo on RKOT. I accepted it because he asked my permission. We became friends later, went out for dinner. I accepted it because the page was nice... There were quality and wealthy people so I thought it was ok.”

“Tolga tagged me 3 times... I was frustrated first but once I read the comments underneath, I loved it. That's why I didn't ask him to delete my photos.”

“I wanted to be tagged but I didn't pay for it. But a friend of mine paid for me and I was tagged. I gained more customers. My primary reason was advertising my company to the “rich” and I did it.”

“They first tagged me without me paying anything. Then I asked them to share a photo of mine in a helicopter paying 300 TRY. I got 180 follower requests after the first post. After the second one, I got around 100 more.”

As a consequence, all *RKOT*, even those who did not like the fact that they were tagged on the page at the beginning, are glad to appear on the page. Despite various motivations and objectives such as gaining popularity, advertising their job, and drawing attention, *RKOT* apparently represent a collective rich identity. Also, the existence of a specific social class (the upper class) and a distinctive style (lavish lifestyles and ostentatious display of wealth) coincide with the core concepts of subcultural studies despite some differences regarding class and style. Moreover, use of social media (especially *Instagram*) as a societal space, societal reactions coming from the dominant culture (e.g. the media and *Instagram* comments) are other concepts that could be discussed within the realm of subcultural theory. Based on this data and the literature review, the case of *RKOT* on *Instagram* is analyzed considering the core concepts of the subcultural theory: “style”, “resistance”, “space and media”, “societal reaction”, “identity and authenticity” and “leisure” to provide insight into the current subcultural studies in local and global contexts although most current subcultural studies utilize only one or few of them (Williams, 2007).

4.3. Subcultural Style and *RKOT*

One of the most notable aspects of Hebdige’s (1979) work on subcultures is “style”, which means appropriation and recontextualization of artefacts through practices of bricolage (Lohman, 2017). Hebdige (1979) argues that the members of subculture seek to challenge the values and norms of the society. Hence, he follows a semiotic approach to analyze subverted and appropriated clothing and behaviors of subcultures such as mods, skinheads, punks, etc. Even though widely critiqued, the fact that Hebdige (1979) puts lots of emphasis on “spectacular” style(s) of subculture leads to theorization of subculture for later studies.

For example, in his symbolic analyses of punk, he focuses on their practices of consumption. He distinguishes punk subculture from the other working class subcultures since it displays “otherness” and “absurdity” outside the “parent” culture (working class culture) rather than positioning punks in the “parent” culture. Like Hebdige, Laing (1985) in *One Chord Wonders* also adopts a semiotic approach to analyze the style of punk by taking a broader approach. Cohen (1972) states that style consists of 4 dimensions: dress, music, rituals and argot and these dimensions can be categorized into cultural objects and practices; however, only symbolic indicators (e.g.

expensive cars, designers' clothes and so on) do not make style by themselves (Williams, 2007, p.7).

The various youth sub-cultures have been identified by their possessions and objects. ... Yet, despite their visibility, things simply appropriated and worn (or listened to) do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylization – the active organization of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organized group-identity in the form and shape of a coherent and distinctive way of “being-in-the-world”. (Hall & Stuart, 2003, p.54)

In the former chapter it has been stated that *RKOT* display a specific “ostentatious rich kid” identity through subverted and appropriated symbolic indicators of wealth such as expensive cars, private jets and yachts, luxury holidays, designer's clothes and so on at face value. Thus, *RKOT* can be claimed to have a distinctive style since their “ostentatiously rich” identity is constructed through the activity of stylization. One who looks through *Instagram* is likely to see photos in which people pose with expensive consumer goods but because they do it individually without being a part of a group or without giving some ostentatious messages to the audience, their image and look cannot be regarded as the same style as discussed in subcultural studies. However, *RKOT* shows a solidarity in style as they are all tagged on the same *Instagram* page as being the active participants of group-identity. Also, the reactions of the media and society they have received¹⁵ display a conscious activity of stylization. Accordingly, their visibility without an active organization of objects including activities and outlooks is not sufficient to call them a group. Instead, the way (how) they form and shape coherent and distinctive group-identity gives them a symbolic and distinctive style that differentiates them from the rest of the “rich”:

“It is appealing... sports cars... nice settings... I was tagged on the page because of my car – Maserati.”

“I was tagged in a Mustang in Las Vegas... Another one was in Arizona in a helicopter. Ummm... Errr... I think I wanted to come out of my shell.”

¹⁵ Discussed in chapter 3.

“My photos on RKOT display me with private jets, yachts, helicopters, planes and mansions.”

Therefore, consistent with the semiotic analyses in respect to the subverted and appropriated style of *RKOT*, luxury consumer goods that interviewees point out (e.g. a Maserati, a Mustang, a helicopter, a yacht, a private jet, etc.) indicate that *RKOT* have a collectively “spectacular” style. However, another criterion of *RKOT*’s style is to appear to be of “quality”. The concept of quality among *RKOT* is determined according to the people tagged on the page and how a *RKOT* looks like in a post:

“... I am not a famous person. I am a normal man... But the detail in my photos is that I wear chic clothes... I always go to the nice places... Yes, I am a bit artificial. It is what I lack in my photos but there is a meaning in all my photos. In the background of my photos, there is a beautiful view for sure... That’s why I am a quality man. Nobody can deny it.”

“When I look at the page, I see that there is a criterion to be tagged there. They do not share the photos under a specific quality level.”

“I have lots of money and I find this account very high-quality. Some cheap accounts ask for my photos to share but I would never let them do that”

“What makes this page different is that Tolga shares photos very selectively. He shares only the people who suit that page... My photo tagged on RKOT displays me with a yellow Camaro.”

Thus, “quality” is an important component of style among *RKOT*. They all could wear designer’s clothes, drive expensive cars, eat in expensive places and use luxury consumer goods but “they are not regarded as “rich” unless they do not look “quality” enough.” “Quality” indicates saturation of a *RKOT* who can show his wealth without being “uncouth” and “ostentatious”. Although most photos “ostentatiously” and “uncouthly” indicate wealth¹⁶ due to the theme of the page, almost no *RKOT* regards himself/herself as “uncouth” or “ostentatious” underlying the fact that they are different from the others tagged on the page:

¹⁶ *RKOT* accept the fact that their photos are extravagant and ostentatious.

“They (other RKOT) give a message: I have a standard (high) and I should display it. Maybe for the purpose of vanity”.

“All of them are posing as if they didn’t know that somebody was taking their photo. It is mostly showing off.”

“People like to show off a lot... There are quite a lot of rich ones among them but they are those who like to show off.”

“In my photo I show only the watch on my wrist but the others show their property in the photo. It makes a lot of difference.”

“I’m more friendly and modest. I find them cold. RKOT is a community of the rich. Flashy... Ostentatious...”

“Putting money in the boot of the car and taking a photo of it... It’s not an indication of wealth... It’s vulgarity.”

“We do not have anything in common. What they share is cheesy... What it costs me when I land by my private jet is equal to how much they spend in a week... What they do is show off.”

“People who share photos on RKOT and those who follow RKOT are lowbrows. I’m a lowbrow too (Laughter).”

Hence, according to the participants of the page, the “style” of the RKOT is not as rigid and fixed as CCCS’s conceptualizations of subcultural groups although some wealth indicators (e.g. cars, yachts, private jets, etc.) are also commonly defined as indicators of RKOT identity by the interviewees. However, Muggleton (2000) argues that “style” in today’s contemporary subcultures is *“a symptom of postmodern hyperindividualism”* (p. 6). Therefore, subcultures are *“manifestations of self-expression, individual autonomy and cultural diversity”* (p. 167). In the RKOT case, it is seen that the style defined by the members of the group is based on their manifestations of self-expression in relation to the other RKOT tagged on the profile. Therefore, the cultural diversity and individual autonomy of RKOT are also the factors that make style fluid yet important.

However, especially being familiar with the other participants in real life makes a difference for RKOT. Hall & Jefferson (2003) suggest that loosely-defined strands or “milieux” of some subcultures within the parent culture do not allow them to possess

a distinctive world of their own. Since most *RKOT* come from wealthy families, the schools they went to and the social environments they have been to are the same. Thus, they know each other from the outside world of *RKOT* on *Instagram* and are able to confirm whether a member is “rich” or not:

“For example, Ş.... (a girl tagged on RKOT) The girl looks very wealthy on her Instagram but she is a hungry dog in her real life. I know who she is. I know her family.”¹⁷

“E... (a male RKOT) is rich. I know his family. You can understand it from his photo in a private jet.”

“I know at least 80% of these people. They are all boys. I was brought up in the same environments as they were brought up in. We went to the same schools, we live in the same residential areas, we go to the same places.”

Yet, *RKOT* tend to define affluence in a subjective way, which is relevant to *RKOT*’s individual worldview and perspectives. Hence, being wealthy and having an upscale lifestyle do not necessarily mean “wealth” without the criteria they described:

“There are a lot of rich people. You know... Thousands... They are rich but not quality people. I understand wealth from the people in the photos. I think somehow you understand it.”

“A person who takes photos next to a car is not necessarily rich. People like to show off. I can be sure that a person is rich unless he/she displays his/her wealth much.”

“In my worldview, being rich just because your father is rich is gross. My friends and I laughed a lot after I was tagged as a rich kid because the opportunities are not equal. Even an idiot can be rich just because his dad is rich.”

Therefore, the meaning of being “rich” varies across *RKOT*. Although all of them have a distinctive style which distinguishes them from the ordinary “rich”, they do not describe “wealth” as they display on the page. Also, they do not regard themselves as “uncouth” as others in the group. Thus, this can be explained with Hebdige’s (1979) words: *“it is highly unlikely, for instance, that the members of any*

¹⁷ This *RKOT* is working in family business. The female *RKOT* he talks about is not working. Her family is wealthy but he does not define her as rich since she does not earn her own living.

of the subcultures described in this book would recognize themselves reflected here" (p. 139). In other words, members of subculture do not consciously realize that there are some hidden rules behind their style (e.g. clothing, practices, behaviors, etc.) due to the naturalization of this style to them.

In CCCS subcultural studies, clothing and sartorial distinctiveness was a key element of style. For example, mods who were trying to look like the middle class youth with a specific style (e.g. tailor-made suits, skinny ties, pointed shoes, scooters, etc.) were also committed to their working class background (e.g. Jazz, Blues, R&B music). Thus, subcultures tended to dress in ways that differ them from their peer groups by "*re-ordering and re-conceptualizing the objects to communicate fresh meanings...*" (Clarke, 1976b, p. 177). In *RKOT*, the style determined by luxury consumer goods and an upscale lifestyle in relation to the upper class is also re-ordered and re-conceptualized with more "individualized" and "ostentatious" compositions. (e.g. a photo of a luxury car with an open boot in which there are loads of banknotes).

However, "*subcultural members do not attribute the same meanings to their style as "outsiders" do. Therefore, when punks draw a swastika on a jacket or jeans, they may not mean to signify fascism, but rather simply to shock narrow-minded parents, teachers, and peers.*" (Williams, 2007, p.8). Thus, meanings inferred from their style by the media and people who are not a member of *RKOT* could be different from the meanings *RKOT* attribute to it themselves. Although Hodkinson (2002) points out that wearing black represents a collective identity for goths, Bovone (2003) states that they wear black because they feel like wearing black when they get up pissed off in the morning. Thus, stylistic choice in subculture shows a precarious nature in postmodern approaches (Williams, 2007). And *RKOT* affirm this argument of Williams in terms of stylization:

"My RKOT photo is a photo of mine while skiing. It's not about being wealthy but maybe skiing is a sport which belongs to the wealthy class."

"I do not get my photos taken intentionally. It happens by coincidence. But I work on my photos and I like it when people like them."

“I love to show off. I have brought this phone (Vertu Signature)¹⁸ today just to show off. It does nothing. It’s like you are taking photos with an iron. It is meaningful just because of its price...”

“In some photos I look like them. But it’s not because I want to look rich. I just share what I find beautiful.”

Post-subcultural scholars (e.g. Muggleton, 2000; Bennett, 2000; Miles, 2000) center on a Weberian perspective by highlighting the significance of individual action and consumerism. In other words, they argue that young people do not have any influences on social structures. Moreover, different sets of values determine the structures of the society. Hence, post-subcultural scholars claim that not its relation to production and struggle but the expression of individual consumption and lifestyle construct style (Blackman, 2014). For example, Muggleton (2002) focuses on how clothing styles are used to distinguish individuals not only from mainstream culture, but from other members of the subculture as forms of “*distinctive individuality*”. Within a post-subcultural perspective, *RKOT* display individual consumption patterns and lifestyle since almost all of them wear upscale brands and designer’s clothes and have luxury lifestyles and choices. However, even the super-rich *RKOT* interviewed have stated that they also wear clothing items from mainstream stores like Zara¹⁹ since they like the design and the cuts:

“I wear only from Beymen. But I shop only when there is a sale.”

“I’m picky in terms of clothing... Chanel, Dior, etc...”

“Celine, Chanel, Prada, Gucci, Beymen... But I also wear Zara.”

“My girlfriend adores Cartier and Versace. But I can’t find anything in these stores. I never get something just because of its make or designer. Normally I wear clothes from Zara. I wear what suits me well.”

From these quotes, it can be inferred that *RKOT* shows an individual consumerist behavior. The post-subcultural theorists argue that individual consumer creativity is important for reinforcing identity (e.g. Thornton, 1995; Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2002). However, Blackman (2014) states that they neglect “*the collective*

¹⁸ A \$10.000 - mobile phone with the function of crypto security.

¹⁹ A Spanish chain store for clothing.

nature of subcultural practice” (p. 506). Thus, they put emphasis on individual pleasure, choice and individualism regarding hybridity of consumerism regardless of class, gender and race (Blackman, 2014). Like Blackman (2014), Hodgkinson (2002), Griffin (2011) and Williams (2011) criticize post-subcultural theorists since their works lack critical analyses of current neo-liberal social structure and order unlike CCCS’s.

Williams (2011) argues that subcultures which are embedded in the wider culture can spread through social interaction so that we can view how social structures constraint cultural practices while allowing individual negotiation. Based on William’s (2011) argument, Lohman (2017) suggests to adopt Crossley’s (1996) model of intersubjectivity and importance of subcultural theory to understand connectivity. Crossley (1996) claims that intersubjectivity explains how the meaning based on assumptions of all groups is created and shared through verbal and non-verbal communication. Similarly, Wan (2012) suggests that cultural meanings are constructed between individuals. Thus, both Crossley (1996) and Wan (2012) claim that the meaning does not remain fixed but tends to evolve due to intersubjectivity. Therefore, *RKOT*’s style constructed by shared and created meanings through subcultural artefacts, commodities and rituals represents an evolving intersubjectivity.

In addition, *RKOT*’s upper class identity, luxury consumer goods and expensive clothing style, despite some individual choices and differences, shed light on the current neo-liberal socio-economic and socio-cultural structures. The poses they strike and the ostentatious and extravagant attitude while displaying their luxury consumer goods in the posts also construct a collective style despite various forms of “distinctive individuality”. Therefore, CCCS’s subcultural theory which is based on a cultural studies approach and resistance through style still should and must be considered viable for a critical analysis of *RKOT* although it should and must be rethought under the circumstances of the 21st century.

Both in post-war subcultures and in post-subcultures, the forms of music have been one of the important components of style (e.g. punks, rockers, Rastafarians, club cultures, straightedge). “*Youths’ subcultural practices become meaningful through stylization, from slang terms and secret hand-signs to food preferences, music and dance forms. Music has proven to be a particularly potent aspect of meaning-making among young people*” (Williams, 2007, p.8). However, there are still numerous post-

war and post-subcultures which do not center around a specific kind of music (e.g. mods²⁰ and Sapeur Parisiens) to construct identity. Similarly, in *RKOT* there is no content of music in the posts. Nevertheless, participants show a tendency to play club music in their stories especially when driving. Also, in the interviews they have stated that they listen to any kind of music which is beautiful to them although the examples they have given are limited to pop, club and Turkish folk music genres for some *RKOT*. Thus, they tend to consume popular music without commitment to it. They also do not make music.

Bearing all this in mind, *RKOT* as the wealthy “ostentatious youth” of the post-industrialized society can be seen as a neo-subculture with their distinctive and “spectacular style” which also shows individual consumer creativity since we are no longer able to talk about the traditional social class struggles of the 1960s and 1970s in England. Although the style of *RKOT* mostly coincides with the definition of *CCCS* theorists, it also carries the concept of individual consumer creativity that post-subcultural theorists suggest. Thus, rather than deterministically choosing either of both approaches, grounding on the *CCCS*’s subcultural theory and reconsidering it under the circumstances of the socio-economic and socio-cultural structures of the 21st century as Williams (2011; 2017), Jensen (2017) and Lohman (2017) suggest can provide an insight of the subcultural style in the post-industrialized, neo-liberal society.

4.4. Resistance and *RKOT*

Williams (2007) highlights that a variety of activities of youth have been considered “resistant”, “rebellious” or “deviant” by subcultural scholars depending on their own perspectives. Social environment and human actors have played an important role in the establishment of concepts predicated on complex relationships. Despite some differences in perspectives, all subculture scholars have approached resistance as a sign of “*opposition or alternative to existing power relationships*” (Williams, 2007, p.9). He also suggests that one should be skeptical about resistance of youth since they might be consciously resistant, or resistant about something else or not resistant at all. *CCCS* scholars theorized the subcultural resistance putting forward the idea that social spaces and stylistic practices represent a resistance against

²⁰ Although they listen to soul, ska and R&B.

the dominant culture which could be the family culture, school culture, or middle class culture (Hall & Jefferson, 2003). For example, skinheads' style (e.g. suspenders, jeans, boots, etc.) was seen as a resistance against the dominant culture in order to reconstitute the traditional working class culture. However, some theorists like Lowney (1995) and Brake (1985) argue that resistance in youth subcultures does not work the same as seen by the other theorists (see Copes and Williams 2007; Haenfler 2004; Moore 2007; Schilt 2003; Wood 2003). They claim that resistance through style does not improve the youth's social status or educational benefits rather it creates a collective identity at a "cultural level". For example, the practices of a group of teenage Satanists in the US was mainly about upsetting the oppressive local Christian culture at their high school rather than a commitment to Satanic worship (Lowney, 1995).

In this aspect, based on the media exposure discussed in the former chapter and their ostentatious posts displaying wealth in a highly marginal way is likely to make someone assume that *RKOT* could be resistant against the consumer culture of the lower class who tries to look wealthy or against their parents or against the other rich. However, after the interviews, it has come out that *RKOT* do not have a particular overt resistance against any other social classes, school or parents differently from their "parent" culture *RKOI* which has a caption saying "*we have more money than they do, this is what we do...*" It is rather either an emulation and a competition among likeminded wealthy youth or a utilitarian activity:

(What's your motivation to be tagged on RKOT?)

"To be liked. I like my photos to be liked. I put effort into my photos, I like it when people like them."

"I have money. It is a very chic page. I met a person like Tolga thanks to this page and when we go to some places we (RKOT) recognize each other. The page is the best of the world. I love it very much."

"Tolga and I have common friends. We live nearby too. We went to Çırağan one day and he wanted to share my photo. I can't say why I wanted him to post my photo but not for networking. It's a bit of fun."

"The page was nice. There were quality and wealthy people so it was ok."

“I like the page. I don’t think there are fake ones because there are lots of people I know. Especially the recently tagged ones are mostly my friends.”

“My friend was sharing his own photos and wanted to share mine too. He paid for it.”

Thus, this category consists of *RKOT* who see the page as a platform that brings wealthy young people from the same milieu together. Accordingly, they seem not to have any kind of overt resistance against a specific ideology or class. Nevertheless, emulation between these young people is an important factor for being tagged on the page. The desire of appearing like other peers who are wealthy on the same *Instagram* profile indicates the significance of milieu in respect to subcultural formations. Belonging to the same class and life standards in real life makes these *RKOT* convinced about the genuineness of the page where they can share their photos with a *RKOT* identity.

However, the factor of emulation does not project itself as naively as in the motivations of these *RKOT* in all members. Some *RKOT* who come from the same social class and who are familiar with the other *RKOT* tagged on the page share posts on the profile since they run against the other wealthy peers and want to prove that they can do even better than them. In addition, some *RKOT* share posts on the profile to make a distinction between themselves and “the other rich”:

I bought it (Vertu Signiture) as a result of my anger. People were thinking that I was having all these cars thanks to my footballer boyfriend and they were saying I was renting the cars. So I bought a Vertu and put it on the table to show them I am capable of buying things. I am carrying a phone that costs the same price as a car. A phone they cannot afford. It is a kind of resistance. I sometimes show off myself. Even to my dad. He asks why I show off because he buys them for me. I just become happy.”

“...My friends say that I share very beautiful photos. Both their appreciation and my defiance are my real reasons for sharing posts.”

“There is a useless person in Antalya who posts his photos every second. I know his family. They are very rich but he is not because he is not earning his own money. He is spending his family’s money. If Tolga puts any person’s photos on the

page, I would also fall down to their level. He shouldn't share such people's photos on the page."²¹

Accordingly, milieu has a central role in the motivation for being tagged on the *Instagram* profile of *RKOT*. Likeminded or not, *RKOT* hold a specific class identity which brings them together in a cultural milieu. Hall and Jefferson (2003) claim that "*localized conceptions of class are in fact the rule rather than the exception*" (p. 202). Hence, the conception of the upper class among *RKOT* is based on their cultural milieu in Turkish society which has gone through a set of cultural, economic and social changes as a result of neo-liberalism and globalization. Lockwood (1966) also explains this as "*For the most part men visualize the class structure...of their society from the vantage points of their own particular milieux...*" (p. 249). Accordingly, what *RKOT* understand from the "rich kid" identity on the *Instagram* profile indicates the perceptions and understanding of "wealth" in their particular milieu in real life.

Another reason that brings these wealthy kids together under the same roof of *RKOT* identity is utilitarianism. However, the aspect of utilitarianism among *RKOT* varies according to the needs and gratifications of the members. Some utilitarian ones get their photos tagged on the profile since they want a network for their business:

"I am not ridiculing this page because it contributes to me indirectly because it shares my work place and a person who sees it realizes that I am the owner of the beach they have gone to, for example."

"I wanted to be tagged on this page because I wanted to enlarge my business circle."

However, this desire of career is not explicitly represented on the profile since subcultures emerge around leisure rather than career goals even though members may have similar career based objectives or problems regarding their class. Hall & Jefferson (2003) argue that "*there is no "sub-cultural career" for the working-class lad, no "solution" in the sub-cultural milieu, for problems posed by the key structuring experiences of the class*" (p. 47). Consistent with this, *RKOT* who want to enlarge their networks or advertise their business prefer to be tagged as an ostentatious "rich kid" on the profile rather than a business owner.

²¹ This *RKOT* is 35 and runs his family business (agriculture) with his father although he studied law.

The majority of utilitarian *RKOT* use this identity to struggle with the gender-role stereotypes in the established society. Hence, *RKOT* on *Instagram* serve them as a tool to challenge the stereotyped gender roles:

“I wanted to chat up girls. Once you are tagged there, the number of your followers increases.”

“I wanted to have a bigger social environment of women in Istanbul. I didn’t have many friends here because I was in Russia. I thought girls might like me and I can have some connections with them.”

Almost all male *RKOT* who think that they can have easier access to girls when they are tagged on the profile do it for recognition. They think that they would be more recognizable and desirable by girls if they have a high social status since they believe that girls are attracted to power and that wealth means power today:

“First of all, because of girls. I met a few girls who reached out to me but I couldn’t find what I was expecting. I want to have a conversation with the person I date... Especially girls who look for money got in touch me.”

“Actually I don’t like to be popular. But maybe for girls. Girls are only interested in your money. I even do not text back to these girls on Instagram. All boys like to draw girls’ attention. People like to be flattered; I think I liked it.”

Consistent with what they have said in the interviews, the comment Tolga (the administrator) has made summarizes *RKOT*’s utilitarian reason to be tagged on the page:

(Why do you think these people are on this page?)

“Most of them are chasing women. If there are any who do not, it means they are gay.”

(But they have lots of money. Why are they trying to find girls on Instagram?)

“Because they have had enough of everything. There are women in their lives but this platform is different for them. They are satisfying their egos. They show off. Most of them already know each other because most of them go to good schools and know each other from childhood. They are in a competition with each other.”

Accordingly, gaining social status is one of the most important gratifications of *RKOT* for being tagged on the profile although there is no *RKOT* who belong to lower classes. Jensen (2017) criticizes *CCCS* scholars for not focusing on social status as a core motivation of subcultural participation. He also highlights the importance of Cohen's work which suggests that working class young men are embarrassed due to their low social status since they adopt middle class cultural values. In *RKOT*, there is no embarrassment resulting from class consciousness since even the poorest *RKOT* come from the upper middle class. Yet, these kids are aware of the fact that the higher social status is more likely to bring more possibilities and chances to diminish their problems resulting from stereotyped male-female relationships and gender roles.

Jefferson in Hall & Jefferson (2003) argue that the style of teddy boys initially aims to buy status since the clothes they wore were originally worn by the upper class dandies. Similarly, Nelissen & Meijers (2011) state that financial wealth implies both acquirement and control of valuable resources. Hence, wealth generally refers to social status (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Frank, 1999; de Botton, 2004). Accordingly, display of wealth on *Instagram* with some modifications and subversions in an extravagant and ostentatious way is a desirable characteristic among *RKOT*.

Thus, it can be claimed that *RKOT* display a desire for a social change by reproducing the current dominant ideology in the 21st century through their symbolic lifestyle choices on *Instagram*. *RKOT* are aware of the fact that it is difficult to be successful in business without a good network or the right connections in a neo-liberal economy. Also, they believe that women who are privileged enough to choose the men they want to in the dominant culture can easily become those who are ready to be chosen by a *RKOT* male thanks to the powerful (in terms of wealth) male identity constructed on the profile. However, this social change does not refer to changing the larger social structure.

Unlike Lowney (1995) and Brake (1985), some theorists (e.g. Copes & Williams 2007; Haenfler, 2004; Moore, 2007; Schilt, 2003; Wood, 2003) put forward the idea that subcultures have "a sincere desire" for "a social change" and they resist mainstream culture through personal lifestyle choices (Williams, 2007). However, resistance (personal or collective) could be in the overt and covert forms. Although some theorists sometimes express defiance through overt activities (e.g. political activities), marginalized communities tend to resist through some covert activities such

as private rituals. This kind of resistance seems to be “relatively passive” but offers “*an empowering identity or community of friends to social outcasts without changing the larger social structure...*” (Williams, 2007, p.10). Williams (2009) rightly draws attention to importance of taking a closer attention to the concept of resistance in subcultural studies. He, for example, mentions that the scholars of the 1960s and 1970s see counterculture as a form of resistance (e.g. Marcus, 1969; 1970) while resistance is seen as a trite and residual concept which legitimizes consumption practices as possible rebels among current scholars (e.g. Weinzierl & Muggleston 2003). Accordingly, he suggests centering on three dimensions of resistance: passive/active, overt/covert and micro/macro.

Passive – Active

Williams (2009) states that the CCCS conceptualization of resistance can be defined as relatively passive based on the working class consciousness of a youth's parents and an emerging consciousness of this youth on middle class consumption patterns. Hence, he states that theories of resistance regarding passiveness are particularly associated with consumption. Social spaces such as dance halls, weekend holiday spots, street corners and stylistic practices of working class youth are regarded as symbolic resistance against the dominant culture. Clarke (1976a), for example, suggests that style represents an unconscious desire to reconstitute the traditional working class since it is deteriorated around the working class youth. For example, teddy boys who were influenced by the Edwardians and purchased second hand clothes which represent the upper class indicate the desire for the recognition, status and respect by the middle class while staying rooted to working class.

Hall and Jefferson (2003) suggest that members of a subculture reassemble mainstream cultural objects and subvert the meanings. In brief, rituals of subcultures are an appropriation of dominant cultural forms. Thus, resistance is described as “*magical*” since it did not give much chance to youth to improve their life-chances. In other words, fighting the system was an illusion for young people. At this point, Williams (2009) criticizes CCCS scholars for neglecting these young people's intention and he points out the linkage between resistance and intentionality.

Hollander and Einwohner (2004) focus on “*intentions*” of youthful acts as a form of resistance rather than the consequences of these acts. Similarly, in his ethnographic study on working class lads, Willis (1977) draws attention to the

intentionality of these people in constructing a subculture as acts of “*opposition to stuff and exclusive distinction from [conforming students through] the three great consumer goods supplied by capitalism...clothes, cigarettes and alcohol*” (p. 17). Also, Lowney (1995) suggests that a group of teenage students in the US develops a Satanist style with the intention of showing “*opposition to the local dominant culture*” (p. 477). Williams (2009) states that these two ethnographic studies are important to understand the intentionality behind the passive resistance analyzed with semiotic and rhetorical methods by CCCS scholars since they help to understand “*young people’s sense of self, despite a lack of any social-status improvements in their everyday lives*” (p. 24).

Lastly, he disapproves of the tendency of post-subcultural theorists (e.g. Bennett & Kahn-Harris, 2004; Huq, 2006; Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003) to generalize contemporary youth practices as consumption patterns rather than resistance. In addition, he suggests that some recent works (see e.g. Haenfler, 2004; Phillipov, 2006; and Schilt, 2003) indicate that there is an explicit formation of subcultures in terms of intentional social change. In short, Williams (2009) attempts to show that resistance in subcultures regarded relatively passive by CCCS or dismissed by post-subcultural theorists should and must be considered regarding the intentions of the members of the subculture.

Micro – Macro

Leblanc’s (2001) work focuses on acts of resistance by female punks and their subjective intentions to participate in these acts. However, Williams (2009) suggests that “*no choice is purely subjective*” (p. 26). The choices of these girls are based on the small-group cultures where they live. Thus, singular instances of interaction indicate micro-oriented resistance. Leblanc’s analysis does not indicate the motivations regarding behaviors but rather self-conscious motives of some punk girls who refuse to abide by normative gender roles. Hence, micro-oriented resistance may lead to “*meso-level resistance*” since it “*targets peer and other identifiable groups*” (Williams, 2009, p. 26).

For example, Haenfler’s (2004) study on straight edge subculture highlights that clean living without drugs, casual sex, alcohol, etc. is a way of symbolic resistance to the values of mainstream. However, it also shapes gender relationships, involvement in social change, sense of self and sense of community in the straight edge subculture.

Thus, spectacular rituals and everyday activities are means of resistance practices at the meso-level. For this reason, meso-oriented analyses of resistance reveal the conflicts and contestations among young people in their own social networks. In addition, they reveal the competing groups among the members of the subculture (see Haenfler, 2004, p.429-430) along with collective identity and monitoring subcultural boundaries (e.g., Williams & Copes, 2005; Williams, 2006). In brief, micro-resistance centers around everyday lives of members of the subculture by assisting them in solidifying a reference point.

However, macro resistance centers on the *“issues of power and inequality at the institutional level of society”* (Williams, 2009, p. 27). Thus, resistance in subcultures cannot be regarded at the macro-level even though some members of subcultures identify themselves as participants of some social movements, participants of public protests and other kind of macro-oriented actions (see e.g., Cherry, 2006). In short, shared subcultural values, norms, beliefs, practices, rituals and collective identification of subcultures are the means that help to articulate micro and macro resistance among subcultural theorists.

Overt – Covert

Resistance can be regarded *“relatively overt when all parties involved agree on the meanings of things”* (Williams, 2009, p. 28). However, covert resistance in subculture can be described as acting in a resistant way without wanting particular outsiders to recognize it as such. Thus, resistance which is intentional at the individual thought level may be unintentional or partially intentional at the recognition level. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) differentiate overt and covert resistance as in the following quotation:

...overt resistance is behavior that is visible and readily recognized by both targets and observers as resistance and, further, is intended to be recognized as such. This category includes collective acts such as social movements...as well as individual acts of refusal.... We use the term covert resistance to refer to acts that are intentional yet go unnoticed (and, therefore, unpunished) by their targets, although they are recognized as resistance by other, culturally aware observers.
(Hollander & Einwohner, 2004, p. 545)

Based on Hollander and Einwohner' (2004) words, Williams (2009) suggests that overt resistance may be carried out either at micro (e.g. individual acts of refusal) or at macro level (e.g. social movements). In addition, like in passive and active acts resistance, intention plays an important role in overt and covert acts of resistance. For example, globalized processes of inequality and social movements (e.g., The "J18" Carnival Against Capitalism and "N30" Anti-WTO protests in Cologne, Germany and Seattle, Washington in 1999) can be given as examples of overt and active resistance at the macro level. However, Rastafarians with their dreadlocks and reggae music during the 1960s and the 1970s in England can be an example of a covert form of resistance carried out through rude boy subculture (Williams, 2009).

Unlike the overt form of resistance, covert forms of resistance take place in private subcultural spaces which are isolated from the spaces of the mainstream (e.g. clubs, basements, etc.). For example, hardcore dancing which is cool and fun to the participants may be labeled as violent and dangerous when witnessed by those who belong to the mainstream society. Thus, this subcultural act may be seen as covert even though the participants have intentions to resist (Williams, 2009). Williams (2009) also suggests that resistance can occur both in overt and covert forms. For example, zines, videos, blogs, forums articulated by *riot grrrls* can overtly reflect their angers, frustrations, and confusions to their like-minded peers while remaining anonymous and covert to authority figures. Even though this kind of resistance seems impotent, it offers an empowering identity and community of friends at micro-level by allowing diffusion of culture and an increase in social awareness at meso and macro level.

To sum up, based on these three dimensions of resistance: passive/active, micro/macro and overt/covert, in the *RKOT* case, the members of *RKOT* could be claimed to have a passive resistance at face value due to their symbolic style with some particular intentions of individuals at the thought level. Even though Williams (2009) claims that explicit intention in the passive resistance may be claimed to be a form of active resistance, acts and rituals of *RKOT* cannot be claimed to have an active form of resistance since they still use appropriated dominant cultural objects to subvert meanings like the subcultures of post-war England.

In addition, the participants of *RKOT* do not have any kind of overt resistance (e.g., a political or societal movement) with the desire of a social change. However, as marginalized rich kids, they could be claimed to have the desire of an empowering

identity and community of friends to social outcasts. Thus, they show resistance which is intentional (e.g., competing with peers, attracting girls, and enlarging their network) at the individual thought level. However, they do not want these intentions to be recognized as a way of explicit resistance by those who they resist to (e.g. peers, girls). In other words, *RKOT* do not try to change the larger social structure but they want to appear as a *RKOT* on this profile with the desire of being recognized, liked, and envied. Some *RKOT* share posts on this profile because their friend does it and “*it is fun*”.

However, they do not do it against another social class or any individual who belongs to the upper class but against the other *RKOT* on the page. In this aspect, one can say that *RKOT* show resistance against the “uncouth”, “ostentatious” and “vulgar” culture of other *RKOT* as well. Some *RKOT* share posts on the profile because they think that they are different and can do better than the others tagged on the profile while most of them do it because “*Girls like power and money means power*”. In this aspect, *RKOT* show a covert and passive resistance at both micro and meso levels since motivations of the members regarding the subcultural acts and rituals are both self-conscious and other(s)-conscious.

Within the micro/meso level of resistance, *RKOT* males show a tendency to have a covert and passive resistance against the commodified culture and choices of the opposite gender which are determined by stereotyped gender-roles in the established society. They know that money attracts women and they use it as a tool to attract them. They chat them up on *Instagram* but they even do not meet up with them in real life²² because they can “have enough of everything” in real life. Raby (2005) argues that young people’s reactions against injustice is partially conscious and unarticulated. Nevertheless, these reactions are significant in terms of analyzing resistance while Williams (2009) argues that some subcultures may be explicitly political. Thus, Jensen (2017) suggests to “*develop a more finely calibrated terminology*” (p. 6) for a non-determinist but clear understanding of resistance.

In the earlier studies on youth subcultures in England, parental power was another thing the youth subcultures were resistant against. British working class youth subcultures were considered as groups of homology who were against the dominant

²² There are still some *RKOT* who date with the opposite gender from the profile. I had a female interviewee dating another *RKOT* after some interactions through the *RKOT* profile but the male one did not accept to have an interview with me.

culture and ideology of the traditional working class since they, for the first time, were more educated and more prepared to be consumerists than their parents as a consequence of industrialization. Nevertheless, resistance of subcultures in England was not only a generational conflict but also a class issue (O'Connor, 2004). However, *RKOT* who display lavish, extravagant and ostentatious acts and behaviors on *Instagram* do not hold this identity as a mean of revolt against their upper class family culture even though they prefer *Instagram* since there is no familial control on this platform²³. In contrast, almost all *RKOT* have said that they get along well with their families and that there is no intention of upsetting parents in posting their photos on the profile:

(Do you get along well with your family members? Is posting photos on RKOT a reaction to them?)

“No. Not at all. I never argue with my family”

“I get along very well with them. I sometimes argue with mom because we are very similar. She is very tidy and strict and it makes me tense... But no, I don't share for that.”

“Super. We are like friends with my dad. But we sometimes have problems because of my obsession with technology and the internet.”

Thus, *RKOT* do not resist parental power unlike the youth subcultures of *CCCS* studies and they do not have any intention of defiance against other social classes or the government although they do have a covert and passive forms of defiance against their own milieu and the opposite gender through reproducing the dominant culture in an appropriated and subverted style they adopt. To investigate this covert and passive defiance in the broader literature, it is also important to mention Janice Radway's (1984) work briefly.

Radway (1984) in her book *Reading the Romance* argues that housewives who are expected to fulfil demanding and tiresome routines of everyday life read romance so that they can not only escape from their reality but also find the tenderness and attention they lack in their everyday life. Accordingly, she means that reading romance is a way of countering despair for a more perfect social state. Even though it seems

²³ To be discussed in Media & Space section.

very minimal for those who are committed to social change, this legitimate form of protest should/must be considered more seriously. Moreover, she finds their attempt not only combative since it encourages them to refuse their social role in the institution of marriage which is directed by the other but also compensatory since it allows them to have a solitary space isolated from the patriarchal society for their self-interest. Hence, she suggests that romance reading could be regarded as an oppositional act which covertly challenges the dominant ideology. Also, within this perspective, the way *RKOT* use the “rich kid” identity against their own milieu and the opposite gender can be regarded as a form of protest even though it does not consciously aim at a social change in the established society. Nevertheless, their choice of media and space to maintain this identity shows that they avoid familial connections which may hinder their self-expression due to the institutionalized values and beliefs of the society.

In the Iranian case of *RKOI*, after the page was banned by the government due to its sexual and alcoholic content which is not appropriate for sharia, the administrator of the page said that Iran was introduced to the whole world in an incorrect way and they wanted to show its beautiful face too. Thus, in the Iranian case, there was a sincere desire of a social change which could lead to broader changes although it should be kept in mind that this explanation of the administrator may result from the fear of any potential sharia punishment. Nevertheless, based on the administrator’s declaration, the resistance of Iranian *RKOI* was likely to be an overt political activity which is a form of relatively active resistance against the dominant ideology of the country. However, in *RKOT*, as stated before, there is no intention of making politics on social media although most of them claim that they are political but they do not prefer to reflect their ideological ideas on social media:

“I’m not a supporter of the government of course. Especially the unfair distribution of money has increased a lot. It is not pleasant to see the corruption in such a young country. I am political; not apolitical. I was involved in local elections because my father was a candidate but he wasn’t proposed as a candidacy... Well... That’s also a reflection of the corruption I have mentioned.”

“I will vote “yes” in the referendum. It might come out “no” but Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is rebellious. If it results in “no”, he can attack PYD²⁴ or other sides, so the

²⁴ The Democratic Union Party: A Kurdish democratic confederalist political party established on 20 September 2003 in northern Syria.

economy and the country will go worse. Actually it is more about fear. That's why I will say "yes".

"Our government is not a secular and modern government. We are becoming like Iran and it has a big impact on society."

"I support a political party but I am not active. Of course I support my country though. We are a nationalist country. I support the public's decision."

"I'm apolitical but I support the government. I love Tayyip although he has some imperfections..."

"Well, I'm a supporter of Tayyip but just because there is no one better than him. I support AKP due to Tayyip. I will vote "yes" in the referendum. My dad is doing business with him. They get along well."

Therefore, the political profile of *RKOT* is a representation of the political profile of Turkish people²⁵. There are those who support the government, especially the president while some are against the government and the ideology of it. It has been mentioned that *RKOT* do not use the profile for any kind of political resistance; however, in their real life some have been involved in some societal movements like the *Gezi* upspring²⁶ (the protests against the government in 2012), or 15 July²⁷ (the failed military coup attempt in 2016) although some *RKOT* attended due to curiosity only:

"Yes, I unfurled a banner during "Gezi" in a Zülfü Livaneli²⁸ concert in Moscow. I appeared in the newspapers."

"Yes. I was in Italy during Gezi Park and I organized the march in Milan with the mayor of Milan. I even joined the funeral of Uğur Mumcu²⁹ (a socialist journalist who was killed in an unidentified murder) when I was 5. I can even define myself as quite radical."

²⁵ The referendum held under a state of emergency due to the failed military coup attempt in July 2016 resulted as in a 51–49% lead for the "Yes" vote and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has become the president with broadest possible national consensus in the implementation of the policies.

²⁶ See introduction for further information.

²⁷ See introduction for further information.

²⁸ A left-wing Turkish political singer/composer.

²⁹ A left-wing Turkish investigative journalist assassinated by a bomb placed in his car in front of his home.

“During Gezi I stored lots of water, gas masks, rennie (medicine for stomach) and so on in my car and distributed them to people for 5 days. Mom learnt about it on the 4th day but she became very happy and proud.”

“I went outside on “15 July”. It is completely about national identity. It’s a kind of show of gratitude to your country.”

However, some interviewees have declared that they are not interested in politics and that they have never participated in a societal or political movement:

(Any societal/political resistance?)

“No. Never. We (his family) fought against HDP³⁰. We have factories in the South East of Turkey and they wanted tax from us and burned our trucks because we refused to give money to them. Then we made peace thanks to Barzani³¹. In the past, yes there was a lot of torture towards Kurds but not anymore. Those in the mountains are not Kurds. And old and uneducated Kurds believe that it is the same as in the past.” (This RKOT is Kurdish)

“No, I don’t like it. I don’t care for it. As long as a person is good to me I am good with that person too. I don’t have any prejudices.”

“No, never. I have never got involved in politics. I thought what the government was doing in Gezi was not right at the beginning. I went there and I was teargassed and stuff. But there was alcohol, people were too comfortable... It was not appropriate for our culture.”

Thus, RKOT show variety in terms of their ideologies and participations in political and societal movements. However, these ideologies and political views do not have any influence on gathering around the collective identity of RKOT. Their motivation to be tagged on the profile results from individual desires motivated at micro level by the milieu regarding lifestyle and choices. Consistent with the previous discussions, the political resistance of RKOT cannot be regarded as an overt and active form of resistance at the macro level.

In Hall and Jefferson’s (2003) prominent book *Resistance Through Rituals*, Corrigan and Frith state that the problem of the British working class was being quiet,

³⁰ People’s Democratic Party – A left-wing pro-minority political party.

³¹ Masoud Barzani-President of the Iraqi-Kurdistan region between 2005 and 2017.

passive and non-revolutionary while being “*ideologically incorporated with the values of bourgeois culture*” (p. 231). They add that existing literature does not allow political implications on youth culture, thus the active role of young people in their culture should be paid attention to. Therefore, one can focus on the concrete struggles of young people rather than defining them as non-political and isolating them with only regard to commercial leisure, the school or the law. Corrigan and Frith (in Hall & Jefferson, 2003) offer “*to develop an approach in which politics is the center of the analysis*” (p. 232) because they claim that young people’s experience exactly matches the experience of the State’s attempt in contributing to “*the reproduction of capitalism*” (p. 237). Therefore, under these circumstances, resistance is possible since even working class kids cannot become independent of the bourgeoisie.

In the *RKOT* case, one cannot see any active or overt form of political resistance on the page. Also the interviewees stated that they do not have any intention or desire of sharing their political views on social media. However, almost all of them have stated that they have a political view and they support a political party. Almost two third of the interviewees have been involved in political and societal resistance in their real life although they do not have a particular political ideology under the collective identity of *RKOT*. Althusser (1969) claims that ideology is profoundly unconscious, a system of representation, usually images, and occasionally concepts... Thus, based on Althusser’s claim, *RKOT* cannot be defined as totally non-ideological. Also, it should be added that almost all of them are proud of being Turks and a citizen of this country. Even the ethnically Kurdish interviewees are highly Turkish nationalistic and Kemalists. However, 2 female interviewees stated that they are not proud of being a citizen of Turkey, even though they love their country, because of the oppressive ideology of the state and male dominance.

Gramsci (1971) warns that it is important to distinguish organic movements from those which appear immediate, occasional and almost accidental in studying a structure since the latter is conjunctural while the former is relatively permanent. The aim must be to “*find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural*” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 177). In this aspect, one should keep in mind that *RKOT* is a conjunctural formation with respect to the conjunctural movements of the 21st century, a consumer society in which digitality, technology, globalization and

ownership have become the most significant ideologies³². Thus, the power of buying and selling things and services and displaying them extravagantly and ostentatiously on *Instagram* could be regarded a kind of conjunctural resistance. It is important to keep in mind that the theorists of CCCS studied youth subcultures with respect to the conjuncture of their time: ethnicity problems, school, parental power and class struggles were their main themes. Thus, through their distinctive and alternative style, they were claimed to resist against the dominant culture. Therefore, both the themes and the way of resistance are more likely to be different in today's virtual, consumerist and globalized culture, so *RKOT* as a production of the network society display a covert and passive forms of resistance against the commodified culture and stereotyped choices of the opposite gender and the vulgarity of the peers.

4.5. Leisure, Space, Media and *RKOT*

Durham and Kellner (2006) state that there is a new culture based on “*appearance, look, style, variety and diversity of contemporary culture*” which has a potential for promoting a new kind of resistance in postmodern society (p. 448). Poster in Durham and Kellner (2006) suggests that configurations of sounds, images and words through multimedia in this postmodernity cultivate new forms of individuality and that new media has become important regarding its connectedness to this new subjectivity in the postmodern society. Accordingly, new media which allows interactive communications and new kind of cultural formations could be a new virtual space for subcultures.

All subcultural studies highlight the significance of space for leisure activities of subcultural members. For example, Loader (1996) claims that local neighborhoods in young people's public spheres are common spots for just hanging around or leisure activities. Particular social spaces such as urban street corners, festivals, music halls, dive bars and more recently, internet forums have been an important element of subcultural studies since they provide the participant of the subculture independence from controlled and familial spaces. Mayhew (1968 [1861–2]) approaches subcultures as “romantic”, “displaced”, “nomadic” and “homeless” formations. On the other hand, Gelder (1997; 2007) claims that there are also firmly rooted subcultures in a particular space/place. Thus, subcultures either “implicitly or explicitly” connect space and

³² Discussed in Introduction

culture to each other (Williams, 2007). Cressey (1932), Baron (1989), Cohen (1972), Gaines (1992), Leblanc (2001) emphasize the importance of “*bounded geographical spaces for embodied, situated social action*” (Williams, 2007; p. 11). Also Marshall et al. (1997), Fanarow (1997) and Lincoln (2004) are other theorists who have mapped out the local spaces of subcultural activities. Hence, the significance of geographical spaces in the analysis of traditional subcultures is incontrovertible.

Bourdieu (1984) sees class as a multidimensional social space made up of different forms of capital. Jensen (2017) states that Bourdieu finds this objective space either “*homologous or paralleled by a space of positionings*” (p. 8). These positionings describes the cultural and subjective elements of class (e.g. taste, lifestyle, distaste, preferences etc.) and play a crucial role in subcultural formations since according to Bourdieu (1984) society is made up of multiple fields in relation to each other. Based on Bourdieu’s work, Jensen (2017) explains this field as a semi-autonomous social space in which the participants have their own criteria and in which they are also determining the criteria which constitute the capital.³³ Therefore, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) suggest, without the existence of a field, it is not possible to mention the existence of capital. In other words, hierarchy, dominance, and struggle can only occur in a particular field. Accordingly, subcultures as cultural ensembles of a collective creative agency may have little or negative value outside their own field despite their position in the overall social space (Jensen, 2017). Sweetman (2013) argues that the Gramscian approach of CCCS scholars to subcultural theory allowed them to see hegemony as a negotiated meaning rather than absolute. Thus, as Clarke et al. (1976) states, hegemony which is supposed to be won leads to symbolic challenges to win space from the dominant culture. Within this perspective, agency in subculture can be described as the way members of subculture experience and interpret the shapes and structures they create collectively. In other words, the activity of stylization which is carried out through “*a process of bricolage, the creative and agentic appropriation, and recontextualization of cultural objects and artefacts*” (Sweetman, 2013, p. 4) with new imagined uses and new meanings assigned represent this agency.

Apart from traditional geographical spaces, recent subcultural studies (e.g., Williams, 2006; Williams & Copes, 2005; Garrison 2000; Kearney 1998; Leonard,

³³ Shared values, beliefs, acts and practices of subculture.

1998; Schilt, 2003) are concerned with virtual spaces and formations in which people form a shared identity and culture and communicate with each other without face-to-face interaction. They have also highlighted that whether in print or digital, virtual spaces provide the opportunity of resistance. Especially the internet enables the possibility of subcultural participation due to its flexibility in terms of interaction (Williams, 2007). Like Hodkinson and Lincoln (2008), Williams (2011) suggests that social media have increased flexibility, knowledge, collectivity and participation; thus, they offer new forms of subcultural communication and criticizes post-subcultural theorists for ignoring these increased online communications and digitality.

In the *RKOT* case, hanging out on social media, primarily on *Instagram* is one of their leisure time activities along with another favorite pass-time activity, hanging out with friends:

“In my free time, I surf the net. I mostly hang out on Instagram mostly”

“I hang out on Instagram. It is fun. You can find anything you look for there.”

“I hang out on Instagram and sometimes I hang out with my friends.”

Paul Corrigan’s study of *Sunderland street-corner culture*, *The Smash Street Kids*, claims that “*The major activity in this venue (Wigan, Shephard Bush and Sunderland), the main action of British subculture is, in fact, “doing nothing”.*” (Hall et al., 2003, p. 103). These kids do not choose the street to fight to show resistance as it is a lively place but rather a place “*where there is the most chance that something will happen*” (Hall et al., 2003, p.104). “Doing nothing” on the street is much preferable compared to the other alternatives like arguing with parents at home or getting bored in the youth club. Similarly, *RKOT* who would like to use *Instagram* as a pastime activity could be said to be similar to these kids with respect to the possibility of seeing something interesting and fun on *Instagram*. Basically, hanging out on *Instagram* could be regarded as “doing nothing” compared to other alternative pastime activities (e.g., sports, cinema and so on).

In addition, as the particular social space or subcultural space of *RKOT*, *Instagram* is considered as the best environment for the representation of such an identity based on vanity since *Instagram* is a popular, flexible and only-visual social media:

(Is Instagram the right environment for RKOT?)

“Yes. You put photos on the page and you show your wealth via cars etc.”

“Very much. Nothing would be better than this. If it was organized, there would be a very good collaboration.”

“Yes. Instagram is a very popular social media tool. If they (RKOT) didn’t appear there, they wouldn’t be this popular.”

“For such people, a platform is needed. That’s why it is right. Thanks to this app, RKOT directly achieves its objective.”

“Yes. You can reach the masses. It is a way of showing my own page to others because people seeing your photo in RKOT get interested in you. When your profile page is private, it draws more attention. I keep it private, I draw more attention. If your profile photo is good, people follow you.”

“Yes, because how did you learn about Dan Bilzerian (a notorious Instagram phenomenon known for his vulgar display of his life)? Through Instagram. Newspapers got to know him from Instagram too.”

“There couldn’t be any better platform. Maybe these rich people can pay and appear on the newspapers too, but only grandparents read newspapers today.”

Turkle (1995) suggests that the interactive users of the internet create a feeling of community in a dramatic new context through online identities due to the need of self-expression and communication that may be independent from their physical self. At this point, leisure in subculture plays a central role since subcultures “*are not simply ideological constructs. They, too, win spaces for the young: cultural spaces in neighborhoods and institutions, real time for leisure and recreation, actual room on the streets or street corner.*” (Clarke et al., 1975, p. 45). Thus, virtual spaces of contemporary subcultures can be the fields where participants offer meaningful leisure activities along with both an individual and collective identity (Brake, 1985).

Hall and Jefferson (2003) suggest that the subculture and class relationships should be investigated relying on a global notion of the “*new youth leisure class*” since the explanation of the subcultural problem would be more difficult to explain without bearing this in mind. Thus, *Instagram* as a social media platform on which youth spend time for “fun” represents the communal cyberspace for the “*new youth leisure class*”

of the “network society”. In addition, the scholars of CCCS tended to theorize style and leisure over other social realms such as family and school since leisure spaces are free of the dominant culture (at least in youths’ minds) where subcultural expressions are most likely to appear (Williams, 2007, p. 7), which means that style emerged in the leisure sphere was subculturally meaningful and important. Hence, *RKOT* as a youth culture use *Instagram* as a leisure sphere which is user-friendly, goal-oriented, popular and free from social realms:

“...I have been using Instagram for 7 years. It is easy and fun. There are no relatives on Instagram. I got bored of them on Facebook. When I unfollow them on Facebook, they get angry... So I just block them on Instagram because they do not leave me alone. It is that easy. I can’t do the same on Facebook because they recognize it easily. That’s why I can’t trick them.”

“...I use only Snapchat and Instagram. My twitter and Facebook were hacked. I used to like Twitter but not Facebook because my mother’s generation is using it. When I shared a photo, almost 250 people would like it... It is so funny. I don’t like the social circle on Facebook. It is a bit for older people.”

“I have a FB account but I am not active on it... Everybody is on Facebook so it is not as attractive as Instagram... On Facebook there are news, comments, and some other stuff. But on Instagram there is only photos. That’s why I like it better.”

“I do have a Facebook account but I don’t use it. My second favorite application is Snapchat after Instagram. Facebook is old fashioned and there are lots of meaningless things on it. I have never used Twitter.”

“I used to have Facebook and Twitter 4-5 years ago but I inactivated them because they weren’t interesting for me. Instagram is fun because you share photos and watch videos... You can see people from all over the world. There are grandparents on Facebook now.”

Based on this data, it can be concluded that the reasons for choosing *Instagram* as a leisure space, which is considered “popular”, “easy”, “fun”, “flashy” and “necessary” for today’s world, have common characteristics defined by *RKOT*. First of all, *Instagram* is a platform for people from the same generation who avoid familial control or personal ideological and political opinions like on the other social media (e.g. *Twitter* and *Facebook*). Secondly, *Instagram* is visual, which means it serves the

society of the spectacle. Thirdly, it is momentary and ephemeral. Fourthly, it is user-friendly and lastly, it is the best social media for microcelebrity in the attention economy. For further elaboration of these categories, the reasons for preferring *Instagram* as a leisure sphere among *RKOT* is discussed under the following subsections.

4.5.1. No Familial Control or Explicit Ideology on *Instagram*

Shildrick and MacDonald (2006) suggest that young people tend to show differences in terms of accessing leisure experiences or creating cultural identities. In addition, Williams (2007) states that “*leisure spaces are relatively free of dominant cultural forces*” (p. 7) such as family and school so leisure spaces are more likely to be the places where subcultural expressions appear. Like British subcultures struggling to differentiate themselves from their parents’ working class culture by establishing spaces of resistance formed sites of resistance “*on the street corners, in the dance halls, on the open road, and in the weekend holiday spots*” (p. 5), *RKOT* as a virtual formation under the social and economic circumstances of the 21st century consider *Instagram* as the most distant space from dominant cultural forces (e.g., family ties and other social realms) which may hinder their leisure experiences and cultural identities:

“Instagram is fun because you see photos and watch videos. You can see people from all over the world. On Facebook, there are grandparents now.”

“I only use Instagram. It is good... You share photos and you like them. Facebook is old-fashioned and there are lots of meaningless things.”

“I do not like the environment of Facebook... It is a bit for older people. For my mother’s generation.”

“I also have Facebook and Twitter but I never use them. Especially after grandparents’ participation on these platforms, they lost their appeal.”

“I quit using Facebook after Instagram. The generation on Facebook is no longer our generation. They are older.”

“I especially use Instagram. I also have FB but it is outdated after Instagram.”

“There are no relatives on Instagram. I get bored of them on FB. When I unfollow them, they get offended. I just block them on Instagram because they do not leave me alone.”

“For example, on Facebook, we have lots of family members, friends... When you see posts sharing their personal comments and stuff, you automatically get distanced from these people.”

Based on this data, it can be concluded that familial ties and the generational conflict are one of the central reasons why *RKOT* prefer Instagram to any other social media. Hall et al. (2003) underlines the major differences between working class adults and young people regarding leisure. The reorganization of consumption and leisure aiming to attract young clients have led to the growth of the “teenager consumer”. Thus, the activity of stylization has created an organized group identity. This group identity, which distinguishes itself from the mainstream culture through subculture as leisure experiences on the street corners, dive bars and so on has been approached symbolically as a revolt against parental power especially. Similarly, within the context of neo-liberal society in which the growth of network and internet technologies are idealized, generational conflict between adults and young people manifests itself in a virtual environment differently from the territorial spaces of post-war subcultures in England. Thus, consistent with the argument of *CCCS* scholars, avoiding familial ties has become one of the reasons why *RKOT* have chosen *Instagram* as a leisure space for themselves.

In the *RKOT* case, the cultural dominance of the elderly makes a difference in these young people’s social media choices. They would like to differentiate themselves from the older generations by using a different social media platform (*Instagram*) since the others are outdated and for older generations. In the aspect of subculture, territorial space for the formation of the subculture and the interaction among the participants plays an important role in differentiating themselves from the wider culture. Williams (2007) states that *“Leisure and recreation seem to have provided a more negotiable space than the tightly-disciplined and controlled work situation”* (p. 50). Similarly, *RKOT* has found a discipline-free and control-free environment on *Instagram* as a tool of leisure and recreation. For example, the *Teeny Bopper* girls negotiating a space of their own for highly figured alternative occupations and lifestyles of women which is free from male-dominant culture, *RKOT* finds this control-free and leisure space by

escaping from family ties and pressures, which is basically perceived as coming from the older generations.

However, escape from the family ties and social pressures is not the only reason why *RKOT* choose *Instagram* as a leisure and societal space. The fact that *RKOT* do not like to see explicit ideology exposure on the social media is another reason why *RKOT* prioritize *Instagram*:

“Even though I respect people’s opinions, especially on social media, I am bothered by nonsense comments and humor. ...When you see such posts from these people, you automatically get distanced from them.”

“On other social media (Facebook and Twitter) people try to prove that they are smart. There is no need for that.”

“On Facebook there are lots of useless people... peasants... Ignorant, uneducated ones... But on Instagram I don’t see them.”

“I don’t like people talking about politics. I just escape from that environment. People talk about politics based on the news they watch on the media. Except Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (the president) nobody knows what is going on really.”

This data indicates that *RKOT* do not want to be exposed to politics on social media although the majority of them have declared that they have a political view and although some have stated that they sometimes participate in political movements and social protests. It has been discussed that there is a strong link between leisure and subcultural formation. Consistent with that, *RKOT* consider social media a leisure space for interaction and identity formation. However, they do not see all social media platforms (e.g. *Facebook* and *Twitter*) are equally appropriate for what they desire as leisure. Especially exposure of explicit political views is one of the important reasons why *RKOT* prefer a visual-based social media (*Instagram*) to others. Thus, the statements of the interviewees reveal the neo-liberal culture of today’s generation which centers around individual self and milieu:

“For example, you see such things (posts including political and ideological opinions) on Twitter too. Actually, there are also very nice posts there but people cut off their nose to spite their face... In every aspect of life... Like politics... Everybody has an opinion and sometimes, really bad ideas come out and it and that prompts me

to Instagram because Instagram is more about only my friends' and immediate environment's posts. It is far away from comments and personal opinions."

Thus, for RKOT, *Instagram* posts, which are far from such political discussions, explicit ideologies and familial control are more preferable than the posts shared on *Facebook* and *Twitter* since they believe that a photo can tell quite enough about a person's lifestyle and philosophy. This avoidance from political and philosophical issues on social media and their preference of visuals only on social media explains the other reason of choosing *Instagram* as a societal and leisure space; thus, RKOT could be associated with Debord's (1994) *The Society of the Spectacle*.

4.5.2. *Instagram for the Society of the Spectacle*

In his infamous book *The Society of the Spectacle* Debord (1994) argues that in modern society, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles and the spectacle aims at nothing than itself. It is not a collection of images; but a social relation between people that is mediated by images. The only message it gives is that "What appears is good; what is good appears." (p. 6). In the RKOT case, Debord's definition of the spectacle provides an explanation for the rationale behind the choice of *Instagram* as a social media space for self and group identity representation. The fact that RKOT prioritize *Instagram* to other social media platforms confirms what Debord (1994) argues about the importance of appearing rather than having:

"I find Instagram very successful. For example, if you need some information on a topic, Instagram puts this information in front of you without blurring it."

"Twitter might be different... It is difficult to express yourself with a particular word limit but in a photo, a scene can express lots of things..."

"I once tried Twitter and I felt like I was crazy because it was like I was talking to myself. People try to prove that they are very smart on other platforms"

"My favorite app is Instagram. ...I like Instagram better because there are only photos on Instagram."

"I'm most active on Instagram because on others there are generally written things. Instagram is not like that... It is completely visual..."

“Everybody has an idea about anything and it prompts me to Instagram because it is a platform of only my immediate friends. It is far away from comments and personal opinions. It is more about visuals.”

Debord (1994) claims that “social life has become completely dominated by the accumulated productions of the economy, is bringing about a general shift from having to appearing — all “having” must now derive its immediate prestige and its ultimate purpose from appearances.” (p. 7). From his perspective, it could be said that RKOT as the generation of the post-capitalist era, bear a covert hostility towards those who have ideas or who explicitly declare their ideas on things. They find the meaning in appearing, which indeed can tell someone more than what is said even though appearance might be false:

“Instagram is not like Twitter. The content is over after a while, but I can spend 10 hours on Twitter. That’s why I use Instagram the most. I find everything on it.”

“On Facebook, there are lots of useless people... Peasants, ignorant, uneducated people. But I don’t see them on Instagram.”

“You can’t find articles, news and so on on Instagram. It is better... if it also dealt with them, it would lose its ultimate focus.”

In short, consistent with *the Society of the Spectacle* of Debord (1994), RKOT as a community of shared interests and a contributor to the task of cultural production is spectacle produced and distributed by its prosumers (the members and the administrator). Members of RKOT understand not only others’ but also their own existence through images produced and defused by the social media (*Instagram*). Hence, RKOT who find meaning in appearing rather than purely having are rather a generation who reinforce a specific pattern of consumption on *Instagram* which is based on an extravagant and ostentatious style. In other words, RKOT posing in an extravagant and pretentious way on *Instagram* posts represent the reality of the society of the spectacle since “all individual reality has become social, in the sense that it is shaped by social forces and is directly dependent on them. Individual reality is allowed to appear only if it is not actually real.” (Debord, 1994, p. 7).

Nevertheless, based on the data collected from the interviews and the symbolic analyses of RKOT, it cannot be claimed that RKOT are unreal despite their preferences to live through the gaze of society. Yet, their understanding of reality depends on the

act of appearing. Debord (1994) suggests “*The spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality, reducing everyone’s concrete life to a universe of speculation.*” (p. 8). Accordingly, the images posted on *Instagram* are the reality that is philosophized by *RKOT* and their concrete life idealized by luxury consumer goods and lifestyle and choices are reduced to their own universe of speculation. For this reason, *Instagram* is prioritized by *RKOT* on *Instagram* as a societal and leisure space which provides them with only images rather than heated debates shaped by social forces.

4.5.3. *Instagram* as a Momentary and Ephemeral Platform

Another reason why *RKOT* prioritize *Instagram* to other social media is that it has the features of live broadcast and story through which users can share momentary posts and append new ones to the previous ones for 24 hours. These features allow the users to see who has seen their posts. The posts automatically disappear in 24 hours so long as they do not delete them. Xu et al. (2016) point out that young people prefer more ephemeral social media platforms in order to avoid “*the meaningless and potentially embarrassing content*” according to recent studies. Even though *RKOT* do not explicitly state that their content is embarrassing and meaningless, they like the fact that snaps and stories they share on *Instagram* disappear by themselves after a specific amount of time:

“They do not remain there. They automatically disappear after 24 hours”

“They are ephemeral, which is good.”

“On snaps, posts disappear. That’s the purpose! It is momentary so you can share constantly. I share stories on Instagram now because of this feature.”

“I do not share a photo on Instagram every day. But I’ve been active on the story on Instagram. I also use Snapchat.”

Based on this data, an important difference between a snap/story and a regular *Instagram* post should be kept in mind. When someone shares a regular *Instagram* post, it drops on the personal feed of every follower so that followers are obliged to view the post unless they “mute”³⁴ the user. Thus, sharing abundant posts has the possibility

³⁴ When an *Instagram* user mutes someone that he/she follows, he/she does not view any posts of this person on his/her personal feed.

of overwhelming the followers and being disliked by them. For this reason, *RKOT* who want to appear on *Instagram*, consistent with Debord's (1994) society of the spectacle, can avoid any disturbance they may cause by sharing snaps and stories since a follower who does not want to view snaps and stories does not have to view them. This can be explained with Hogan's metaphor: "exhibition" which means "*asynchronous presentation of digital artifacts*" (Xu et al., 2016, p. 6) since *RKOT* seem to have the fear of permanent content that may require self-censorship.

Xu et al. (2016) also points out informal communication which encourages mundane interaction and close relationships. They suggest that young people like *Snapchat* since the snaps (messages) disappear after they are viewed and since it is "*a lot less formal*" than *Facebook* and other social media. Consistent with this, *Snapchat*³⁵ as the second most preferred social media platform is quite popular among *RKOT* due to its fluidity and ephemerality:

"Snapchat is fun because what you share disappears by itself after a while."

"I am well-known for the numbers of snaps I share. I have shared almost 5,000 snaps so far. It is fun."

"Snaps are short but to the point. This feature makes it more desirable and fun."

However, a male *RKOT* has stated that he does not like *Snapchat* since he sees photos as memories and wants to keep his memories. Also a few male *RKOT* have said that *Snapchat* is not appropriate for advertising their businesses. Nevertheless, *Instagram*, with the features of *Snapchat* provides the users with an environment that encourages mundane talks and deeper interpersonal relationships:

"Instagram is the only social media where people can share most momentarily and which has all the features of other social media."

"Instagram already has the feature of the snap. So why should I use Snapchat?"

Like Duck et al. (1991), Goldsmith and Baxter (1996) highlight the importance of mundane talk to create a sense of co-presence through interaction since this kind of

³⁵ A social media application in which shared photos and videos disappear automatically after a specific amount of time.

talk enables implicit participation of individuals in each other's life. Hence, it provides a relational continuity:

"It is more private. Only your circle of friends can see it"

"You don't need to make long explanations or phone calls with your friends to say what you are up to. They just can see it and know what you are doing"

Based on this data, it can be claimed that *RKOT* on their personal *Instagram* profiles prefer to share snaps or stories since they want more private and closer interactions. Gable et al. (2004) suggest that sharing fun content is valuable in close relationships. Thus, unlike the posts shared on the *RKOT* profile page, members of *RKOT* prefer sharing more ephemeral contexts through *Instagram* snaps and stories on their personal profiles. However, stories on *Instagram* are taken more seriously by *RKOT* since they display the real-self and a continuity apart from snaps which add funny faces and gestures to the pictures:

"They keep you almost always online because you do not want to miss what's going on."

"There is such a beautiful thing called story on Instagram... A story should show an incident from the beginning till the end. There must be a chain of stories during the day."

Within this context, Goffman's (1956) concepts of "*front stage*" and "*back stage*" can be used to conceptualize and explain *RKOT*'s behavior regarding their gratifications of using *Instagram* and their *RKOT* profile. Goffman (1956) states that the appearance of a person and the manner of his/her behavior shape their interactions with others by influencing their overall performance. From the front stage perspective, *RKOT* correspond to the expectations of others within a particular context and they behave accordingly. For example, on the *RKOT* profile, they display extravagant and ostentatious rich kids and share the posts on the permanent feed of the page since the *RKOT* profile addresses any *Instagram* user that is interested in them. However, on their personal snaps and stories on *Instagram*, they display some acts and practices which do not address these anonymous *Instagram* users but rather their own milieu. Thus, the latter can be explained with the concept of "*back stage*" since even in our back stage, we cannot completely be independent from social norms and values but in an interaction with our small groupings (e.g. friends, partners, housemates, etc.).

In brief, *Instagram* which provides *RKOT* with the features they look for on a social media platform, is the most preferable platform by them. Firstly, it prevents the accumulation of meaningless and embarrassing content that may cause self-censorship. Secondly, it enables them to have fun while maintaining mundane talks and developing closer relationships that may be conveyed to face-to-face relationships in real-life. Thirdly, it gives them the chance of displaying their identity (front stage vs. back stage) in multiple contexts (snaps/stories and regular posts) which they choose. Hence, it can be concluded that *RKOT*, who would like to avoid any formal, strict, and controlled social pressure, prioritize *Instagram* to socialize and entertain.

4.5.4. Usability of *Instagram*

Numerous recent works (see e.g. Nielsen 2012; Cui et al., 2010; Clawson, et al., 2008; Bergman & Vainio, 2010; Harrison et al., 2013; Bevan et al., 2016) have shown that user-friendly applications on the web is an attraction to the users. Thus, the design of the application and the interface is a non-negligible part for the user preference and satisfaction. *“The user interface is the environment where online users conduct communication, information search, and transactions”* (Venkatesh, Ramesh, & Massey, 2003, p. 54). Accordingly, *Instagram*, the virtual environment in which *RKOT* conduct communication, information research and transactions, could be said to have a user-friendly interface since it is the number one social media preference for them. Also, the comments of the interviewees approve the fact that *Instagram*, with its user-friendly functions, provides *RKOT* with a good user experience:

“Although I have Facebook and Twitter accounts, I mostly use Instagram because it is easy to use on the phone and more user-friendly.”

“I’ve been using Instagram for 7 years. It is easy and fun. When I unfollow my relatives on Facebook, they easily recognize it. I can’t trick them on Facebook.”

“Instagram is not complex and it is easy to use and it has the function of both Snapchat and Facebook. So why should I use Facebook?”

“I don’t like spending hours on the phone. I check all posts on Instagram twice a day. That’s all.”

“On Facebook you waste lots of time to find what you are looking for.”

This data also indicates that *Instagram* which has a user-friendly interface enables *RKOT* to save time in contrast to the other social media (*Twitter* and *Facebook*) they find time-consuming for leisure. *The International Organization for Standardization (ISO)* define usability as the achievement of specific goals with “*effectiveness, efficiency and satisfaction in a specified context of use*”. Thus, *Instagram*, providing *RKOT* with accurate, easy, complete, comfortable and positive user experiences, features an effective, efficient and satisfying social media application so that *RKOT*, who avoid conflict, pressure, discipline, control and any kind of obstacles, can have a user-friendly mobile experience. Therefore, escape from discomfort is another reason why *RKOT* choose *Instagram* as a societal and leisure space.

4.5.5. *Instagram* for Microcelebrity and Attention Economy

Marwick (2015) argues that some online spaces provide people who fall outside the societal norms and values with the opportunity for becoming popular. She adds that *Instagram* as a fairly open-ended social media platform allows its users to represent themselves using various techniques apart from sites (e.g. *Facebook*) which have a rigid profile structure. She exemplifies this with YouTube comedian Miranda Sings and a feminist fashion blogger Tavi Gevinson. She calls this kind of “*Instafame*” as a form of “*microcelebrity*” (Marwick, 2015, p. 138). Senft (2013) defines microcelebrity as a way of self-presentation through strategically formulated profiles to increase attention and improve online status. Consistent with Fairchild’s (2007) definition, microcelebrities gain a marketing value based on their capacity through media and this is called the attention economy. Hence, individuals who employ the attention getting techniques of consumer brands for popularity use *Instagram* due to its photographic nature (Marwick, 2015) since, as Sundén (2003) suggests, individuals use images for self-expression rather than written self-descriptions:

“Twitter might be different... It is difficult to express yourself with a particular word limit but in a photo, a scene can express lots of things...”

“My favorite app is Instagram. ...I like Instagram better because there are only photos on Instagram.”

“I’m most active on Instagram because on others there is generally written things. Instagram is not like that... It is completely visual...”

Within this perspective, the *RKOT* may be considered as individual microcelebrities who attempt to gain attention to improve their *Instagram* status and popularity through a strategically formulated profile which consists of a group of wealthy young people's luxury and conspicuous consumption practices. Regarding microcelebrity and attention economy, Senft (2013) draws attention to the paradox of late-capitalism. On the one hand, late-capitalism cannot afford to hire young people who are ready to enter the economy. On the other hand, it provides the same young people with more opportunities for creating a market for themselves since they can make and distribute the media autonomously. Within this context, the administrator of the profile can be considered as a young individual who attempts to benefit from these opportunities of late-capitalism:

*"I never spent money because I was hanging out with rich people (RKOT). I was only paying for petrol for 2-3 years."*³⁶

*"I shared these photos without any demands"*³⁷. Then I realized that there was a demand. I have earned 45-50.000 TRY so far..."

As stated before, there are also few *RKOT* who would like to enlarge their business circle and networking circles through *RKOT* on *Instagram*. This group can be considered as individuals who attempt to create an attention economy for themselves:

"I'm not ridiculing this page because it advertises my work. A person who sees me there realizes that I'm the owner of the beach club he/she goes to, for example."

"I have gained more clients. ...My primary reason was advertising..."

However, it should be kept in mind that this category makes a small part of *RKOT*. The rest do not aim to get a financial benefit in respect to attention economy but still want to improve their popularity and social status by gaining attention through a strategically formulated profile:

"Ummm... Errr... I think I wanted to come out of my shell."

"Once you are tagged there, the number of your followers increases."

³⁶ Since he lives in Cyprus due to his new business, he does not see *RKOT* as often as he used to in Turkey.

³⁷ He talks about the beginning of *RKOT*.

Both in Senft and Marwick's definitions, a microcelebrity is defined as an individual who attempts to reach out to more followers through strategically formulated profiles. However, *RKOT* consist of lots of individuals who hold a collective identity at face value on a particular profile. In addition, they do not represent the same microcelebrity identity on their personal *Instagram* profiles. Therefore, *RKOT* cannot be considered as individual microcelebrities but a neo-subculture which is formed within the context of the 21st century.

However, Tolga's position in relation to the concepts of microcelebrity and the attention economy reveals the fact that economic processes carried out with the members of *RKOT* have some set of rules and fit into the conceptualization of microcelebrity and the attention economy in a different way:

"If a person has shown wealth in the photo, I share it even though this person is not wealthy. But I don't share it for free to the lower class... I share a post for free for a very special person who is rich. ...For example, sometimes I refuse to share the photo even though I am offered money because the clothing style is bad, the background is ugly."

Based on these comments, it can be understood that some *RKOT* pay for appearing on the page. Even though there are exceptions, Tolga charges male *RKOT* to post their photos. However, those who belong to the super-rich group and female *RKOT* are not charged at all. Tolga explains it like this:

"But I never charge girls... They don't need it. Just with a gesture, they can get what they want."

Tolga also gives consultancy to few male super-rich *RKOT* for a specific amount of money:

"We talk and decide to organize his profile. We make a good profile including 150-200 photos..."

(So are you giving consultancy?)

"Yes. I also get paid by B... monthly. He was a lowbrow. We got him a "blue tick" from Instagram. You know only famous people can get it... He thanks me every day. He says "Tolga, people didn't treat me like this before, even younger people have started to call me "ağabey". You showed me what quality I have."

As discussed in the other components of subculture, gender and economic status play a crucial role in the realm of the attention economy. Tolga who charges generally the rich and upper middle class of male *RKOT* avoids asking for money from the super-rich and female *RKOT* since he thinks that by posting such people's photos on the page, he increases the value of his profile. In other words, he hooks the potential clients by choosing and creating a small number of microcelebrities for his strategically formulated *Instagram* profile. However, he never shows up on the page even though he is in touch with almost all the *RKOT* in person in real life. Those who pay for appearing on the profile do not do it as fans but as individuals who want to have the same social status as these microcelebrities.

Senft's (2013) comparison between subculture stars and microcelebrity practices also explains the origin of the term microcelebrity. She states that the internet has long had its subculture "stars" such as pornographer Danni Ash, webcam girl Jennifer Ringely and homepage creator of *Usenet's Doctress Neutopia*, Justin Hall. Today, they can be called microcelebrities since the internet has changed the notion of celebrity. Apart from celebrities who are expected to speak "at" audiences, microcelebrities are desired to speak "with" the communities who follow them. Thus, for the notion of microcelebrity, existence of a community is important. As a consequence, *RKOT* as a community may have individual microcelebrities³⁸ but it is rather a collective identity which is gathered under a structurally formulated profile. Although some *RKOT* do have gratifications of creating a market for themselves, most of them do not have any intention regarding the attention economy, rather they seek the attention only. However, Tolga (the administrator) benefits from the opportunities of the attention economy.

4.6. Societal Reaction to *RKOT*

In the former chapter, it has been discussed that media play a central role in defining and framing a subculture. Thornton (1996) defines the type of the media utilized by subcultural insiders as "micro-media" (p. 137). Yet, those who generate the most popular and valuable information about particular subcultures are the "outsiders" since they label, categorize, marginalize and spectacularize their particular events,

³⁸ The administrator gives few names as very special and rich persons in *RKOT*. He likes to have close relationship practices with them (e.g., travelling, going out, eating out, etc.) but no *RKOT* idealizes a specific person tagged on *RKOT*.

styles, and actions (see e.g., Moore 2005). What is called *resistant* from the outside requires and legitimizes “*adult interventions*” (Williams, 2007, p.13). Youth employed as a metaphor for social change in the 1950s and the 1960s was seen as the evil eroding the traditional values and the sacred order of the society. Social anxiety, failing to identify an organized public or political expression, accused the youth for being the “*responsible enemy responsible?*” for traditional “*morality*” (Hall et al., 2003, p. 71-72). For example, Cohen (1972) in his study of moral panics on mods and rockers in England in the 1960s explored the notion that youth subcultures are constructed as folk devils by mainstream, “dominant” culture as discussed in the former chapter. Thus, a pragmatic conception of resistance to the mainstream makes a basis for a significant amount of subcultural participation.

In the symbolic analysis of *RKOT*, it has been noted that the media exposure of *RKOT* is not as explicitly critical and judgmental as the foreign media exposure of *RKOI* due to the conjunctural, socio-cultural and political differences. While foreign media is more brutally critical about these kids, Turkish media prefer to make more neutral, just “click on the photo” news with very little written content. However, onedio.com; for example, is one of those that highlights the extravagant and ostentatious lives of *RKOT* with the headline: “*They are playing with money*”. Similarly, in the news of listelist.com, *RKOT* is sarcastically featured with the content saying “*Watch out! This news includes lots of helicopters, which could be dangerous for those who use metrobus*”.³⁹ It has also been stated that *Ekşi Sözlük* and *Süslü Sözlük* are the only Turkish media platforms which explicitly and harshly criticize *RKOT*. As a foreign mainstream online media platform, thesun.com, could be claimed to have made the most explicitly critical and judgmental news of *RKOT* by underlying their extravagant and ostentatious posts and by calling them “*spoilt*” and “*envy-inducing*” youngsters.⁴⁰ Thus, even if *RKOT* is not explicitly defined as a serious threat to societal values and interest by mass media, it is for certain that it has achieved to draw attention of mainstream society in a negative way by displaying a “marginalized outsider” identity which challenge the societal norms. The interviewees are also well aware of this.

³⁹ A type of public transport in Istanbul.

⁴⁰ See chapter 3 for further discussion.

Cohen (1972) suggests that “A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media...” (p. 1). Hebdige (1979) states that Cohen’s main focus was “news media” aiming at higher ratings by sacrificing accuracy of information. Similarly, Hall et al. (2003) emphasize the two-facedness of the societal reaction to youth subcultures (e.g., mods and rockers) with its patronizing publicity versus moral anxiety. Thus, the media not only normalize and banalize the subcultures through constant coverage but also establish negative portrayals of them. Therefore, stereotypification and gross simplifications of their actions and motives result from their styles which differ from the culture (Williams, 2007). Some scholars (see e.g., Warren & Aumair, 1998; Lucas, 1998; Paterline, 2000) claim that adults do not get involved in direct interactions with subcultures. They have an idea of subcultures through either news media or hearsay labeling them upon their race and style. Similarly, *RKOT* represented through *Instagram* have very little interaction with adults of the outside world who define them somehow “deviant” (not criminally but culturally) in local mainstream populations.⁴¹ Yet, one should keep in mind that *Instagram* itself, as the societal and leisure space of *RKOT*, constitutes the media which represent *RKOT* to mainstream populations, which means that not only the other media, but also social media the content of which is generated by its users⁴² have been effective in the representation of *RKOT* since they constantly establish the “deviant” identity. As a consequence, the societal reactions also coming through *Instagram DMs* and comments indicate that style of *RKOT* represented through *Instagram* posts conflicts with the culture and the norms of the mainstream populations:

(Have you received any reactions from people after being tagged on RKOT?)

“I received both positive and negative reactions. Some people wrote that (“what has changed in your life after sharing that post? What was your objective in doing that?”)”

“Once someone commented under the photo saying (“The cars in your photos are just rental!”).”

⁴¹ See media exposure of *RKOT* in chapter 3 for more detailed information.

⁴² *RKOT* and their followers along with the administrator of the profile.

“One of them said I look like a waiter. People are sending messages asking (“what’s the source of your money?”)”

“Of course. They asked Why so much showing off? Why so much ego? Actually I am not egotistical but I don’t have to explain myself. I get angry with this attitude.”

However, gender plays a big role in the attitude and the tone of societal reactions. Society, which is harsher to male *RKOT* due to their uncouth and ostentatious posts, generally tend to regard female *RKOT*’s posts more reasonably. Hall et al.’s (2003) words explain this well: *“Girls are also ideologically encouraged to see their sexual identity” as an avenue of social mobility, whether that is defined (as normally for boys) as a passage across class boundaries, ...”* (p. 228) Accordingly, gender difference may allow girls to pass across the boundaries resulting from class. Consistent with the claim of Hall et al., female *RKOT* interviewees have said that they did not receive almost any negative reactions but lots of compliments instead:

“I was asked for a date by lots of boys after being tagged on RKOT. I met my boyfriend B. through this page.”

“Men were complimentary through DM because I am a woman.”

“Generally they say that they envy me. Especially boys. They are so funny. Once one of them said: (“Even the queen of England doesn’t have the same charisma as you do”).”

Based on this data, it can be concluded that the norms, the values and the beliefs of the dominant culture discriminate genders regarding their *RKOT* style. While male *RKOT* receive negative comments and messages from the followers, female ones receive positive and complimentary messages.

Also some societal reaction to *RKOT* can be said to intend to get some pragmatic consequences as well. Even though one cannot be sure whether the cases are true, almost all *RKOT* interviewed have claimed that people in need contacted them through *Instagram DM* to ask for financial aid. A few *RKOT* are more skeptical and avoid giving money to these people since they think that it is a scam:

“People asked for money. They asked for a ginger⁴³ and scholarship. I do not trust such things on the internet.”

“I received silly messages too. People asked for scholarships. I helped some of them but most of them are liars.”

However, the majority of RKOT have accepted to help these people since they felt convinced about their sincerity:

“(“Can you give me scholarship” “I am getting divorced, can you pay my debts”) I received such messages. One of the them from Belgium said that he didn’t have any money and needed money for education. I sent him 50 Euros. I believed him. He was sincere.”

“A lot of people asked for scholarships. I helped lots of people because I believed them.”

“3-4 people asked for money. There are some still asking for money. Someone asked me if I can send a video of the inside of my car with music in the background because he wanted to use it as if it was his. And I did. He will send it to girls.”

Based on this data, it can be claimed that the subcultural processes of RKOT have been spectacularized in more positive ways. Williams (2007) explains this well with the following words:

Societal reaction may also spectacularize youth-subcultural processes in more positive ways. As Thornton (1996) studied the media’s responsibility for acid house’s mutation into rave culture, Bennett (2000) explored how the growth in popularity of ethnic Punjabi music in the UK resulted in an increased number of venues and events upon which young fans could rely. The rise of rap’s popularity has similarly allowed for the global spread of a racialized and classed black sensibility that stands ostensibly in contrast to a white, middle-class culture (Williams, 2007, p.14).

⁴³ An electronic scooter.

Similarly, *RKOT*, ostentatiously and vulgarly showing off through their luxurious lifestyles and wealth, have also been involved in philanthropy. In contrast to their starting point and essential objective, like in other subcultural processes resulted in more positive ways, this formation has resulted in an increased awareness and sensibility among *RKOT* towards the lower classes of society. Also positive reactions and the increase in the number of followers have allowed *RKOT* to gain confidence and the attention they long for:

“My friends quite liked and appreciated my profile so I liked it as well... They said I share very beautiful photos. Friends’ appreciation and defiance are my real reasons. They say (“we wish everybody used it like you.”)”

“The number of my followers has increased. Lots of girls have added me.”

“I received almost 10.000 follower requests after being tagged. I’m very glad about it.”

“The poor started to follow me! (Laughter) I got lots of friend-requests. A lot of beautiful girls added me.”

In his work *the Society of the Spectacle* Debord (1994) claims that the ruling economic system results in a vicious circle of isolation. This isolation contributed by technologies serves as weapons to create “*lonely crowds*” by constantly reinforcing the conditions. Therefore, *RKOT* longing for popularity and attention may stand for the “*lonely crowds*” of Debord since they still tend to keep the small circle of their friends as it is despite an abundance of followers. In addition, they do not meet these people in real life despite some virtual interaction for a short period of time. Debord (1994) claims that the spectator experiences alienation through his own unconscious activity:

The more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more readily he recognizes his own needs in the images of need proposed by the dominant system, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires (p. 10).

In conclusion, based on the definition and the framework of the societal reaction discussed in traditional and contemporary studies on subculture, *RKOT* who hold a collective ostentatious and extravagant identity on *Instagram*, are aware of the

negative reaction that comes from the dominant ideology. Even though some feel bothered by this attitude, they keep appearing on the profile. In addition, they are exposed to the reactions of *Instagram* users through comments and *DMs*. Despite some positive feedback from the followers (especially for females), *RKOT* tend to receive rather negative messages that attack their ostentatious and extravagant rich identity.

However, subcultural processes of *RKOT* also result in humanistic acts like philanthropy and popularity despite some drawbacks. Thanks to philanthropy, some *RKOT* have helped individuals from the lower class in the society. Even though they do not establish a close relationship or a friendship with these people in real life, such kinds of interactions have allowed *RKOT* to eliminate the distance between the poor and themselves. In addition, despite the feeling of satisfaction resulting from an increase in the number of followers, *RKOT* do not tend to meet these people in real life since they rather like to hang out with their own milieu which consists of only a few individuals. Hence, in Debord's (1994) expression, they stand for "lonely crowds" who experience alienation through their unconscious activity.

4.7. Identity and Authenticity of *RKOT*

Ethnicity⁴⁴ and class⁴⁵ have been two core concepts of identity both in British and American subcultural studies. *CCCS* scholars have defined youth subcultures in regard to their distinctive style and resistant identity formed against mainstream culture.⁴⁶ Subcultural studies in the US mainly focused on "naturalistic inquiry" and "the empirical study of experience". Thus, the relationship between subcultural participation and its effect on the self was their primary concern framing identity with respect to insider/outsider dichotomies or internal hierarchies (Williams, 2007). Today, in "*the network society whose social structure is made up of networks powered by micro-electronics-based information and communication technologies*" (Castells, 2004, p. 3), the significance of ethnicity and class in formations of subcultures can be claimed to be controversial. Youth closely mingling with each other through the facilities of electronic communications technologies have almost abolished the boundaries resulting from these two factors. Nevertheless, *RKOT* expressing themselves through an "appropriated" and "subverted" upper class identity with no

⁴⁴ Especially black youth.

⁴⁵ Especially working class.

⁴⁶ The culture of white, working class and middle class.

specific ethnicity can be claimed to be a consequence of the network society since they have established their group identity through electronic communications technologies. Thus, ethnicity does not play a role in their national identity since almost all the interviewees, even those with a different ethnicity, have said to be proud of being a Turk:

“I’m proud of being a Turk. As a person who lives abroad, I always vote in the elections. When needed, I do my best for my country. I was going to fly to Turkey during the coup attempt but the US cancelled the flights so I went to the Turkish Embassy.”⁴⁷

“I’m happy to be a Turk. I’m Kurdish but I love Atatürk very much. My family loves Atatürk, as well. They vote for CHP.”

“Of course. I was born as a Turk. There is no foreigner in my family. I don’t have any foreign friends. I live in Turkey. I earn my living from this country.”

However, gender plays a crucial role in defining identity in relation to Turkishness. Female *RKOT* avoid establishing an identity through the Turkish nation while male *RKOT* tend to show a more chauvinistic approach. Two female interviewees who claim to be exposed to negative prejudgments of foreign people due to the patriarchal and male dominant culture of Turkey say that they sometimes feel embarrassed to be a Turk:

“I am not happy to be a Turk. I do not conform with the society since it is patriarchal. Of course my family does not treat me like that but... still... I don’t like Turkish men’s attitudes towards women. If I had a chance, I would want to be from another country... Like any Scandinavian country. Even though I do not have any problems in the society because of my family’s attitude, I don’t like the way Turkish men behave.”

“I’m kind of nationalistic. I love to be a Turk but sometimes I feel embarrassed. Especially abroad. People have prejudices about us. That’s why I hide my nationality abroad.”

⁴⁷ This *RKOT* is coming from a Kurdish family.

Sim and Baker in Baker et al. (2015) argue that some female members of contemporary hardcore and straightedge subcultures tend to stop identifying themselves as members since they do not have the same bodily practices as male members do. Hence, dominant masculinity of male members defines the authenticity of the subculture, which causes some female members to avoid subcultural identification with the group due to the difficulty in sufficiently meaningful connection with the other members. Similarly, some female *RKOT* who dislike the male dominance in Turkish society tend to avoid identifying themselves with the Turkish identity.

In the *RKOT* case, unlike the traditional subcultural youth groups of Britain which commonly emerged from black and white conflicts during the 1960s and the 1970s, the *RKOT* identity is not associated with any specific ethnicity except for being the Turkish leg of the *RKOI* phenomenon. However, it should be added that the Turkish identity which is proudly possessed by almost all *RKOT* interviewees except for a few female participants, may be utilized to establish a resistant identity against non-Turkish Western society:

“Turkey is a developing country. I wanted to show that we could do and afford beautiful things too.”

“In the past, I used to be a part of it. I shared 6 photos and received very nice and funny comments. I thought that it was like showing foreigners what Turks could do.”

Noble in Baker et al. (2015) highlights the importance of other forms of togetherness such as ethnicity, age, locale and experience along with class and style. Even though *RKOT* do not possess a collective Turkish ethnicity, they tend to adopt the “rich kid” identity in relation to the Turkish identity. Nevertheless, they do not show any explicit representation of chauvinist behavior on the profile.

Williams (2018) states that street studies of white British fans⁴⁸ regard their consumerist behavior of soul music in 1960s as a form of reducing racial lines. Nevertheless, some fans report that they do not see any correlation between the ethnicity of the musician and their choice of this music since they were too young to understand the racial politics behind the music they listened to. In addition, both Idriss

⁴⁸ Now in their sixties or older.

and Morgan in Baker et al. (2015) highlight the importance of class, taste and lifestyle in relation to subcultural identity rather than ethnicity due to the possibility of stereotyped and stigmatized labels of a particular ethnicity. Thus, Kurdish and Caucasian *RKOT* who identify themselves with the Turkish nationality could be an example of this avoidance from the stereotyped and stigmatized identity of their nationality. Moreover, the proudly adopted Turkish identity by all male and some female members of *RKOT* indicates that nationality plays an important role in getting together under the roof of especially *RKOT* on *Instagram*, rather than any other *RKOI*.

To sum up, ethnic identification, which was regarded as more explicit and apparent during the time of American and British subcultural studies have become less apparent in the globalized society especially among subcultures. Based on this, *RKOT* who adopt a Turkish identity could still be claimed to have a collective identity of ostentatious rich kids regardless of the ethnicity.

Since subcultures are internationally embedded in larger social and cultural networks, many scholars of subcultures have identified them regarding their distinctions in contrast to the dominant culture. For example, Becker (1963) states that jazz players hold a degree of “hipness” separating themselves from mainstream “squares”. At this point, Williams (2011) highlights the importance of authenticity which is carried out through subcultural interaction. Like Williams, Lohman (2017) suggests that authenticity is “*a tool in the creation and maintenance of individual (or group) identity, based on intersubjective understandings of what markers are needed to claim authenticity*” (p. 23). Thus, intersubjectivity; in other words, interactions and observations of subcultural members, enable them to “*come to decision through their own and others “authenticity”*” (Williams, 2018, p. 8). *RKOT* who separate themselves from the “ordinary” upper class with an ostentatious, extravagant and “relatively” uncouth identity, put a distinction between themselves and others although most of them do not agree that they conform to the *RKOT* identity:

(Are you a part of RKOT?)

“I don’t see myself as one of them. There is a kind of nouveau-rich who don’t know even how to hold a spoon. The bourgeoisie has disappeared... the middle and high class as well. The rich have become richer. The poor have become poorer.”

“I am more friendly, modest. I find them cold. They call people “bey” (sir). I am against this attitude.”

“No, I don’t care for such things. I’m a quality man. Nobody can deny it. When you look at my photos, you can see that quality. But others are not like me. They share anything and everything. It is irritating.”

“Maybe. In some photos I look like them. But it is not because I want to look rich. I just share what I find beautiful.”

Hereby, it is important to emphasize the individualistic perspective of post-subcultural studies. Post-subcultural theory suggests approaching people in youth cultures as individuals rather than members of social groups. Within this perspective, *RKOT* can be considered as individuals who construct their own identities and who make their own decisions. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that some *RKOT* still regard themselves as part of this group despite their individual motivations and identities. Also, all *RKOT* are happy to appear on the profile with the identity of *RKOT* although they differentiate themselves from the other *RKOT*.

In addition, some *RKOT* state that they have lost the sense of belonging to the group over time although some still regard themselves as a part of the phenomenon:

*“In the past, I used to be a part of it. I shared 6 photos and received very nice and funny comments. I thought that it was like showing foreigners what Turks could do. Now, everybody shares a post in a Porsche and it is not a sign of wealth. That’s why I don’t see myself as a part of *RKOT* anymore.”*

“Well we can say that... But right now, I can say that I’m not anymore. I wouldn’t do it now. I see myself a part of it though...”

“I don’t have a photo on the page anymore but because I’m in touch with Tolga, yes I feel like I’m a part of it.”

Hereby, the emphasis put on individualistic identity and pleasure by post-subcultural theory can explain the fluidity and hybridity of *RKOT* since there are also few *RKOT* who totally reject that they have been a part of this identity since they differentiate themselves from the group’s identity and individual identities of the other members:

(Are you a part of RKOT?)

“No. I don’t think so.”

“No. I’m not. Definitely not. I don’t know them. I feel like I am different. For example, in my photo, I only display the watch on my wrist but others display all their property. It makes a lot of difference.”

“Some have less money than I do but they share very uncouth photos. I never show what I have. I always share discreetly. I have only my work info.”

Some RKOT happily possess the identity and accept that they have a collective identity as rich kids. Yet, they do not associate it to their real-self, rather to their existence on the profile regarding the RKOT identity:

“Since I am there, I am part of it. I am culturally rich. I do not miss any environment. I’m like a chameleon. I can adapt to any kind of environment.”

“If they have shared my photo there, then yes I am part of it.”

“Definitely. Well. I didn’t know that there were this many rich people in Turkey before this page. I find this page is of a high quality.”

“I’m not yet but I will be... I’m too young to be a part of it but once I become 18, I will be a part of it. My father will get me the car I want as well and I will start sharing more photos. For example, I’m thinking of sharing the photo of our house, which costs 20.000.000 TRY.”

Thus, this data leads us to rethink the concept of two analytically distinct layers of identity noted by Williams (2006). Williams (2006) claims that identity discourse can be separated into two analytically distinct layers: a social identity as members of groups and a personal identity as unique subculturalists, even separated from fellow participants (see also Widdicombe, 1993). From this perspective, RKOT who do not define themselves as the other participants of the group and differentiate themselves from them can be still identified as participants of the subculture since they have the social identity of RKOT at face value:

(What differentiate you from ordinary people?)

“We can do things without working and putting effort in. Sometimes I feel embarrassed when I drive an expensive car and see an old man riding a bike. I know

how to enjoy life. I never think of tomorrow. If I had 1 billion liras in my pocket, I would spend it all even though I was in debt. ”

Hereby *RKOT* define their identity through an insider and outsider distinction. While a young kid who drives an expensive car holds the identity of the “rich kid”, “the old man” who rides a bike stands for the outsider (mainstream) who does not have as much wealth as *RKOT*. Especially, the example of an “old man” is important. While making the distinction between rich and poor, *RKOT* also emphasize the distinction of young and old who have inversely proportional wealth.

Lohman (2017) highlights the importance of understanding “subcultural capital” in relation to identity yet criticizes Thornton’s (1995) view of “subcultural capital” since it lacks an explicit addressing of authenticity in terms of identity formation. Williams (2007) claims that subcultural capital may be present as well as absent in terms of the insider/outsider distinction. In terms of internal dimensions creating hierarchies, it is expressed and valued in specific and different situations. Thus, subcultural capital represents “*a more general social–psychological practice of social identification*” (p. 15). Within this context, *RKOT* can be claimed to identify themselves regarding both external (outsider) and internal (insider) dimensions through hierarchies representing a social identification regarding a more socio-psychological practice.

Some scholars conclude that subcultural identity is dichotomous and hierarchical. Thus, there are real and fake participants. For example, in Fox’s (1987) study of punks, it is stated that there are real ones and pretenders who serve various functions on the periphery of the subculture. Although the majority of *RKOT* interviewed described themselves as real *RKOT* (except for upper middle class *RKOT*), almost all members tend to have skepticism on the genuineness of the other *RKOT*’s individual identity:

(Are RKOT genuine/real?)

“No. they look rich but they are not literally rich. Especially girls. I do not find any of them real. ”

“I think 50% of them are real. Well. I believe that there are people who just pretend. But I cannot say much about it because I do not check the page very carefully. ”

“Some people are fake. I understand fake profiles when I look at them. If it is your specialization, you understand it. They post a receipt of a nightclub; I can understand if it is fake or not because I know how much it would cost. For instance, a man organizing parties looks like he has this life style on his profile even though he doesn’t.”

“50%. I understand. When I carefully look at a profile, I understand it. I will show you a profile... This girl looks very wealthy on Instagram but she is a hungry dog in her real life.”

Thornton (1995) explains the idea of “subcultural capital” that participants (insiders) use both to distinguish themselves from outsiders and differentiate themselves from insiders in the scene. Style, actions and events of subcultures may objectify and embody subcultural capital in appropriate ways so that participants of the subculture can purposefully express the personal and social aspects of subcultural identity:

“Well. Yes, (they are) real. But I don’t know if the life they display is the same as the life they have. I think some are not real. But most of them seem to be rich.”

“It depends on people’s honesty. They can turn out to be a totally different person after you meet.”

“I don’t think so. It is a bad environment. It makes people competitive. Maybe it is a good platform. Thanks to your short bio people can reach your life.”

“I think the authenticity of the photos are important. What they put and what they show is what it is, I believe. Some are really good at fake photos though.”

In this aspect, RKOT’s approach to the authenticity of the other participants explains William’s (2006) claim about authenticity. He emphasizes different standards in acquiring authenticity. RKOT do not totally trust what they see on the profile. They become sure whether a particular participant is literally rich or not either checking the personal profiles carefully or knowing that person in real life. Also, regarding the representation of the identity on *Instagram*, RKOT believe that *Instagram* is a limited tool to reflect their genuine identity:

(Is Instagram the right platform to display your identity?)

“I do not think so because you only share visual content but your thoughts and what you say is always different from how you look.”

“Most people can think that I am uncouth but when I talk to them they say that I am not uncouth at all. But this is something that I allow...”

“No because you only post photos. For example, if it unites with twitter, it would be better. There shouldn't be only photos. Only visual things are not enough.”

“People say I look very snobbish on Instagram but when they get to know me in real life, they say that I am a very good person. So it doesn't reflect my identity. People think that I'm rude to waiters and so on... but I am not... You can't reflect your personality on Instagram.”

“It reflects my physical appearance... My life style... But not my character. Yes. kind of... it reflects my personality.”

This data is surprising since as previously discussed, RKOT have reported that their favorite social media is *Instagram* due to its visual content. The majority of them find other social media frustrating since they have written content and people share their ideological and philosophical opinions. Once they are asked to describe RKOT from the individual identity perspective, they tend to dislike the other RKOT:

“It's a platform where people reflect themselves as what they are not. These people satisfy themselves, and gain self-confidence. But they know they pay for the followers and it is so silly. There are also people who buy likes. They buy both real followers and bots. But after a while, real followers unfollow these people.”

Nevertheless, contradicting with the opinions of the RKOT who are skeptical about the authenticity of the participants, some RKOT state that *Instagram* reflects their genuine identity:

“Well... You can reflect your life style, character, etc... Even the car you drive reflects your identity.”

“Right now yes, it is (the right platform). Because you can show/display what exists. It is the best platform for now.”

“It might be (the right platform). Well... You can have an idea about my personality looking at my profile.”

“Definitely. A person’s profile page reflects their character. For example, my girlfriend’s page is of very high quality, she is a very quality person too. She shares a post every 15 days. One of the things that influenced me the most in that girl. By the way, she is not rich.”

“You can understand what kind of a person I am according to the caption under the photo.”

Thus, like in other aspects, *RKOT* have differences of opinion in respect to the genuineness of identity and authenticity represented on *Instagram*. *CCCS* subculture scholars’ concept of authenticity was used as an opposite meaning for mass culture. For example, Hebdige (1979) highlights the authenticity of subcultures due to their unadulterated and “pure” resistance to the mainstream. Similarly, Thornton (1995) defines authenticity with attached negotiated values. Yet, it should be kept in mind that authenticity only exists at the time of the subcultural formation. The styles and identities that differentiate them from outsiders are quickly commodified and utilized for profit, which demolishes the authenticity of the subculture. In this aspect, *RKOT* can be claimed to be the authentic version of ostentatious and vulgar rich youth culture and young *Instagram* participants who are not tagged on *RKOT* but share posts having similar features to *RKOT*’s who could be said to demolish the authenticity of the *RKOT* culture. Moreover, some participants of *RKOT*⁴⁹ complain that those who are not literally rich or who “cannot digest to be rich”⁵⁰ damage the reputation of the page:

“Tolga shouldn’t share the posts of non-quality people on the page because it would also make me a non-quality man. I am not saying that there are a lot of them on the page but there are some.”

Subsequent studies (see e.g., Jasper, 2004) have clarified some details of the authenticity argument of Hebdige, which focuses on absolute resistance to mainstream. In addition, some postmodern approaches (see e.g., Muggleton, 2002) primarily center on the “socially constructed nature of authenticity as a standpoint

⁴⁹ Especially the richer ones who take the page more seriously and once had an identity attachment to the profile.

⁵⁰ They mean nouveau-rich.

ontology” (Williams, 2007, p. 15), which claims that the youth may believe in an authentic subcultural self even though they do not belong to typical subcultural styles. Yet, more modernist approaches (see e.g. Lewin & Williams 2007) conceptualize the authenticity as the supremacy of style altogether. Also, semantic dimensions of authenticity such as political-economic, gender-sexual, social-cultural and so on has been another approach to the authenticity of the subcultural identities (see e.g., McLeod, 1999). Thus, based on these different approaches, it can be inferred that *“identity and authenticity do not have fixed meanings within the subcultural studies literature; each concept is deployed in multiple (and sometimes antagonistic) ways”* (Williams, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, concepts of identity and authenticity regarding *RKOT* should be deployed in multiple ways such as class, style, gender, age, nationality etc. since members tend to identify with the group identity and authenticity through both their own individual ways and intersubjectivity.

In addition, Murdock (1973) highlights the importance of subculture in terms of providing *“a social and symbolic context for the development and reinforcement of collective identity and individual self-esteem”* (p. 9) since he advocates that *“subcultures offer a collective solution to the problems posed by shared contradictions in the work situation and provide a social and symbolic context for the development and reinforcement of collective identity and individual’s self-esteem”* (p. 9). In the *RKOT* case, it could be claimed that the problems do not result from the contradictions in the work situation as it did in the 1960s and the 1970s in England. However, the problems resulting from societal assertiveness in a neo-liberal society such as desire of high status, reputation, popularity, entertainment, emulation, competition and attention among *RKOT* lead these kids to gather under the collective identity of the *“extravagant and ostentatious rich kids”* identity.

Their class identity and position is never finally “settled”: the balance of forces within them remains open. They form the basis of what Parkin has called a ““negotiated version” of the dominant system. ...dominant values are not so much rejected or opposed as modified by the subordinate class as a result of circumstances and restricted opportunities.” ... (Parkin, 1971:92).

The upper class identity of *RKOT* and position is not settled either. Being tagged under the same collective identity, these kids possess a negotiated version of the dominant system as Parkin (1971) states since they do not totally reject or oppose the dominant system values⁵¹. In contrast, they put the distinction between themselves and outsiders⁵² by appropriating and subverting luxury consumption patterns and practices in an ostentatious way. In addition, they differentiate themselves from insiders⁵³ by highlighting their “self-uniqueness” and others’ vulgarity.

Hall et al. (2003) state that “...registering of group identity, situation and trajectory in a visible style both consolidates the group from a loosely-focused to a tightly-bounded entity...” (p. 56). Thus, the new meanings emerge by creating a new distinctive stylistic ensemble with appearance, language, ritual occasions, dress, music and so on. All these symbolic objects form a unity in an expressive form defining the group’s public identity. Hall et al. (2003) also emphasize that both the internal processes of the group and its position to others generate their self-identity. Moreover, not only the negative reactions coming from other groups, but also positive ones in particular directions shape the group’s identity.

Within this context, *RKOT* who seem to form a “loosely focused” entity could still be claimed to have a group identity. However, the understanding of this collective identity varies among *RKOT*. At this point, William’s (2007) argument on the “contingent nature” of subcultural boundaries and identities should be kept in mind. While some participants approach the phenomenon with a positive attitude describing it as real, original, genuine, fun, attractive, intriguing, flashy, quality, funny, nationalistic⁵⁴, popular, rich, quality, genuine, eye-catching, match maker, joyous, and beneficial for Turkey, some *RKOT* hold a negative perspective towards *RKOT* describing it as ostentatious, spoilt, bullshit, show off, lowbrow, uncouth, defensive, ego-satisfying, womanizing, mercenary. In addition, some *RKOT* define the group neutrally describing its face value (e.g. virtual, monied, luxurious). Therefore, grounding on subcultural theory which basically focused on class and ethnicity in relation to identity and authenticity, subcultural authenticity and the identity of *RKOT* can be explained through contemporary scholars’ emphasis on embracing multiple

⁵¹ The values of post-industrial consumerist society which idealize some concepts like globalization, high-technology, the internet, etc.

⁵² Those who are from the middle class and the upper class.

⁵³ Members of *RKOT*

⁵⁴ They use this concept in a positive way.

ways of defining identity and authenticity such as gender, age, experience, locale, intersubjectivity, etc.

4.8. Glocalization of Subculture and RKOT

Yi-feng (2009) draws attention to the importance of re-establishing cultural location and identity in relation to globalization since globalization increases the possibility of destroying local cultures and creating a homogenized world. Hence, within the context of cross-cultural communication in this globalized world, there is a process of change which is also shaped by the forces of localization. These two concepts are significant since they enable both the meeting and clashing of different cultures. While globalization tends to convert the world into sameness, localization increases cultures by emphasizing difference. Tomlinson (2003) claims that *“globalization is not a “one-way” process of the determination of events by massive global structures, but involves at least the possibility of local intervention in global processes”* (p. 26). In other words, local intervention prevents globalization from coming into conflict with local norms and values. Sometimes, it simply blocks culturally and politically unacceptable and offensive practices. Hence, there is a reflexive interconnection between globalization and localization which not only reduces the rigidity of identity but also places a multicontextual and multidimensional environment to the forefront in the form of glocalization (Yi-feng, 2009).

Thompson and Arsel (2004) argue that both globalization and localization need to be embodied in one another. Thus, culture is the central ensemble that goes through glocalization processes. Youth culture, which is under the processes of appropriation and diffusion due to its inherently global and modern characteristics can be associated with Robertson's (1992) concept of “glocalization”. Wilk (1995) claims that global institutions of the youth may have localized versions despite *“global structures of common differences”* (p. 117). In other words, youth cultures which are more likely to be manifestations of Western culture tend to have appropriated forms in the local context (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006).

Even though they do not use the concept of “glocalization”, some subcultural scholars (e.g. Moore, 1993; Peterson & Bennett, 2004; Williams, 2007) highlight the importance of diffusion and appropriation of subcultures through cross-cultural interactions. In chapter 3, it has been claimed that *RKOT* with all its variations (e.g. Tahrán, India, London, California and so on) tend to show some distinctive features

although they all are inspired by the original, London-based *RKOI* and each other. Even though they all have a similar kind of “style” and use *Instagram* as a common societal and leisure space, the cultural and conjunctural differences affect the way *RKOI* represent their identity on this social media:

(Are RKOI and RKOT the same things?)

“The images and concepts are similar but there are some differences. For example, a guy is smoking hookah in his luxurious car in his RKOT post here in Turkey.”

“RKOT is more ostentatious of course. There are modest ones too but fewer. Other RKOI are not as fictional as the Turkish wing Their photos are more spontaneous and inartificial but ours are not.”

Based on this data, it can be concluded that the socio-cultural structure of Turkey constrains the way *RKOT* display their ostentatious and extravagant rich identity on *Instagram*. They do not regard themselves as exactly the same as *RKOI* even though they all accept that they are similar. In addition, while some *RKOT* appreciate what *RKOI* do and criticize the Turkish wing for being artificial and non-spontaneous, some *RKOT* think that the profile should be improved to reach the level of some other *RKOI*:

“I talked to Tolga. I want his page to reach a good position like the American and Iranian RKOI...”

Kjeldgaard and Askegaard’s (2006) claim about diffusion of early youth cultural styles explains *RKOT*’s comments. They argue that as part of the development of mass society, diffusion primarily starts in the West, however, it spreads to other parts of the modernizing world. Within this context, the position of Turkey in the globalized world can be seen as the latter territory. The administrator explains the reason of this re-established and appropriated form of the *RKOI* phenomenon in the local context:

(Are you inspired by RKOI?)

“My page is independent from that. Things work differently in Turkey. When I write more provocative captions under the posts like RKOI do, RKOT call and ask me to delete them. They feel uncomfortable about it.”

This comment of the administrator can be explained with Jenkins's (2004) claim. Mediated imagery is appropriated and re-contextualized across cultures. Thus, this process usually causes metamorphoses of meanings, which means unpredictability and contradiction of meaning in relation to the origin of broadcast. Friedman (1990) and Giddens (1991) argue that the processes of globalization generally shape socio-cultural reality between the local and global. In addition, as noted by Simon (1996) cultural meaning "*is not located within the culture itself but in the process of negotiation which is part of its continual reactivation*" (p. 138). Thus, cultural meaning is made up of "*a specified and restricted meaning*" through a collective agreement (Allan, 1998, p. 88). Hereby, it can be stated that *RKOT* enforce limits and shape the style to specify and restrict meaning in the local context. Since the majority of *RKOT* avoid provocative hashtags, they appropriate and contextualize the *RKOI* identity with Turkish nuances.

In other words, the cultural and conjunctural differences affect the way all *RKOI* represent their identity on *Instagram*. Moore (1993) claims that the skinhead subculture facilitated through transatlantic interactions evolved differently both in the US and UK. For example, non-racist skinhead groups emerged in the US differently from those who are racist (Wood, 1999). Similarly, other contemporary subcultural groups such as goths, punks, straightedges, hardcores and so on have had participants from all around the world with their distinctive translocality (Williams, 2007). In addition, Peterson and Bennett (2004) defines this translocality as "*a regular communication of widely scattered local scenes around a distinctive ... lifestyle*" (p. 6). Thus, what is defined as "*translocality*" (Williams, 2007) or "*widely scattered local scenes*" (Peterson & Bennett, 2004) can be reconsidered with the concept of glocalization.

In regard to Fine and Kleinman's (1979) definition of subculture as a "*larger set of idiocultures that are interlocked through networks of direct and indirect communication*" (p. 734), Williams (2007) claims that translocal subcultures are interlocked through various ways such as music festivals, travel groups and so on. Despite no physical or geographical interaction, different legs of *RKOI* in different countries and cultures could be claimed to be interlocked through indirect visual online communication showing distinctive features which are unique to their specific culture. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that their ostentatious and vulgar wealthy

young attitude remains the common feature that ideologically interlocks these young people.

To conclude, the use of *Instagram* as a societal and leisure space is common among all *RKOI*; yet the way they use it varies depending on the culture they are exposed to. Some scholars (e.g., Jenkins, 1992; Hodkinson, 2002; Williams, 2007) claim that virtual spaces allow subcultures to continue to be relevant in their local scene facilitating regional, national and global translocal interaction. *RKOT* with their distinctive features which are unique to Turkish culture and the society could be said to interact with Turkish users of the profile on *Instagram* while keeping up-to-date within the global scene (other *RKOI* around the world) by following their profiles and being inspired by them. In brief, *RKOT* is an example of the glocalization process of a subculture in the network society.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to see whether the phenomenon of *RKOT* on *Instagram* can be regarded as a cyber-subculture in the network society under the current socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural structures of Turkey. I had two motivations for choosing this subject group for the study. First of all, it resulted from my personal experience and curiosity. As a lecturer at a private Turkish university, almost five years ago, I realized that my students as young people showed much more interest in the social media app of *Instagram* than any other social media platform. Also, the abundant number of both national and international media exposures of various *RKOI* on *Instagram* drew my attention to the globalized popularity of a specific youth culture which is known for its ostentatious and vulgar display of wealth. After I learned that three students from my university were tagged on the Turkish leg of the profile, I decided to work on *Instagram* and *RKOT* in relation to the subcultural theory. My second motivation for choosing *RKOT* for studying subcultural theory resulted from its characteristics which are similar to the characteristics of both traditional and contemporary youth subcultures despite some differences that may result from the social structures of the neo-liberal society. Thus, based on the fact that both traditional subcultural theory and contemporary subcultural studies emphasize the importance of social structures in a specific society in relation to the subcultural identity formation and participation, *RKOT* on *Instagram* as a derivative of globally famous *Instagram* phenomena of *RKOI* was chosen as the subject of the study. To make it clear, the reasons why *RKOT* can be claimed to own the characteristics of both traditional and contemporary subcultures can be explained as follows:

Firstly, *RKOT* is a youth group with a collective rich kid “identity” and “style” through which they display affluence ostentatiously and extravagantly. Thus, this subverted, appropriated and re-conceptualized style of *RKOT* could be approached as a way of symbolic

“resistance” against the dominant culture as CCCS scholars argued. Secondly, they represent a specific “social class” (the upper class) even though it cannot be regarded the same as CCCS’s working class youth groups. Thus, the collective upper class youth culture of *RKOT* allows me to investigate the importance of “class” in relation to subcultural identity and resistance. It also opens a new perspective to the concept of class which could vary across different societies and cultures, especially in today’s globalized society where the class segregation is claimed to become indistinct. In addition, for the actuality of the study, this component is of capital importance regarding the socio-economic and socio-cultural structures of neo-liberal society since it provides a potential for confuting the position of post-subcultural theorists who tend to disregard the concept of “class” in youth cultures today. Thirdly, *RKOT* who show luxury consumption practices in an extravagant and vulgar way display a “consumerist” identity which is emphasized by both CCCS scholars and post-subcultural scholars in relation to “individualization” of youth subcultures. Lastly, *RKOT* who have a virtual identity choose a specific cyberspace (*Instagram*) to construct and maintain their collective “rich kid” authenticity. This is an important aspect in the study since CCCS scholars put an emphasis on the significance of “leisure” and “space” in subcultural formation and participation meanwhile recent studies regarding leisure and youth cultures highlight the use of cyberspace as a leisure activity. In addition, the argument that advanced internet technologies and social media play a crucial role in the formation of virtual identities and subcultures became effective for the universe choice of the study. In brief, the concepts of “style”, of “class”, of “consumerism”, of “leisure”, of “space” and of “virtual identity” which have the potential for both collective and individual, fluid and loose formations provided the ground for studying *RKOT* as a subculture.

Starting from this point, this study attempts to seek an answer to the research question stated above centering around the signs and symbols (i.e. style) that distinguish *RKOT* on *Instagram* and other core components of subcultural theory (e.g. resistance, space, class, etc.) observed in *RKOT*. Within this perspective, it investigates how consumerism and social media in identity formation functions on *RKOT*, how they communicate on *Instagram* as active participants and whether their virtual subcultural identity relates to real life. Thus, for the purpose of a deeper understanding of subcultural identity formations on cyberspace where interactive users, mediated by images are actively involved as prosumers, the research adopts

a mixed approach that consists of a symbolic content analysis of *RKOT* and a (n)ethnographic methodology which is conducted through photographic, netnographic observations and interviews. Within this context, the introduction of the study is first followed by a literature review, then photographic and netnographic observations of both *RKOT* and *RKOT* phenomena and finally data analyses of interviews carried out with *RKOT* members.

First of all, the introduction of the study attempts to give a clear context and setting of the 21st century regarding socio-economic and socio-cultural structures of the neo-liberal society with a comparison to the socio-economic and socio-cultural structures of post-war England in relation to subcultural theory. Thus, based on the literature review on Castell's network society and a brief socio-historical overview of milestones in Turkey¹, the youth culture in Turkey has been conceptualized as the culture of depoliticized or sometimes politicized prominent consumers of popularized consumer commodities and values offered by media (the internet mostly). With a detailed research on the internet usage across the world and in Turkey, it has been stated that youth familiar with post-industrialized consumer goods and internet technologies use cyberspace for the purpose of communication, and information mostly. Hence, Turkish youth who think that social media liberate and inform them about the developments around the globe immediately by functioning as a new window opening to the globe commonly prefer *Instagram* (29%) which is followed by *WhatsApp* (27%) and *Facebook* (26%) as social media platforms on cyberspace (Next Generation, 2017). In addition, according to the research of We Are Social and Hootsuite (2018), Turkey has been stated as the second largest *Instagram* penetration rate (41%) across the world after Sweden (47%). Hence, all these findings have provided a basis for the research of *RKOT* on *Instagram* in relation to the media and cultural studies in Turkey.

Secondly, the theoretical framework of the study attempts to provide a basis for the investigation of *RKOT* in relation to subcultural theory and cultural studies. Within this perspective, the importance of cultural studies in relation to subcultures is discussed in terms of adopting an approach which is open to reconceptualizations and critiques rather than highlighting popular culture by excluding politics. In addition, it has been emphasized that

¹ i.e. The military coup d'état of 1980 and the latter rapid social change resulting from economic politics and technological developments, the governance of AKP and its neo-liberal economic policies after the 2000s, Gezi uprising and the failed military coup attend of 2016.

its potential for allowing use of symbolic terms to define culture enables creative and generic conceptualizations since it embraces culture as an autonomous entity that shapes everyday life and perceptions of society. After a brief overview of the subcultural theory in cultural studies, it has been stated that subcultures that represent the uses and transformations of culture through mainstream and marginalized groups tend to adopt specific values and behaviors that do not fit into the behaviors and values of the dominant culture. Based on this, it has been suggested that the extravagant and ostentatious *RKOT* could display these uses and transformations of culture through their subverted and appropriated behaviors and values. This hypothesis has led me to contextualize *RKOT* from both the society's and their own perspectives. Accordingly, in the following chapters, an approach which is grounded on both *CCCS's* subcultural theory by also centering around important components of the *Chicago School* and contemporary subcultural studies has been adopted for the course of the *RKOT* research.

Thirdly, symbolic content analysis of both *RKOT* and *RKOT* investigates particular features of subculture such as "marginalized identity" and "style" at symbolic level from society's perspective. The findings have shown that both *RKOT* and *RKOT's* media exposure and public image represent a collective "marginalized outsider" identity as they are featured as "envy-inducing", "outrageous", "jaw-dropping", "mind-boggling", "shocking", "insane", "spoilt", "pampered", "ostentatious", "shameless", "worthy-disaster", "uncouth", "lavish", "Kezo", "Kamil", "shamelessly extravagant" among numerous national and international media. At this point, it can be concluded that this marginalized outsider identity can be regarded as a consequence of the globalized dominant culture carried out through digitality. Apart from the agents of dominant ideology (i.e. America's *The Federal Bureau of Narcotics* and popular magazines and England's mass media such as TV and radio) in the former subcultural studies, today the internet can be claimed to function as the "moral entrepreneur", "crusader" and "rule-maker" of established society. Thus, it can be claimed that those who have the opportunity for creating the content of the digital environment serve as the agents of the dominant ideology since they contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of cultural hegemony. In other words, today the new media, regardless of whether they be mainstream or alternative, which have the power of rule-making, labeling, marginalizing, and crusading can contribute to a globalized cultural

hegemony. Hence, the misfit image of *RKOT* and other *RKOI* in society can be claimed to be reproduced and reinforced by the new media.

At this point, understanding the culture of the rich in relation to the dominant ideology of the post-industrialized society has gained prominence to understand the ostentatious and extravagant style of *RKOI* and *RKOT* since they represent affluence in a subverted and appropriated way which is not approved by established society. The netnographic findings have shown that in contrast to the dominant ideology regarding rich people, both *RKOI* and *RKOT* display a “vulgar” rich kid identity that shows their class privilege and that is far from being prudent and hardworking. These kids that flaunt their wealth via assertive and satirical captions and extravagant and ostentatious photos on *Instagram* cause disturbance in the surrounding culture. Thus, they seem to adopt a materialistic approach favoring their class advantages rather than being hardworking and generous in contrast to what wealthy parents desire. In addition, neither *RKOT* nor other *RKOI* shows any sign of philanthropy or high culture projects like music and art for the sake of society. In short, it can be argued that both *RKOI* and *RKOT* display a symbolically “intentional style” which does not coincide with the norms, values and beliefs of the dominant culture since they feed and reinforce frustration, disturbance and jealousy with an indifferent and provocative attitude towards the problems of society (e.g. politics, income inequality, poverty, etc.).

Thus, based on Hebdige’s (1979) symbolic analysis of “style”, the last part of the symbolic content analysis focuses on *RKOI* and *RKOT*’s style as an “intentional communicator” and as “bricolage and homology”. The findings have shown that both *RKOT* and *RKOI* reposition and recontextualize luxury commodities and lifestyle by subverting the conventional ways of wealth representation similar to the spectacular subcultures of post-war England. They construct new uses and meanings as subcultural style through “bricolage” which may open up new covertly oppositional readings. Hence, neither *RKOI* nor *RKOT* exactly abides by the social norms and values which are “normal”, “natural” and “appropriate” for “the rich” in the dominant ideology. Thus, the “re-appropriated”, “subverted” and “radically adopted” uses of luxury consumer goods (e.g. champagne bottles, expensive cars, designer clothes, private jets, etc.) stand for a set of common shared interests, values and rules that establish “*extreme orderliness*” as Hall et al., (2003) suggested, among

the members of both *RKOI* and *RKOT*. Hence, luxury consumer goods, provocative captions, ostentatious lifestyle, and so on also indicate the homology within the group despite their non-normative image in the eyes of society. In short, at symbolic value, their intentional style which is reproduced and reinforced through bricolage and homology is contagious across the world since it is communicated through *Instagram* which eases the process of the formation and diffusion of subcultures.

Lastly, the data analyses of the interviews with *RKOT* attempt to contextualize the phenomenon by centering on the core components of subcultural theory such as “social class”, “subcultural style”, “resistance”, “leisure”, “space”, “media”, “societal reaction”, “identity and authenticity”. The interviews have revealed that the real social class of *RKOT* can be categorized in three: “the super-rich” (26%), “the rich” (59%) and “the upper middle class” (15%). Hence, it can be argued that the rich identity of the *RKOT* is mostly (%85) coinciding with their real-life rich identity despite the upper-middle class *RKOT* who make the minority (15%) in the group. In all categories, it has been seen that there is class-consciousness although, unlike the members of traditional subcultures who want better life standards as the working class, *RKOT* struggle with different kinds of problems such as “loneliness”, “lack of trust”, “desire of interest” and “jealousy” resulting from their social class. In addition, unlike the homological working class approach of *CCCS* scholars in subcultures, being rich in *RKOT* displays hierarchical segregations even though the posts do not explicitly indicate these segregations at a symbolic level. Moreover, the heterogeneity in terms of educational, social, cultural and economic backgrounds has an influence on the worldviews and life perspectives of *RKOT*. Those who have a higher educational level and who come from educated families (31%) tend to define being rich metaphorically like “having free time”, “having good friends” and “being modest” while others (69%), most of whom (77%) dropped out, tend to define it with a nominal value. Thus, even though there is a certain extent of homology in the group since they all belong to the upper class and they all have the same style at a symbolic level, they can be regarded more fluidly, loosely and heterogeneously in terms of class. In brief, it can be claimed that the concept of class and of class consciousness can be still inherent up to a certain extent in today’s virtual subcultures due to the potential of cyberspace for more fluid, loose and heterogenous formations which also allow subcultural formations among different class segregations.

In relation to “style”, the interviews have shown that they have a “spectacular” style which is consistent with the semiotic analyses which highlight the subverted and appropriated style of *RKOT*. However, the criterion of “quality” among *RKOT* plays a crucial role in defining style among *RKOT*. The concept of quality among *RKOT* is determined according to the people tagged on the page and the way a *RKOT* looks in a post, which means that they are not regarded as “rich” unless they look of acceptably “quality”. In other words, “quality” indicates saturation of a *RKOT* who can show his wealth without being “uncouth” and “ostentatious”. Despite their “ostentatious and uncouth rich” image resulting from the theme of the profile, almost no *RKOT* regards himself/herself as “uncouth” or “ostentatious” underlying the fact that they define themselves as different from the others tagged on the page. Hence, the style of *RKOT* which is not as fixed and rigid as the style of the *CCCS*’s subcultural theory has been defined by their members according to their manifestations of self-expressions in relation to the other *RKOT* tagged on the profile. *RKOT* tend to define wealth in a subjective way, which is relevant to *RKOT*’s individual worldview and perspectives. Hence, being wealthy and having an upscale lifestyle do not necessarily mean “affluence” without the criteria (e.g. quality, wealthy, socially rich, etc.) they described.

At this point, the concept of hyperindividualism contemporary subcultural theory can explain cultural diversity and the individual autonomy of *RKOT*, which makes style fluid yet still important for their collective identity. Based on the interviews, it can be argued that in *RKOT*, the style determined by luxury consumer goods and an upscale lifestyle in relation to the upper class is also re-ordered and re-conceptualized with more “individualized” and “ostentatious” compositions although the individual members of *RKOT* do not attribute the same meaning to their style as outsiders do. *RKOT*’s style, which stands for creative consumerist behavior and constructed by shared and created meanings through subcultural artefacts, commodities and rituals, represents an evolving intersubjectivity. In short, *RKOT*’s style despite some individual choices and differences shed light on the current neo-liberal socio-economic and socio-cultural structures. Although the style of *RKOT* mostly coincides with the definition of *CCCS* theorists, it also carries the concept of individual consumer creativity that post-subcultural theorists suggest. Therefore, *RKOT* should be considered as a “neo-subculture” with their distinctive and “spectacular style” which also shows individual consumer creativity.

The concept of “resistance” has been one of the most valuable findings of this study. Differently from my assumptions before the interviews, *RKOT* do not have a particular overt resistance against any other social class unlike its parent culture *RKOI* which has a caption saying “*we have more money than they do, this is what we do...*”. However, they have rather shown either an emulation and competition among likeminded wealthy youth or a utilitarian activity. For the emulation and competition aspects, the milieu plays an important role since *RKOT* who belong to the same social class and who have the same life standards in real life feel convinced about the genuineness of the profile where they can share their photos with a *RKOT* identity. However, some *RKOT* (50%) who come from the same social class and who are familiar with the other *RKOT* tagged on the page share posts since they compete against other wealthy peers and want to prove that they can do even better than them. For the utilitarian aspect, it has been seen that although few upper middle class *RKOT* (11%) aim to enlarge their business circle, the majority of male *RKOT* (86%) use this identity to struggle with the gender-role stereotypes in the established society. Based on this data, it has been seen that *RKOT* do not try to change the larger social structure but they want to appear as a *RKOT* on this profile with the desire of being recognized, liked, and envied. In other words, they have the desire of an empowering identity and community of friends. Therefore, it can be claimed that both the themes and the form of resistance are more likely to be different in today’s virtual, consumerist and globalized culture. Thus, based on William’s (2009) detailed discussion on forms of resistance, it has been seen that *RKOT* have an “intentional resistance” (e.g., competing with peers, attracting girls, and enlarging their network) at the individual thought level. Hence, *RKOT* as a production of the network society display “covert” and “passive” forms of resistance against the commodified culture and stereotyped choices of the opposite gender and vulgarity of the peers at both “micro” and “meso” levels since motivations of the members regarding the subcultural acts and rituals are both self-conscious and other(s)-conscious. In addition to these, the concept of nationality is another aspect of covert resistance among *RKOT*. However, it is discussed in relation to the concept of ethnicity later in the conclusion.

The part which focuses on “leisure space” and “media” in relation to *RKOT*, highlights the fact that social space is significant for leisure activities of subcultural members. Geographical social spaces (e.g. street corners, dive bars, basements, etc.) where traditional

subcultures came together may shift into cyberspaces where virtual leisure activities are carried out by the members of subcultures today. In other words, new media which allow interactive communications and new kinds of cultural formations could be a new virtual space for subcultures since increased online communications and digitality provides increased flexibility, knowledge, collectivity and participation which is underestimated by post-subcultural theory. Grounding on Bourdieu's (1984) work and drawing upon William's (2011) argument, it has been suggested that social space in which members of subcultures constitute the capital (i.e. subcultural values, taste, likes, dislikes, lifestyle, etc.) refers to a semi-autonomous environment where hierarchy, dominance and struggle can occur. Thus, a collective creative agency of subcultures carries very little or no value outside their social space despite their positioning to overall society. Keeping this in mind, it can be claimed that *RKOT* on a particular social media space (*Instagram*) display a collective and creative agency through which they determine the criteria that constitutes the subcultural capital. Thus, in the networking society, cyberspace can function as the social environment of subcultures where they can also have leisure.

The data collected from the interviews have shown that use of *Instagram* among *RKOT* results from both the possibility for seeing something interesting and fun and capability for representing such an identity based on vanity since *RKOT* define *Instagram* as a “popular”, “easy”, “fun”, “necessary” and “only-visual” social media which allows leisure at individual and collective levels. Thus, it can be argued that members of *RKOT* find meaningful leisure activities on *Instagram* both at individual and collective levels. Based on the concepts of “leisure” and “space”, the reason of this particular social media choice (*Instagram*) of *RKOT* has been explained in five categories. First of all, it has been reported that *RKOT* who prefer *Instagram* to other social media avoid the cultural dominance of the elderly and of explicit ideology and politics since *Instagram* is both an “elderly-free” and “ideology-free” platform that provides them with discipline-free and control-free leisure and recreation. For this reason, *RKOT* do not prefer other social media like *Twitter* and *Facebook* since they find them outdated and ideological. Thus, *RKOT* do not want to be exposed to politics on social media although the majority of them have declared that they have a political view and although some have stated that they sometimes participate in political movements and social protests. Based on the fact that the territorial space for the formation of a subculture

and the interaction among the participants plays an important role in differentiating themselves from the wider culture, it can be claimed that *Instagram* is the virtual space which provides *RKOT* with a subcultural identity formation, leisure, and participation.

In addition, based on Debord's (1994) work that argues that life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles which are not a collection of images; but a social relation between people that is mediated by images, it has been concluded that *RKOT* as part of the generation of the post-capitalist era, bear a covert hostility towards those who have ideas or who explicitly declare their ideas on things. They find the meaning in appearing, which indeed can tell someone more than what is said even though appearance might be false. In other words, *RKOT* as a community of shared interests and a contributor to the task of cultural production is the spectacle produced and distributed by its prosumers (the members and the administrator). Members of *RKOT* understand not only others' but also their own existence through images produced and defused by the social media (*Instagram*). Hence, *RKOT* who find meaning in "appearing" rather than "purely having" refer to a generation which reinforces a specific pattern of consumption on *Instagram* which is based on an extravagant and ostentatious style. In short, they represent "the society of the spectacle" that reduces their own universe of speculation to a concrete lifestyle which is idealized with luxury consumer good, lifestyle and choices.

Moreover, the interviews have revealed that *RKOT* on their personal *Instagram* profiles prefer to share snaps or stories since they want more private and closer interactions despite their permanent photo-posts on the *Instagram* profile of *RKOT*. This results from three reasons: Firstly, *RKOT* avoid accumulation of embarrassing content that may cause self-censorship on their individual account since they have acquaintances and close friends that could be overwhelmed by regular *Instagram* feed posts. Secondly, it enables them to have fun while maintaining mundane talks and developing closer relationships that may be conveyed to face-to-face relationships in real-life. Thirdly, it gives them the chance of displaying their identity (front stage vs. back stage) in multiple contexts (snaps/stories and regular posts) they choose. At this point, Goffman's (1956) concepts of "*front stage*" and "*back stage*" explain *RKOT*'s behavior regarding gratifications of using *Instagram* and the *RKOT* profile. From the "*front stage*" perspective, *RKOT* correspond to the expectations of

others from them within a particular context and they accordingly behave. For example, on the *RKOT* profile, they display traits of extravagant and ostentatious rich kids and share posts on the permanent feed of the profile since the *RKOT* profile addresses any *Instagram* user that is interested in them. However, on their personal snaps and stories on *Instagram*, they display some acts and practices which do not address these anonymous *Instagram* users yet rather their own milieu. Thus, the latter can be explained with the concept of “*back stage*” since even in our back stage, we cannot completely be independent from social norms and values but in an interaction with our small teams (e.g. friends, partners, housemates, etc.). In brief, it can be concluded that *RKOT* who would like to avoid any formal, strict, and controlled social pressure prioritize *Instagram* to socialize and entertain.

Another interesting finding of the interviews is the fact that *RKOT* find *Instagram* user-friendly. The data collected from the interviews has shown that that *Instagram* with its user-friendly functions provides *RKOT* with a good user experience. *Instagram*, the virtual environment on which *RKOT* conduct communication, information research and transactions has been reported to allow “accurate”, “easy”, “complete”, “comfortable” and “positive” user experiences that help *RKOT* to save time in contrast to the other social media (i.e. *Twitter* and *Facebook*) which they find time-consuming for leisure. Thus, consistent with *The International Organization for Standardization’s (ISO)* definition of usability, *Instagram* provides *RKOT* with an “effective”, “efficient” and “satisfactory” user experience within the specified contexts of use. All in all, *Instagram*, which lacks conflict, pressure, discipline, control, ideology and any kind of obstacles, represents a virtual platform with a user-friendly interface that provides *RKOT* with a social and leisure space. Thus, in addition to contextual rationale of the specific social media platform, the interface and the design are also effectual in terms of collective identity formations on social media.

Surprisingly, the interviews have revealed that the majority of male *RKOT* (79%) that belong to the upper middle class and the rich category pay to the administrator for the display of their photos on the profile while female and the super-rich *RKOT* are not charged any amount of money. Thus, based on Senft (2013) and Marwick ‘s (2015) definitions of micro-celebrity, it has been concluded that *RKOT* can serve for attention economy. The *RKOT* who want to enlarge their network and advertise their business can be considered as the

individuals who attempt to create an attention economy for themselves since they expect financial benefits even though their businesses are not explicitly advertised on the *RKOT* profile. Nevertheless, like the majority of *RKOT* (89%), they also want to improve their popularity and social status by gaining attention through this strategically formulated profile.

More surprisingly, the interviews have revealed that the one who benefits the most from the opportunities of attention economy is the administrator of the profile since he not only earns money but also makes a milieu of rich people pay for him all the time. Thus, he chooses those who he charges carefully since he aims to attract more potential clients thanks to the posts he shares for free. For this reason, the posts that he shares for free are usually the posts of the super-rich *RKOT* or female *RKOT* since he believes that sharing posts of these people increases the value of his profile. At this point, it can be claimed that gender and economic status play a crucial role in the realm of the attention economy. Also, the interviews have revealed that half of the *RKOT* experience a sense of belonging dilution as a consequence of the current money-oriented formation of the profile since they think that the profile has become distanced from its starting point and lost its initial objective. Thus, based on Hebdige's (1979) concept of "*commodification*", *RKOT* can be considered as a cyber neo-subculture which has gone through a commodification process as a consequence of the neo-liberal society in which the social media, especially *Instagram*, is used as a platform for the attention economy. In addition, this shows that the intervention of the administrator destroys the egalitarian feature of the new media since he uses his authority to designate the structure of the profile for his own benefit despite those who are no longer happy with the commodification of *RKOT*.

"Societal reaction" to *RKOT* is another aspect in relation to subcultural theory. After a brief reminder of the negative reaction they receive through numerous media both in the local and global context, due to their collective extravagant and ostentatious style that challenges social norms, this part focuses on *RKOT*'s individual experiences with the reactions coming through *Instagram DMs* and comments. The interviews have revealed that *RKOT* represented through *Instagram* have very little interaction with adults of the outside world who define them somehow "deviant" (not criminally but culturally) in local mainstream populations. Yet, it has been seen that *Instagram* itself as the societal and leisure

space of *RKOT* constitutes the media which represent *RKOT* to mainstream populations. It means that not only other media (alternative or mainstream) representing the culture of mainstream but also *Instagram*, the content of which is generated by *RKOT*, their followers and the administrator, have been effectual in the representation of *RKOT*'s deviant identity. As a consequence, the societal reactions also coming through *Instagram DMs* and comments indicate that the style of *RKOT* represented through *Instagram* posts conflicts with the culture and the norms of the mainstream populations.

In addition, the interviews have shown that gender plays a crucial role in the attitude and the tone of societal reactions. Society, which is more merciless to male *RKOT* due to their uncouth and ostentatious posts, generally tend to regard female *RKOT*'s posts more reasonable. Based on this data, it can be concluded that the norms, the values and the beliefs of the dominant culture positively discriminate female *RKOT* regarding their ostentatious and vulgar style. Furthermore, some societal reaction to *RKOT* can be said to intend to get some pragmatic consequences. Even though one cannot be sure whether the cases are true, almost all *RKOT* interviewed have claimed that people in need contacted them through *Instagram DMs* to ask for financial aid. Although some *RKOT* (42%) are more skeptical and avoid giving money to these people since they think that it is a scam, the majority of *RKOT* (58%) have claimed to have helped these people. Thus, based on William's (2007) argument, it can be claimed that subcultural processes of *RKOT* have been spectacularized in more positive ways (i.e. philanthropy) since this formation has resulted in an increased awareness and sensibility among *RKOT* towards the lower classes of society different from their essential social objectives. Also, *RKOT* have gained the attention and the popularity they desire as a consequence of the positive reactions and the increase in the number of followers.

Nevertheless, as suggested in Debord's (1994) work, as a consequence of the vicious circle of isolation fed by the ruling economic system through technologies, *RKOT* can be defined as "*lonely crowds*" who tend to keep their small milieu although they have gained a great number of followers through *Instagram* for the purpose of popularity and attention. All the *RKOT* interviewed have stated that the number of their followings is far behind the number of their followers since they do not want to follow people they do not know. In addition, male *RKOT* avoid even virtual interaction with *Instagram* followers except for

chatting up girls. However, only a small percentage of them ((21%) end up with a face-to-face interaction with these girls. The administrator of the profile explains this as a form of ego-satisfaction and lack of trust which result from their life experience as the rich. Interestingly, 60% of female *RKOT* state that they do not even read many messages coming through *DMs* although some of them (40%) find them fun to read. However, this group also avoid face-to-face interaction with *RKOT* who get in touch with them through *Instagram DMs* although some female *RKOT* (40%) have experienced a romantic relationship with other *RKOT* through this profile. Based on this data, it can be concluded that social media which enable their prosumers to have their virtual interactions is not regarded as a completely trustable platform for establishing relationships. However, it still increases the potential for both virtual and real interactions.

Drawing upon the significance of “ethnicity” in traditional subcultures in relation to identity, the interview questions also seek for an answer to understand the relationship between “ethnicity” and “identity” of *RKOT*. However, the data collected from the interviews have revealed that apart from American and English subcultures which formed an explicit and apparent ethnic identity, *RKOT* do not associate themselves with any ethnicity even though all male and a few female *RKOT* have proudly adopted a Turkish identity. At this point, it has been seen that not ethnicity but nationality plays a crucial role in forming the collective identity of *RKOT*. Furthermore, the majority of *RKOT* (68%) have stated that *RKOT* as the Turkish leg of the *RKOI* stand for a nationalistic entity which shows the economic development of Turkish society to the well-developed Western society. Thus, it can be argued that *RKOT*’s Turkish identity displays a covert and passive forms of resistance based on nationality against Western society since there is no explicit representation of chauvinist behavior on the profile. Accordingly, it can be claimed that in today’s neo-liberal Turkish society, apart from the traditional subcultures’ concept of ethnicity, the concept of nationality can be a crucial component for establishing subcultural identity. However, gender has an influence on the perception of this nationalistic identity since the majority of female *RKOT* (80%) avoid associating themselves with the patriarchal and male-dominant Turkish identity. Thus, it can be argued that patriarchy negatively affects the females’ participation and sense of belonging to the subculture regarding nationality.

In addition, based on the post-subcultural theorists' "individualization" theory, it has been seen that the members of *RKOT* tend to identify themselves through self-constructed identities and decisions. Nevertheless, the majority of *RKOT* still regard themselves as a part of this collective identity in spite of their individual motivations and identities highlighted during the interviews while few *RKOT* (15%) totally reject this identity and differentiate themselves from the other members. This can be explained through William's two distinct layers of identity: First, they separate themselves from fellow participants by adopting an identity which is unique to each individual in the subculture. Second, the members of *RKOT* display a collective social identity which differentiates them from the outsiders (the mainstream). At this point, subcultural capital plays a crucial role in addressing "authenticity" in relation to subcultural identity formation. Based on William's (2007) argument on insider/outsider distinction, it can be argued that social identification of *RKOT*, which includes hierarchies in internal dimensions, represents a more socio-psychological practice.

Thus, "authenticity" which is considered as an absolute resistance against the mainstream in traditional subcultural theory, today refers to a supremacy of social, cultural, political, economic, and sexual dimensions of subcultural identity. Based on this, both "individuality" and "intersubjectivity" have a big impact on identification of authenticity. Today, as a consequence of networked, neo-liberal society, problems of young people that result from the need for attention, emulation, competition, entertainment, popularity, reputation and high status enable *RKOT* to establish an ostentatious and extravagant collective identity. Thus, these kids display a negotiated version of the dominant ideology. Accordingly, it can be claimed that their upper class identity and position is not settled since they differentiate themselves from outsiders through "excessive style" and from insiders through "self-uniqueness". In brief, *RKOT*, who represent a "loosely focused" entity, still have a group identity due to the contingent nature of subcultures. Thus, apart from traditional theory which basically focused on ethnicity and class to conceptualize identity and authenticity, this study indicates that today's subcultural theory should also center around variables such as gender, locale, age, and intersubjectivity as suggested by contemporary subcultural scholars.

The last part of the study focuses on the “glocalization” of subculture in relation to *RKOT*. Grounding on the argument that youth cultures which derive from the Western world tend to go through a glocalization process with appropriated and diffused forms of self-manifestations, it has been found that *RKOT* both keep up-to-date in the global context by following other *RKOI*’s profiles and being influenced by them, and manifest themselves in the local context through distinctive features that are peculiar to Turkish culture. Thus, avoidance of provocative hashtags, re-appropriation and re-contextualization of the *RKOI* identity in a Turkish way indicate that the meaning which is specified and restricted in the local scene stands for the style which is limited and shaped through enforcement by *RKOT*. In brief, similar to the concept of “translocality” suggested by contemporary subcultural theorists, *RKOT* can be defined as a glocalized subculture which is interlocked through indirect visual communication in spite of no physical or territorial interaction.

All in all, this study has revealed that subcultures cannot be claimed to have disappeared today even though they can manifest themselves in different forms and contexts that result from the social structures of the neoliberal network society. The study has adopted a new approach grounding on the core components of *CCCS*’s subcultural theory by drawing upon some concepts of both the *Chicago School* and contemporary subcultural studies. Hence, the findings have shown that *RKOT* on *Instagram*, which hold the core components of all time subcultural studies such as “outsiderness”, “class”, “spectacular style”, “symbolic resistance”, “authenticity”, “marginality”, “commodification”, “individualism” and “consumerism”, can be defined as a neo-subculture since they represent a fluid and loosely-focused form of collective identity in the neo-liberal network society. In addition, it has been seen that the internet and social media use for subcultural identity formation and participation has eased the process of diffusion and transformation of subcultural identity.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

Like every research, this study also has some limitations. To begin with, it is limited to only *RKOT* even though *RKOI* on *Instagram* is a worldwide phenomenon. Yet, the choice of the universe should be neither too small nor too big since the smaller it gets, the less valid the findings are or since the bigger it gets, the more abstract the findings are. Thus, the findings of the study are kept restricted to the social structures of Turkey and *RKOT* although

there are numerous glocalized *RKOI* across the world. However, since one of the most significant aspects of cultural studies is investigating culture that creates and transforms everyday life, individual experiences, social relations and power regarding particular cultures and geographies, it could be an influential work for scholars who live in the territories of other *RKOI* across the world. Also, the study is limited to 20 interviewees since all participants had to be contacted through direct messages on *Instagram*. Although 96 participants were contacted, most of them disapproved of a face-to-face or skype communication. However, the results giving consistent findings as indicated above show that the number of the interviewees were sufficient for insightful theorizations and conceptualizations of *RKOT* in relation to subcultural theory.

5.2. Contributions and Future Work

This study has attempted to contribute to the field of media and cultural studies in several aspects. First of all, it has filled the deficiency of ethnographic studies regarding subcultures in relation to youth and media studies in Turkey. Although there is a very limited empirical work in respect to subcultural theory in Turkey, unfortunately, they have either remained at generic level as a section in a sociological work or focused on ethnicity and/or religion regardless of other components such as age, gender, leisure, locale, media, and globalization that contemporary subcultural scholars suggest. Thus, this study has shown the viability of subcultural theory in the local scene by using a mixed methodology to conceptualize both youth cultures and media studies in Turkey.

Secondly, it has brought an empirical answer to the debates on subcultural and post-subcultural theory. By grounding on the components of traditional subcultural theory and adopting some concepts suggested by post-subcultural scholars, it has been seen that a reconsidered and updated subcultural theory of *CCCS* is still viable as argued by a few contemporary subcultural scholars (see Hodkinson, 2015; Jensen, 2017; Lohman, 2017; Williams, 2011; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2018). However, differently from these scholars' works which emphasize the deficiencies and delusions of post-subcultural theory and the need for going back to subcultural theory, this study has also focused on the terminology that is suggested to be replaced with notions (i.e. neo-tribes, scenes, lifestyle) by the post-

subcultural scholars. Thus, it has come up with the term of “neo-subculture” which define youth subcultures in the networked neo-liberal society.

Thirdly, the findings have shown that current socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-cultural structures in an established society is key to the studies of subcultural theory. For this reason, the study has become a reference point for future media and cultural studies which will be carried out in different contexts and under different circumstances. In addition, it has indicated that globalization and internet technologies are two important drivers for territorial diffusion and reflection of particular subcultures since social media, especially *Instagram*, may increase the potential for subcultural identity formation and participation.

Fourthly, this study can create new scopes for other disciplines such as psychology, business, marketing, and sociology since it has provided a broad amount of findings that may lead to more empirical studies in different fields. It has also shown that the globalization of culture through neo-liberal politics and new media technologies can hardly lead to a homological cultural transition since culture is an entity which is shaped by both globalized and local circumstances in the network society. Thus, it has provided cultural studies scholars with a broader perspective that can focus on heterogonous cultural transitions and glocalization of them.

Lastly, it has brought a new perspective to other subcultural scholars in terms of adopting new methods and approaches. The concept of “neo-subculture” and the selection of “upper class” as the subject group of the study can encourage those who are concerned about adhering to established approaches and who would like to bring their own genuine conceptualizations. Thus, the study can also serve as an initiator for future subcultural studies on diffused reflections of *RKOI* phenomena across the world so that we can have deeper understandings of subcultural formations and participations on cyberspace which allows image mediated and virtual communications.

In addition to these, the “gender” issue is an important aspect which needs to be further researched in relation to subcultural theory. Even though the starting point of this study is not specifically analyzing the effect of gender in subcultural identity formation and participation, the findings have shown that female participants tend to avoid subcultural identification due to the patriarchal and male-dominant culture of the established society

since it is also inherent inside the subculture. In addition, even though there are some subcultural studies which regard gender-related issues (e.g. feminism), unfortunately, they have remained limited to single-sex youth groups rather than mixed-gender groups. Thus, as found in this study, subcultural identification and participation of females remain still far behind males'. As a consequence, further research in this aspect can lead to a new perspective that can contribute to the process of egalitarianism between males and females not only in the context of subculture but also in the context of the whole of society.



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APPENDICES

Appendix-A. Interviews

Interviewee 1 – Male

Short bio: This 25 year-old male *RKOT* holds an international business degree from a mediocre private Turkish university. He had to change school a few times since he did not like school. He belongs to the super-rich category. Their wealth comes from the family. His parents are together and he has a sister. His mother is a housewife. Father takes care of the family. He spends some part of the year in Italy since they also have a home there. He spends around 15,000 TRY per month. He has a private driver. He likes listening to Turkish pop music (e.g. Serdar Ortaç, Mustafa Sandal). He hates rock music.

What do you do in your free time?

I listen to music, hang out on social media.

How often do you use social media?

I only use Instagram. Not very much. I don't use snapchat. I use Instagram twice a day. I don't have enough time. I have lots of friends. I don't like being on the phone while spending time with my friends. I check all the uploaded photos. That's it.

Why don't you use other social media?

I used to have Facebook and Twitter 4-5 years ago but I inactivated them because they weren't interesting for me. Instagram is fun because you share photos and watch videos... You can see people from all over the world. There are grandparents on Facebook now.

Do you think looking at photos is better than reading? I am a visual person. So I like it better.

How were you tagged on RKOT?

I didn't want it. People normally give money for that but it is so nonsense for me. I know Tolga very closely, once we met and he put the photo. I didn't ask him to do so.

Do you have only one Instagram account?

Yes. Only one. I do not accept the follower request because I want to have only the people I know in my Instagram account. I was tagged twice on RKOT. The same photo. I received lots of messages.

What happened after being tagged?

More people sent requests to follow me. They generally asked for money. Some asked for a scholarship, some make strange comments like why "we don't have money but you do".

Did you become happy when you got lots of messages?

No, I didn't. I felt bad about it because people were asking why I had money but they didn't.

Do you describe yourself as rich?

I do not describe myself as rich... It is very rude to call yourself rich but yes I am regarded as a wealthy person by people. If I call myself rich, I think that I will lose my own identity. I am a person who can talk to any kind of person from any class.

Are you happy with your life standards? Yes, I am.**Would you like to have better standards?**

No because people richer than me eat at the same restaurants as me. So there is nothing better I can do if I am richer. I can do whatever I want to now.

What places/restaurants do you go to?

Nusret, Arnavutköy balıkçısı etc. I do not like Hooka.

What do you think about socio-economic situation of Turkey?

I don't understand economy. I never think about this kind of things. I see that the cheapest car on the roads is a Mercedes. Even a person who earns 3000 TRY has a car costing 50,000 TRY. I do not understand politics.

Do you visit rich kids of Turkey?

No never, if they share a photo, I don't like the photo either.

What's the most important reason that you were tagged on that page? Finding friends at your economic level?

No never, I never meet a person from that page. Actually I don't like to be popular either. But maybe for girls.

Are girls more interested when you are tagged rich?

Girls are only interested in your money. I even do not text back to these girls on Instagram. All boys like to draw girls' attention. People like to be flattered; I think I liked it.

What is common among RKOT?

The most common thing is the makes we are wearing. Nothing else. I have very rich friends but I also my closest friends are the sons of our janitor and the rich ones do not want to meet these guys because they are not at the same economic level but I don't like this attitude.

How do you understand if the person literally rich on RKOT?

I do. I don't know how but I do. Maybe it is an intuition.

Maybe clothes they are wearing?

No, who would understand if a poor person wears a suit? Maybe I don't understand but I think that I do. For example, I don't believe that this plane belongs to this girl. I don't know this girl but I think that this plane might be rental.

Maybe you do not trust Instagram?

No, of course there are real ones there but of course there must be some fakes as well. I am skeptical.

Do you normally meet RKOT in real life?

No, never. if they are good people, I can meet them but not for especially they are rich.

Do you have any virtual relationship with them? *No, I don't.*

Did the negative reactions bother you?

No, I didn't care. I answered only one of them. I was angry at that moment. He said we even don't have money to buy cigarettes. I said but you have a smart phone to open an Instagram account. He said: "Ağabey, I bought a car that's why I thought maybe you could help me with the payments".

Do you think Instagram describe you correctly?

Yes, because I put there what I experience and live.

Are you a part of any organizations?

No, my parents do some philanthropy but I don't remember the names. Especially for education. I help my friends when they need money.

Have you ever been in a radical movement or political resistance?

No, I don't like to talk about politics.

How would you describe yourself if you chose an identity?

I would like to be regarded as a good person. I want people to like me, to have good time with me. I am emotional, merciful and angry.

Could you describe RKOT in 3 words?

Showing off, vanity, incentive and egoism. People satisfy their ego there. They introduce themselves. 144,000 people view these people's posts.

Do you think Instagram is a good platform for RKOT?

There couldn't be any better platform. Maybe this rich people can pay and appear on the newspapers too, but only grandparents read newspapers today. Tolga is very selective in sharing photo, he doesn't share lots of photos at a time. He shares a photo in every 2-3 days.

Does your photo represent real you?

I am totally different from my photo shared on RKOT. Nobody got in touch with me from RKOT. I used to have 200 photos. But nobody got in touch with me.

Interviewee 2 – Male

Short bio: He did not want to tell his age. Both parents are university graduates. His mother has never worked because her father was rich. His father got rich after they got married. He lives in Miami and studied architecture. He belongs to the super-rich category.

Do you get along well with your family members?

Not with dad but with mom. My dad does not talk much.

Are you literally rich?

We cannot decide how rich a person is just looking at his/her property but let me tell you this: I used to fly to Las Vegas by my private jet (from Miami). I would go to the Bahamas for dinner by my private jet. That's why you decide whether I am rich or not.

Are you happy with your life standards?

Yes. I just gave up on many people around me. I have just a few people around me and I am happier than ever recently.

How much do you spend a month?

When I was a student, my dad was sending me \$12,000 but I quit taking money from him. For almost 4 years, I haven't taken money from my dad. I know someone wherever I go and they do not allow me to pay, so I cannot spend much money even though I want to.

Would you like to have more money?

I am wondering what I would do If I had more money. I would do the same things.

Are you happy with your life standards?

I am happy with my life standards. Even if I do not have so much money, gratefully I am healthy. That's enough. I was flying to Las Vegas by my private jet. I was going to Bahamas by my private jet for dinner. These things were making me happy then but not anymore. I generally stay at home. I go out just for eating. I would either use drugs or go clubbing. But they are childish to me now.

Are you happy to be a Turkish citizen?

I'm proud of being a Turk. As a person who live abroad, I always vote in the elections. When needed, I do my best for my country. I was going to fly to Turkey during the coup attempt but the US cancelled the flights so I went to the Turkish Embassy.

What do you think about the socio-economic situation of Turkey?

Of course there is a lot of games on Turkey. Because it is developing. You never hear about a terrorist attack in Africa. Why? Because it is underdeveloped.

Do you think Turkey is economically doing well?

Nobody knows it because it is in between. It depends on our government's agreement with another country. But recently it is going badly.

Have you ever politically been active? Have you involved in a societal reaction?

Only third class people talk about politics. There are lots of things going on. I don't like people talking about the politics. I just escape from that environment. People talk about politics based on the news they watch on the media. Except Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (the president), nobody knows what is going on really.

What do you think about Gezi?

I didn't fully get it but people protecting trees and reading books were very nice. Especially for the cultural advertisement of Turkey for the tourists. But later, famous people were used by terrorist groups. They shouldn't have been in this position. I support any kind of good thing that a political party has done. But I do not support bad intentions or implementations. If they put Atatürk's party in a bad situation, I do not support CHP, for example.

What do you do in your free time?

I fly, I hang out on the social media, I listen to music I make. Sometimes I feel like I do not need to make lots of money.

How were you tagged on RKOT?

Tolga tagged me 3 times... My photos on RKOT display me with private jets, yachts, helicopters, planes and mansions. I was frustrated first but once I read the comments underneath, I loved it. That's why I didn't ask him to delete my photos. I talked to Tolga. I want his page to reach good positions like the American and Iranian RKOI... I also made suggestions to Tolga, warned him because some people shows fake photos as if those properties belong to them. It is damaging Tolga.

Which apps. do you use on social media?

Only Instagram. I can't use Snapchat because photos are memories. But they disappear in snaps. I fly so I have to put my photos when I fly. Some friends criticize me because it seems like showing off but I understand the jealousy and I even do not answer them. If these guys had the same opportunities as I have, I can't imagine what they would do. I always fly, that's why I share my moments. I never share food. They share food. I do not share the photos of the restaurants I go to unless I have a guest. Sharing food means "I am paying this money for this table".

Do you use Facebook or Twitter?

I once tried Twitter and I felt like I was crazy because it was like I was talking to myself. People try to prove that they are very smart on other platforms. I used it at the beginning when I was young. So I wasn't able to use it. Instagram is enough for me.

Why?

The more social media you have, the more time you spend on the phone. I don't like spending hours on the phone. I check all posts on Instagram twice a day. That's all. I don't like spending time on the phone when I am with friends. It is disrespectful.

Why is Instagram the best?

On other social media (Facebook and Twitter) people try to prove that they are smart. There is no need for that. Snapchat is momentary. There is no need for that.

Instagram is a sufficient platform to introduce yourself to people?

Definitely not. Some people are fake. I understand fake profiles when I look at them. If it is your specialization, you understand it. they put a receipt of a club night, I can understand if it is fake or not because I know how much it would cost. for instance, a man organizing parties looks like he has this life style on his profile even though he doesn't.

What about girls?

Girls texted me a lot but they used to text before too. After being tagged on that page, only more people have seen me. I still find it fake and try not to open the messages. If the person writes a short message and if it is logical I trust this person but if it is long, I don't believe the sincerity.

What kind of messages do you receive?

Messages like “I can’t pay my rent, electricity, etc...”

Scholarship?

Yes, a lot. Thanks to RKOT I helped lots of people because they were convincing. But I have never paid Tolga to share my photo.

How often do you use Instagram?

While having breakfast. Not always. When I put photos, I check it. I try not to put lots of photos because I avoid some people’s inappropriate, silly comments. But this is my life, why shouldn’t I share? For example, I share when I drive but not the brand of the car but the road or the music. On Instagram you know who you want to hook so you share accordingly.

So who do you want to hook?

I don’t need Instagram for girls. I see my friends and my enemies. Jealous people make it obvious even though they like the photos. There are some apps showing who viewed your photos but didn’t like it.

How many Instagram accounts do you have?

Only one. It is enough. If it is hacked, I don’t think of opening a new one again.

How many followers do you have?

I have 4000 followers and I follow 235 people.

Does your Instagram profile reflect real you?

It depends on your point of view. You must have thought that I look snob there before talking to me. I admit that I look like that on Instagram. But I let it happen. I like to put a distance between me and people. But I even give my bed to my guest. I am modest but when you give this impression to everybody, people try to make use of it so I put a limit in my relationships with people.

How often do you follow RKOT?

I do not follow it anymore. In the past, it was more quality. Most of them are my friends. There are some fake people, I told them. Tolga doesn’t know who is rich. You can’t know it.

How do you define your life?

I was interviewed by Uçan Kuş and Hürriyet but I didn’t let them share it because what they wrote was totally different from what I said. Dan Bilzerian and I were kicked out of a club because he kicked a woman’s head. Actually, his brother is rich. When you talk to Dan, you can see that he doesn’t like Turks but he has friended me. He is using a strategy. He does not spend money anymore. At the beginning, he spent money but not anymore. He is still making adds and the number of his followers is increasing. For example, we go to Turkish restaurants to eat lahmacun, when they ask for 20 TRY for a lahmacun, we say Geese! You don’t have to be stupid just because you are rich. I don’t have a complex about it.

What’s the indicator of being rich in RKOT?

It is not showing the make of the car but the hood of the car in the posts. That’s being richness. Putting money in the boot of the car and taking a photo of it... It’s not the indication of wealth... It’s vulgarity. How can you know? Maybe all money the guy has is that all.

Are there any preferences in terms of brands, places, etc.?

My girlfriend adores Cartier and Versace. But I can’t find anything in these stores. I never get something just because of its make or designer. Normally I wear from Zara. I wear what suits me well. I do not go to clubs in Istanbul. I go to Arnavutköy Balıkçısı, Develi, Günaydın. I also go to Karaköy for balık ekmek.

What's common among RKOT?

Most of them are not interesting to me because they are fake. We do not have anything in common. What they share is cheesy... What costs me when I land on by my private jet is equal to how much they spend for a week... What they do is showing off. But I like Hakan Sabancı's posts because he shares posts with his friends, mom, etc. I like natural and modest things. It is better to die than to have such things in common with those. People who have wealth from the family do not do this vulgarity. Displaying a car is genuine but the watch is fake. I am very nationalist and I want Turks to do the best all the time.

Do you feel belonging to this group?

In the past, I used to be a part of it. I shared 6 photos and received very nice and funny comments. I thought that it was like showing foreigners what Turks could do. Because people share Porsche and stuff, it is not a sign of wealth anymore because everybody has it. That's why I don't see myself as a part of it anymore.

Do you think Instagram is the right platform for RKOT?

Yes, because how did you learn about Dan Bilzerian (a notorious Instagram phenomenon known for his vulgar display of his life)? Through Instagram. Newspapers got to know him from Instagram too.

Are you a member of an organization?

No but, I want to. I am planning to put a Turkish flag this year in Miami to represent Turks.

Can you describe Instagram in 3 words?

Advertisement, entertainment, fake.

RKOT in 3 words?

I will make sentences in the past tense (laughter) because I do not look at it anymore. Funny, swaggering, nationalist.

Can you describe yourself in 3 words?

Not smart but ingenious, simple, natural. Really very natural. Listen to my radio show and you will see how natural I am.

Interviewee 3 – Male

Short bio: He is 24 years old. He was studying business administration but he quit university in the fourth year. Parents are together. His father who is the financier of the family has a high school degree and owns a diamond cutting company. His mother is a housewife. He has a brother. He belongs to the rich category.

Do you get along well with your family members?

Very much but up to a certain extent. That's why I live alone.

What kind of arguments do you have with them?

My brother is 18 and sometimes we argue. I have a distance with my dad. He is strict. If I do not open the work place at 8 a.m., he reacts to it negatively. Dad is very hardworking. He went to Germany when he was young with his father and worked in various jobs. He made everything from scratch. That's why he gives a lot of importance to hard work and dedication. When I do not correspond to his expectations as he likes, he gets frustrated.

Are you happy with your life standards? *Yes, I am. I am grateful about it actually.*

How much do you spend a month?

Let's not talk about it. Quite a lot. 15,000-18,000 TRY. My dad knows that I work hard that's why he doesn't tell of that much when I spend a lot of money. Apart from clothes I spend it on entertainment and food.

Are you literally rich?

I am rich but not much... Just average.

Would you like to have more money?

Both yes and no. I'm not sure because the more money you have, the more trouble you are likely to have. Because we are doing business and we have to balance income and expenses. But If I had more money, I would do more philanthropy.

Would your life be different if you were richer?

No, it wouldn't. I wouldn't have breakfast in Paris for the weekend, for example. I would go to the same places and I would do the same things. I generally can't travel to long distances due to our business. My father has been planning to go to Umre for 10 years but he hasn't gone yet because of work. He doesn't like to hang out outside, either.

Are you happy to be a Turk?

Very much. Firstly, we have a kind of nationalism which any country doesn't have. By nationalism I mean a person who loves his/her country and nationality.

What do you think about socio-economic situation in Turkey recently?

I believe it is good. As far as I research, I can see that Turkey is climbing the ladder. There is no economic crisis in Turkey. In industry sector, Turkey has a revolution.

What do you think about ordinary people with lower income?

They are culturally low, economically mediocre. Our people do not like to work.

Have you even been involved into a political activity?

No, never. I didn't get involved in politics. I thought what government was doing in Gezi was not right at the beginning. I went there and I was teargassed and stuff. But there was alcohol, people were too comfortable... It was not appropriate for our culture.

So do you support the government?

They (anti-government people) didn't want the third bridge to be constructed but it should be constructed because there are lots of cars and people and there is a need for it. Since Tayyip came to power, the country has gone better all the time.

What do you do in your free time?

I go to Şile, Ağva by myself or with my friends. I go to Çırağan (a five-star hotel) for smoking shisha, Nusret for eating meat. I used to go to Reina (an expensive night club) and Billionaire (an expensive night club) but not anymore.

Which places do you go to?

Çırağan for smoking shisha, and to Nusret for eating meat. I used to go to Reina, Billionaire but not anymore. After a certain age, I do not want to go to such kind of places.

What about social media?

I especially use Instagram. I also have Facebook but it is outdated after Instagram. Most people do not use it actively. after Instagram it is not fun anymore.

Why is Instagram better?

We can share photos, momentary posts. I think it is instinctual.

Because of the desire of being liked?

No, it is not me. Even if I become one of the richest persons in Turkey, my friends will not change. For example, the son of our grocer man is one of my best friends. He will stay in my life forever.

How often do you get into Instagram?

Very often. I use the apps of Haberturk and Instagram. I follow the stock market from there.

Do you share the same political views as your parents'? Yes, I do have the same ideology.

How many Instagram accounts do you have? Only one.

How many followers? I have 1028 followers and I follow 280 people. I only follow my friends.

How often do you follow RKOT?

When I post photos on the profile. I only check it when I know someone. There is nobody jumping from the helicopter. So it is not very interesting.

How were you tagged on RKOT?

I didn't ask Tolga to post my photo. We live nearby. Tolga and I have common friends. We live nearby too. We went to Çırağan one day and he wanted to share my photo. I can't say why I wanted him to post my photo but not for networking. It's a bit fun.

What has changed in your life after being tagged on RKOT?

Nothing. Only 10 more people started to follow me. Since I didn't follow them, they unfollowed me. People asked for money. They asked for a ginger¹ and scholarship. I do not trust such things on the internet. I just made jokes. Girls also sent DMs. I received 10-12 messages in a week. I talked to a few girls. It was a bit of fun but I didn't want it. I talked to someone online but after a while we quit talking to each other. I just got to know a friend tagged over there.

¹ An electronic scooter.

Did you receive any positive or negative reactions from people?

Yes, I did. But I didn't reply to the negative ones.

How do you understand if a person tagged on RKOT is literally rich?

From the places they go to, from their friends. Not from the cars.

What is the most obvious indication of wealth in RKOT? *Not very clear. Cars.*

What makes do you wear?

Armani, Burberry, Louis Vitton. If earn money, I should know how to spend it. It is a kind of art.

What's the common characteristics of RKOT?

They are generally purse-proud people. I can't understand their intention but the more you meet a person, the more you understand him. For me the brands are not that important. I drive any kind of car. For example, I normally use the Volkswagen Passat that we bought for the company but I have a BMW, as well.

Do you think RKOT are real?

Most of them are artificial. I also know them from Tolga. Most of them do it to get something in return.

Do you belong to RKOT?

I am more friendly, modest. I find them cold. RKOT is a community of rich. Flashy... Ostentatious... They call people "bey" (sir). I am against this attitude.

What identity would you choose for yourself? *I am a nationalist.*

Is Instagram a good platform to reflect your identity?

Well... You can reflect your life style, character, etc... Even the car you drive reflects your identity.

Is Instagram right platform for RKOT?

Yes. Because there is a particular people profile it can serve for.

Do you belong to an organization? *No. Not exactly, Just Bayburtlular Derneği.*

Can you describe Instagram in 3 words? *social, time-killing, fun, accessible, active users.*

3 words for RKOT: *the community of the rich, flashy, and pretentious.*

3 words for yourself: *Friendly, honest, and nationalist.*

Interviewee 4 – Male

Short bio: He is 20 years old have 7 siblings. He is from Siirt. His parents are together but most of the time live separately. He comes from a Kurdish caste system and his father is the leader of the tribe. They have construction and mining businesses. He belongs to the super-rich category. He has lived alone since he was 11.

Why did you start living alone when you were 11 years old?

I just wanted to live alone. I went to Batman for the primary school. Dad was at home a week in a month. I stayed in a dorm for a year in Batman. I couldn't do well there. I was kicked out of school. I went to Ankara, studied at Doğa College but I quit school because I don't like school. I moved to Mersin then. I had a girlfriend there. I was in love with her. We broke up and I decided to go back to Ankara to study. My father got angry and made me move to Istanbul.

So what are you doing now?

I wanted to take my responsibility so they gave me a business in Bursa. I will be working in Bursa for a few days a week soon.

Who looks after the family?

Basically my dad looks after the family. I am helping him (father) now. But they will give me a worksite in the future. But everybody in the family works... Not mom... My dad and mom are cousins. She never went to school. Nobody spends money without dad's permission.

Do you get along well with family members?

Very much. but I am distanced with girls. I love my family very much but I visit them once in two months. I never go on holiday with them. But my parents get along well and go on holiday together. I am the youngest and so they do whatever I want from them. I am a bit spoilt.

When you have a problem with them, what does it result from?

I don't have a problem with them. Mom just calls me and asks if I am good.

Are you literally rich? *Yes; I am. But not from my grandfather. My dad made everything from scratch. He is very hardworking. I work with him.*

Are you happy with your life standards? *Yes. quite a lot. My dad was a security guy in Limak. Now he is the biggest in mining business.*

How much do you spend a month?

Around 20,000 25,000 TRY to be honest, and it is not enough. For example, I never do laundry. I only use dry cleaning. I have a private dressing room. I'm very into clothes and my physical appearance.

If you had more money, would your life be different?

No, I pay at least 2000 TRY in every single place that we (he means his friends) go to. For example, Huqqa. What's the top then? There is no place better than these places. And I don't like going abroad.

Are you happy to be a Turk?

Very much.

What do you think about the economic situation of Turkey?

It is bad. Everthing is very expensive. Food, fuel, car, etc...

What about the society?

There is a referendum. Tayyip is a very good person. We are the supporters of Tayyip too but what's going to happen after he dies? If a bad person comes into power, he will ruin Turkey but people can't say no in the

referendum because they are afraid. So those who are voting for no in the referendum do it by force. But still, “yes” will be much better. He (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) wants to be the biggest. It is dangerous but there is nothing to do.

Have you ever been involved in a political movement?

No. Never. We (his family) fought against HDP². We have factories in the South East of Turkey and they wanted tax from us and burned our trucks because we rejected to give money to them. Then we made peace thanks to Barzani³. In the past, yes there was a lot of torture towards Kurds but not anymore. Those in the mountains are not Kurds. And old and uneducated Kurds believe that it is the same as in the past.

What do you do in your free time?

I walk, watch a film and I hang out on social media. Only Instagram though.

Why Instagram?

In the past, I didn't use any other social media. But Instagram is good because you share photos, and you like them.

How often do you use Instagram a day? 200 times a day.

Why don't you have a Facebook account?

I do have a Facebook account but I don't use it. My second favorite application is Snapchat after Instagram. Facebook is old fashioned and there are lots of meaningless things on it. I have never used Twitter. I just share photos on snapchat. That's it.

How many Instagram accounts do you have? Only one.

How many followers?

I have 1700 followers and I follow 340 people. I do not follow everybody. I follow only the people who I know.

Does your Instagram profile reflect real you?

People say I look very snob on Instagram but when they get to know me in real life, they say that I am a very good person. So it doesn't reflect my identity. People think that I'm being rude to waiters and so on... but I don't... You can't reflect your personality on Instagram.

How often do you follow RKOT?

I used to follow a lot but not anymore because the profile is not as good as it was. Especially people who are not that rich gives money and get their photos shared there. For example, a foreign Instagram page shared my photo and received 100.000 likes. I want only rich people to be there because that account was opened for that reason.

How were you tagged on that page?

Tolga texted me first and asked me if he could tag my photo on RKOT. I accepted it because he got my permission. We became friends later, went out for dinner. I accepted it because the page was nice... There were quality and wealthy people so I thought it was ok.

Why did you let him share your photo?

Because his page was nice. There were quality and wealthy people so I thought it was ok.

² People's Democratic Party – A left-wing pro-minority political party.

³ Masoud Barzani-President of the Iraqi-Kurdistan region between 2005 and 2017.

Did you expect to meet these people?

I don't know. it didn't think of it.

Do you think Instagram is a good platform for RKOT?

Yes, it is because it is the number one. you only post photos. My favorite app is Instagram. ...I like Instagram better because there are only photos on Instagram. You can't post made-up things like in Facebook. They share other pages, games etc. On Instagram, there are only photos, likes and comments. You can also meet people through Instagram. For example; you can meet girls from DMs (direct message).

Have you ever met a girl from Instagram?

Yes, I have. I have met 5-6 people. You can meet a person who you never met before. I still see them. I just hang out for a few days.

After being tagged on RKOT, what has changed in your life?

I have had 200-300 more followers. I have received lots of DMs. I didn't reply to the messages. I just wanted my Instagram to look better. If a person is liked, he/she becomes happy.

Did you receive any help request?

A lot. Scholarships, rent etc. It is so silly. I never gave money.

Did you receive any positive or negative reactions from people?

Through DMs? Yes, I got some negative ones and curses. I received good messages, too. I believe the more you work the more God will give you.

How do you understand whether they are literally rich?

I understand from the places they go to, from the clothes they wear and from the cars they have. So if they are not ultra-rich they, shouldn't share photos.

What is the most obvious indication of wealth on that page?

Yachts, cars, and places they go to.

What makes do you wear?

Dolce Gabbana, Etro, Fendi, Discovered... For shoes, Zarotti, Lanvin, and Louis Vitton. I have a Bentley. I go to Huqqa, Masa, Zuma. I go to Nusret's brother. He cooks specially for me.

Common characteristics of RKOT? Cars, yachts, etc...**What do you think about female RKOT?**

There are just a few girls who are literally rich there. I have a friend called Maria and she doesn't have money. Especially girls coming from abroad are tagged there.

Do you think these people are real? Yes, I do. But there are rich ones and not rich ones.**Are you a part of this group? I used to be but not anymore. It is not in a good condition now.****How would you describe yourself? I am an honest person. Everybody knows me like that.****Is Instagram a good platform to reflect your identity?**

For example, I look different on Instagram. You can only reflect your physical appearance on Instagram. So it is not the right platform for that.

Is it the right platform for RKOT?

Tolga created a good page to introduce famous and rich people. You can display wealth via photos.

Do you belong to any other organization? *No. never.*

3 words to describe Instagram: *Fun, flashy.*

3 words to describe RKOT: *Flashy, quality, wealth.*

3 words to describe yourself: *Modest, honest, outspoken.*

Do you also know RKOI? *Yes, I do.*

Which one did you learn about first? RKOI or RKOT? *RKOT. Thanks to Tolga.*



Interviewee 5 – Male

Short bio: He is 35 years old and has a law degree from a private university in Cyprus. He is divorced has a daughter. His parents are high school graduates. He works with his father in the family business (agriculture) in Antalya. He belongs to the rich category.

Are you happy with your life standards? Yes, I am.

Do you want to have more money?

Yes, I do. Like everybody but I am content with what I have. Even just keeping this wealth is a success.

If you had more money, would your life be changed?

It would never change. I would have the same standards. If I had more money, it would be regarded as scoring up. \$20,000,000 is a good amount of money. What would a person want? You can have the best of everything with this amount of money. So I am rich because I have this amount of money. People who have \$6-7 million can be regarded rich but a person who has a few millions cannot be counted as rich. If you have enough money to buy a mansion, then you are rich.

How much do you spend a month?

I don't gamble or use drugs and alcohols. But still I spend around 100.000 TRY. I have a daughter going to kinder-garden. So I spend a few thousands just for her school expenses. I am also surprised how I spend this amount of money, but I somehow spend it. For the babysitter, dinner, shopping for clothes and I travel a lot. Especially on the weekends. I think that I have only one life so I try to see as many places as I can. I am also a generous man. When a friend asks for some cash, I give it and you know you can't get it back. I can also make my living with only 3000 TRY but my standards would be accordingly.

Why did you divorce?

I was a womanizer. She caught me a few times. I am a bit regretful but there is nothing to do because she is married now. We made an agreement and our daughter lives with me. I have someone in my life for 6 months and I am very domestic recently because she has a quality soul.

Are you happy to be a Turk?

Very much. I travel all around the world. Nowhere is as beautiful as Turkey. Black Sea, İstanbul, Mediterranean, Antalya ... Especially Antalya and İstanbul are very beautiful. I am very lucky to live in Antalya.

What do you think about the socio-economic situation of Turkey?

Good. Not bad. The dollar has increased all over the world. It results from the American system. But Turkish people are ignorant and they think that it is only in Turkey.

What do you think about ordinary people in Turkey?

People are in debts. They were forced to consume a lot so they are in huge debts. Everybody's life standards have increased a lot. Especially social media has a lot of effects on it. Social media ruin people's life because everybody wants to live like each other. It is very bad.

Social media is a kind of mirror because you share your environment, life style, what you eat, drink, where you go to, your circle of friends, brands you wear... So looking at someone's profile, I understand the quality level of a person. Social media is a kind of identity. For example, I believe in my profile a lot. I don't say it is the best but one of the bests.

Why?

I get it from the comments I receive, In the end, I am not a famous person. I am a normal man... But the detail in my photos is that I wear chic clothes... I always go to the nice places. I post photos with my daughter. Yes, I am a bit artificial. It is what I lack in my photos but there is a meaning in all my photos. In the background of my photos, there is a beautiful view for sure... That's why I am a quality man. Nobody can reject it. No, I don't

care such things. When you look at my photos, you can see that quality. But others are not like me. They share anything and everything. It is irritating.

I also benefit from it. I send a request to a girl sitting in Luqqa. She also follows me, she sees my profile and if she likes me too. So we date. You chat through DMs and you can date. In the past, it was impossible. If the girl is also looking for the same, and if your profile is proper, she asks to meet. That's it. You have dinner in the evening.

Do you have a political ideology?

I'm apolitical but I support the government. I love Tayyip although he has some imperfections..." Even the calmest person like me was put in jail (He talks about one of his experiences in the past. Not about politics). So it's normal that Turkey has faced some problems. Despite all these, he broke ground for the bridge in Çanakkale. Bridges, roads, health services etc... Thanks to his good administration, we got rid of such problems. We are not so good but the god of bad.

Have you been involved in any social movement? No, I haven't.

What do you do in your free time?

I travel a lot. I have been to almost everywhere in Turkey. I use my money for travelling. I also hang out on social media.

How often do you use social media?

Once in two weeks. I have had my Instagram account for a year. If had opened it at the beginning, I would be famous in Turkey now. I trust my page. I didn't have a Facebook account at all. I wasn't interested in Facebook. I was married then. After I got divorced, I got to know Instagram. When I opened an account, I saw the light. My photos drew attention. I was a good man. But I have had enough of Instagram so I do not post as much as I used to do. I used to share once in 3 days. now in every 20 days. It doesn't entertain me anymore.

On Facebook there are lots of useless people... peasants... Ignorant, uneducated ones... But on Instagram I don't see them. That's why Instagram is very good quality.

I want to confess something... Girls are totally different from how they seem. I met almost 70-80 people. I also met many female RKOT too but they are not the same people as they look on their profiles. Both in appearance and life quality. But now, when I look at someone's profile, I understand the quality level of that person. Their life is fake. They make themselves thin by using filters and photo-shop apps.

I met L... But she smokes shisha for 7/24. So I can't get along well with her. She liked me too but I didn't call her when I went back to Antalya. And she got cross with me. She is not my style. We met in a shisha place.

Do you use snapchat?

Instagram already has snap app. Your friends are also available on Instagram. So why should I use different social media?

How often do you use Instagram? 6-7 times a day. And I am not happy about it. It should be 2 maximum.

How many hours do you spend? 45 mins. I do quick checks.

How many accounts do you have? One.

Followers? I have 3000 followers and I follow 450 people.

Why? Corporate companies add me. I do not follow them.

How often do you follow RKOT? By coincidence. If they post anything, I see it. I do not look into the page especially.

How and why were you tagged on RKOT?

They first tagged me without me paying anything. Then I asked them to share a photo of mine in a helicopter paying 300,00 TRY. I got 180 follower requests after the first post. After the second one, I got around 100 more.

Have you received any comments?

I also got comments from my friends too. Like emojis. It is not dangerous but it is a bit vulgar. There is a useless person in Antalya who posts his photos in every second. I know his family. They are very rich but he is not because he is not earning his own money. He is spending his family's money. If Tolga puts any person's photos on the page, I would also fall down to their level. He shouldn't share such people's photos on the page."⁴ If he puts the quality woman, that's fine. I don't say there are a lot. I have to check it but I know that there are some people like that.

Does the format of the page match with your understanding of quality?

Not bad. He is like the first one who opened it. People believe it as if it was so important. They thought I was as rich as Sabancı. It is just a trivial site for me. Can I be regarded in the rich club of Turks just because I am on this page? (Laughter) I personally have lots of things in Antalya, but M... 's parents are rich not himself. L... is just getting money from her father. A person's quality manifests itself with the person they have in their life. The guy she is hanging out is horrible.

What has changed in your life after being tagged on RKOT?

Not much. The same. I received lots of follower requests. I got DM s. People ask for money, advice about how to be rich. But all of them are meaningless. A man who regards himself quality shouldn't be there. I even shouldn't be there but I just started it because I am one of the recent followers. Have I had any trouble? No. Have I had any good thing? Maybe yes.

Did you receive any bad reactions?

Never. You can check my messages. Because I don't have any uncouth photos. I hate it.

Did you help these people? No.

How do you understand if they are literally rich?

When I visit someone's profile, it is understood.

What's the most obvious sign of wealth on RKOT?

When you post a photo in a yacht, it does not necessarily mean that you are rich. I posted a photo with a helicopter but it doesn't belong to me. A photo taken in front of a Ferrari doesn't mean that it is yours.

How can you reveal the quality?

There is something which reflects on your face. There are a lot of rich people. You know... Thousands... They are rich but not quality people. I understand wealth from the people in the photos. I think somehow you understand it. For example, E... (a male RKOT) is rich. I know his family. You can understand it from his photo in a private jet, you can understand it from his photos with the ministers. A quality man wouldn't post a car photo. It is wrong. You can visit their internet page and understand their business and life standards. If their number plate is the same as their surname, you understand it. They appear on TV, They are dressed nicely. All these are the indications of quality.

Which places do you go to? Şamdan, Fish Restaurants, Nusret even though I don't like it.

Any makes you wear? *I wear only from Beymen. But I shop only when there is a sale.*

⁴ This RKOT is 35 and runs his family business (agriculture) with his father although he studied law.

What's RKOT's common feature?

They post photos which indicates their wealth. They post flashy photos. There must be a vehicle in the posts.

Are they real?

50%. I understand it. When I look at your profile in detail, I understand it. I will show you a profile. For example, Ş.... (a girl tagged on RKOT) The girl looks very wealthy on her Instagram but she is a hungry dog in her real life. I know who she is. I know her family. Tolga shouldn't share the posts of non-quality people on the page because it would also make me a non-quality man. I am not saying that there are a lot of them on the page but there are some.

Are you a part of it? *No. I don't care such things.*

What identity would you choose for yourself?

I am a quality man. I don't describe myself as rich. I know how to live. I had the chance to talk to Tayyip Erdoğan, he offered me lots of things because I impressed him. I am not an ordinary man. I am different from my generation. I can talk to the richest, or the poorest. I am modest and natural. I don't show off. I don't put anyone into a wrong thing. But people get jealous of me. Two friends of mine deleted me today due to jealousy. They sit at home. Look at my life. I don't care anymore. They are pathetic.

Is Instagram a good platform to reflect your identity?

Definitely. A person's profile page reflects their character. For example, my girlfriend's page is very quality, she is a very quality person too. She shares a post in every 15 days. One of the things that influenced me the most in that girl. By the way, she is not rich. I messaged her first. According to what she said to me, I wrote her a few times, she didn't answer but later we talked.

Any other social media platform? *No.*

Is Instagram a good platform for RKOT?

Yes. You can reach masses. It is a way of showing my own page to others because people seeing your photo on RKOT get interested in you. When your profile page is private, it draws more attention. I keep it private, I draw more attention. If your profile photo is good, people follow you.

Do you belong to any other group, organization etc.?

Minik kalpler and Çaba (children). My photo displaying philanthropy drew a lot of attention. People are surprised when they see me in this kind of photos. Why should I share what I eat? I share what I eat on Snap. The coffee I drink shouldn't be posted on Instagram. Why? What the hell is coffee doing on my profile? I should put it on snap. Life style should be put on snap. What do I signify here in this photo? My perfect relationship with my daughter. But still I don't put it on my page because it is my identity. If I listen to music in the car, why should I share it? What am I going to prove people with that music? I teach something to people. People share blurry photos, which I don't like. My friend posted an ashtray on snap. What's this? Do I have to see your ashtray? By the way, I have friends who were influenced by me and changed their profile. They are grateful to me. They are not jealous. They are like "fake me" because they imitate my profile page.

3 words describing you? *A good father, a vision holder, a real businessman.*

3 words describing RKOT? *Mediocre., the club of the rich, 50% fake.*

3 words defining Instagram? *Identity, life style, the best and the best quality, fewer people. Facebook is political. Fun. I will get a blue tick soon. Only famous people can get it. I will get it soon because it looks chic.*

Interviewee 6 – Female

Short Bio: She is 25 years old. She has completed Istanbul University-American Culture and Literature. She has a disabled adult brother. Parents are together and Both work. Her father is retired. Her mother is still working. She does free-lance work as a model for some companies and organizations. She belongs to the upper-middle class category.

Do you get along well with your family members?

I get along very well with them. I sometimes argue with mom because we are very similar. She is very tidy and strict and it makes me tense... But no, I don't share for that.

Are you literally rich? No. I wish I could say yes.

Are you happy with your life standards? Yes, I am. Of course everybody wants better but still I have a good life compared to lots of people.

How much do you spend a month? I spend more than I make. I don't get money from my family. So I am in debts. I live with my aunt.

How much do you earn? 3,500 TRY.

What would you do if you had more money?

My life wouldn't be different. I do what I want to do. But I would travel more.

For example, I don't go to uber expensive places like Nusret but probably I wouldn't go there If I had more money either.

Are you happy to be a Turk? Nice question. I'm kind of nationalist. I love to be a Turk but sometimes I feel embarrassed. Especially abroad. People have prejudices about us. That's why I hide my nationality abroad.

What do you think about the socio-economic structure of Turkey?

In Istanbul there are lots of rich people but when we look at the whole country, I don't think we are in a good situation. Almost 80% of people get minimum wage. Life is expensive so it is very difficult.

Have you ever been involved in a societal movement?

Yes, I have. I went to Gezi for 6 days. We stayed there. We were tear gassed. We did our best. When it turned into entertainment, it finished.

What do you do in your free time?

I don't have much free time. Generally, I go out with my friends. I go to Alexandra, Any, Whisper etc... To Karaköy... My close friends are from my hometown.

Social media?

I am very interested in it. I check it all the time. I use all of them. Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook... I am not active on Twitter for a year. I was more active. I am the most active on Instagram due to its popularity. I have been using Instagram for 7 years. It is easy and fun. There are no relatives on Instagram. I got bored of them on Facebook. When I unfollow them on Facebook, they get offended... So I just block them on Instagram because they do not leave me alone. It is that easy. I can't do the same on Facebook because they recognize it easily. That's why I can't trick them.

How often do you use Instagram? Everyday. all the time.

How do you use it? Unless I stalk my exes and stuff, I do not especially look at anybody's life.

How were you tagged on RKOT?

I was surprised. Tolga tagged me. I was on the cinema with my friend and we laughed at it a lot. I didn't show any reaction. I just liked it.

How many Instagram accounts do you have?

I also have a fake one I use for stalking my ex-boyfriends.

I generally do not read messages. When you write for the second time It drew my attention. Once someone wrote me saying that he was going to publish a book with visuals so he asked for using my photos. But I didn't allow him. I couldn't trust him.

Do you follow RKOT?

After being tagged there, I checked it a few times, I was wondering why my photo was posted on the profile. Probably because of the car I was sitting on. I don't know the make of the car. It was a family car in Bozcaada. A RKOI page started to follow me. I checked that one too.

Why did you want to pose like that?

I do not get my photos taken intentionally. It happens by coincidence. But I work on my photos and I like it when people like them. I also wonder how Tolga found me. There is no tag on my photo. Maybe he found me in explore.

Any change in your life after being tagged?

No change. I have had 100-150 more followers.

Did you receive any messages? *I don't think I got messages about RKOT but after being tagged on RKOT, there were lots of people messaging me. They wanted to get to know me.*

Did they ask for money, help? *No. But I got some messages telling me off.*

Any positive comments?

"You live this life" (laughter)... Yes, I have received something like that.

Are they literally rich?

Not all of them. But most of them. A person who takes photos next to a car is not necessarily rich. But a person who takes photos next to a car isn't necessarily rich. You can't be sure about it. Especially on Instagram because it is delusive. People like to show off a lot... There are quite a lot of rich ones among them but they are those who like to show off. I can be sure that a person is rich unless he/she displays his/her wealth much. For example, if you go to Reina and do not tag it, I can understand that you are rich. But some want to show off and be tagged in Reina VIP. There are also real rich ones who show off.

I checked people who messaged me. There were quite a lot of rich ones among them but these ones are the people who like to show off. Yachts, cars, mansions, etc...

Specific makes and places you prefer?

I don't think so. I am even skeptical about the genuineness of the he cars? They can buy a Gucci belt from Ali Express (Laughter).

Do you care about designer products? *No. I have only one Celine handbag.*

What's the common feature of RKOT?

Cars... Women are generally beautiful. I think I always make fun of boys. I don't like them at all. Their posing and showing off makes me laugh.

Are they real?

Yes. 65-70% of them are real. I checked some profiles. I think I can analyze profiles well because I use Instagram very actively. Well, I understand it. From the photos they post, from the places they go to, from what they write...

Are you a part of it? No.

How would you define yourself? *I love myself. I am hardworking, stubborn, and friendly. I am a woman.*

Is Instagram a good platform to reflect your identity?

No. A lot of showing off. People introduce themselves differently. Even if you do not introduce yourself differently, people think different things about you.

How real are you on Instagram?

People think that I am really rich but I don't do it to show myself rich but because other people think like that I don't think I look so real. I like concept photos in front of beautiful backgrounds. Such visuals make people think that I travel a lot.

Don't you?

Yes, I do but because of work. But If they ask I honestly answer them. But they evaluate me differently.

What's your motivation?

To be liked. I like my photos to be liked. I put efforts on my photos, I like it when people like them.

Any other social media that you represent your identity?

On Facebook, I rarely share my photos.

Is Instagram a good platform for RKOT?

It is popular. People there would like to be popular. I don't know... It is used a lot. Even by very famous people. Even they like to have likes. It satisfies even them. There are even fake likes. People satisfy their egos. Also there are people making money out of it. It is totally a photo platform. So it is more appropriate than any other platform. Now it is popular maybe another new platform will replace it.

Any other organization? *UNICEF and TEGEV. I was the volunteer teacher for TEGEV.*

3 words describing yourself: *Hardworking, stubborn, friendly.*

3 words for RKOT? *Pretentious, popular, spoilt (they show it like that)*

3 words Instagram: *Joyous, time killing, addictive.*

I met a boy via Instagram not via RKOT. But we split up. We didn't get along well.

Interviewee 7 – Female

Short bio: She is 25 years old and quitted Oxford University Architecture department because she didn't like England. She has five sisters and her parents are divorced. Her parents are not educated, both quitted primary school. She belongs to the rich category.

How would you define yourself?

I am the most different one at home. My other sisters are not like me. I am thinking of running my own business with my sister in fashion design.

Who looks after the family?

My dad has various businesses. Mining, construction, real estate... He owns the land where the third airport is being constructed. He is very close to Tayyip (the President of Turkey). They get along quite well. My mom is a housewife but her financial situation is better than my father due to her father.

I live with my family. I see my father every day. We do not live together but he visits us every day.

How do you get your money?

I ask from him (father). He doesn't want us to use credit cards. We spend cash only. He doesn't ask what I am doing with the money he gives. I exaggerate it. I am the only one who is passionate about sport cars, speeding, expensive things. When I had some problems, my father took over my car (a Camaro) from me a few months.

Do you have any problems with your family?

No, never. I am like friends with all of them. I only have a distance with dad due to the patriarchal culture of ours. He is against the idea of having a boyfriend. But he is fine with normal friends. He is jealous.

Are you literally rich?

Well. I don't know. Better than normal... Gratefully.

Are you happy with your life standards?

I want a better one but by earning myself. That's why I try hard to be successful in my job. Of course it will happen thanks to my dad but at least I will be making my own money.

How much do you spend?

Not much, I used to spend 30,000 TRY a day, now 20,000 a month. My dad didn't limit my expenses but I feel shy about asking for money. I would like to have more money but myself. I can have whatever I want. I got my Camaro in a single day. Before that I had a Q7, and a Hummer, etc... I have had a car since I was 7.

What would you do if you had more money?

We sometimes talk about it with my sister. We go to Nusret, Huqqa, PS Lunch. I do not use alcohol. I want to leave a place in the same mood as I enter. I am already like drunk without drinking. I don't like travelling abroad. I escaped from London. So even if I had more money, I would live in Istanbul, go to the same places. Nothing would change. I am happy to be living here.

Then you are happy to be a Turkish citizen? Yes. very much.

Are you apolitical or not?

Well, I'm a supporter of Tayyip but just because there is no one better than him. I support AKP due to Tayyip. I will vote "yes" in the referendum. My dad is doing business with him. They get along well.

What do you think about Turkey's socio-economic situation?

It is going very well. Everybody around me says they have gone bankrupt but I see lots of people when I go to the shopping malls. They all are full. But I don't know about the average people. In my friend environment, I

do not have any middle class people. All of them are wealthy and all my relatives live in Maraş. I don't like them. Since I was a child, I have been in an environment where there are rich people, that's why I don't know about middle class. My father's work is going well too.

What do you do in your free time?

I like shopping. I definitely buy something every day. Bags, shoes, clothes... especially shoes... And Instagram.

How many Instagram accounts do you have?

Two. One of them is for fashion design. I add every person sending a request. But I have only the people I know in my real account. Believe me I receive 10.000 follower requests in a week but I do not accept any of them. I am bored of blocking them. That's why I do it once a week. I have 900 photos. This account is showy.

What other social media app. do you use?

Nothing. Maybe snapchat once a week but I have never used Facebook or Twitter.

Why Instagram?

Well, I don't like to hang out on the internet. Instagram is more than enough. Sometimes I even find it too much. I am also incapable of using the internet efficiently. I used Facebook for a short time but I thought it was meaningless. I am not a person who shares her feelings or who gets depressed on social media after breaking up.

Whoever I have had in my life as a boyfriend has a Lamborghini (Laughter) but just coincidence. I met my current boyfriend in a cafe in our neighborhood. He introduced himself to me as a bank officer. My sister was making fun of me saying "Renault might be harsh after Lambo" but I wanted a normal person. When I went downstairs to meet him, I saw a Lambo in front of the door. I found out that he is the owner of the bank.

How often do you use Instagram?

10 times in an hour. I either shop or hang out on Instagram. Not because I do something. I don't know if it is an addiction now. I share photos everyday that's why I have 900 photos even though I delete some. Tolga tagged me through my private account.

What's your identity? Rich kid and fashion designer.

How many times were you tagged?

Two times. I don't want Tolga to put my photos. My father doesn't get angry anymore but I believe in the evil eye. I even do not show the 50% of what I have on my Instagram profile. I even do not share photos with my boyfriend due to the fear of evil eye.

Anything bad happened after you were tagged on RKOT?

No, just the opposite. After my car was sold, I was disappointed. I received almost 10.000 follower requests after being tagged. I'm very glad about it.

Why do you like to be tagged as RKOT?

I love to showing off. I have brought this phone (Vertu Signature)⁵ today just to show off. It does nothing. It's like you are taking photos with an iron. It is meaningful just because of its price. It is an ID in private clubs abroad. I didn't want it. I bought it (Vertu Signature) as a result of my anger. People were thinking that I was having all these cars thanks to my footballer boyfriend and they were saying I was renting the cars. So I bought Vertu and put on the table to show them I am capable of buying things. I am carrying a phono that costs the same price as a car. A phone they cannot afford. It is a kind of resistance. I sometimes show off myself. Even to my dad. He asks why I show off because he buys them for me. I just become happy. Everybody knows that I am modest too.

⁵ A \$10.000 - mobile phone with the function of crypto security.

What's the most important reason to be on this page for you?

I have money. It is a very chic page. I met a person like Tolga thanks to this page and when we go to some places we (RKOT) recognize each other. The page is the best of the world. I love it very much. Turkey is a developing country. I wanted to show that we could do and afford beautiful things too.

Tolga once mentioned that he will sell it (the RKOT account) and I got very angry. I don't know but It should definitely exist.

Are you using this page to find wealthy people like yourself?

Well. I didn't know that there were this many of rich people before this page. I have lots of money and I find this account very high-quality. Some cheap accounts ask for my photos to share but I would never let them do that.

Do you think they are genuine?

I am sure they are real. They are all real because I know them. Sometimes I talk with Tolga if they are real. If Tolga is sure, he shares their photos. I know at least %80 of these people. They are all boys. I was brought up in the same environments as they were brought up. We went to the same schools, we live in the same residential areas, we go to the same places.

Would you introduce me to those you know?

I will think about it because they are either abroad or too busy due to work. I will ask a few friends. I will ask them first.

What do you have in common with RKOT?

We hang out/live in the same places. Materialism...

How do you understand if a person is literally rich?

I know Tolga and his rule. He never shares a fake rich's photo. I have a friend who has a luxurious life style; he (Tolga) didn't share her photo because her luxury is coming from men. Maybe just a few photos for advertisement.

Also a person's profile makes it clear. For example, a person is tagged with the same car more than once, it shows that car belongs to him. I have at least 10 tags with my Camaro. It means that that Camaro is mine.

What are these signs of wealth on RKOT?

Cars, clothes, places they go to, we have spent 24.500 TRY once at a dinner in Nusret. I have a friend who spends 33.000 TRY for Nusret every month.

Do you see these people in real life?

Well, they are my friends and one of them is my boyfriend. There is a concept in İstanbul like recognizing a car. I was drawing attention with my Camaro. That's why I didn't stay in England. There was a speed limit in England. My dad was going to buy me a Ferrari.

Do you have any virtual relationship?

No, never. I never reply to online messages. I don't like it. Because I understand what they want. I don't need it. I don't have any female friends, either. I do not like hanging out with girls. I would be proud if they have a good life because they represent Turkey. Turkey has just been explored abroad. My foreign friends' viewpoints have changed after seeing my life style.

What differentiate you from normal people?

We can do things without working and putting efforts. Sometimes I feel embarrassed when I drive an expensive car and see an old man riding a bike. I know how to enjoy life. I never think of tomorrow. If I had 1 billion liras in my pocket, I would spend it all even though I was in debts.

What makes do you wear?

Celine, Chanel, Prada, Gucci, Beymen... But I also wear from Zara.

What do you do in your free times? I smoke shisha and cook.

Music?

Anything... I do not listen to Turkish folk music of course. I generally listen to pop music. Like foreign pop music. Inna, Selena Gomez. I like specific songs, not singers.

Do other RKOT listen to the same kind of music?

Different. An Iranian one listens to Turkish folk music. Horrible... I don't like night clubs. I rarely go to these places. I am not a cheesy person so I do not need it. I do not need to find anybody. That's why I do not necessarily want a rich person.

Did you receive any negative reaction?

They generally say "I need money" or "you do not understand poverty" "how did you buy this car?". They always attack. I do not understand these people. I answered just one of them. I said "even though you are married and you have been used by your husband, you couldn't make him get you a car. So I should be proud of myself to make my boyfriend get this car for me." I also post photos to make them jealous because they are very jealous. I do not want girls to see my life, especially my boyfriend. I just share 50% of my life. Tolga knows I am in Çırağan every day or in Nusret.

Do you get any negative reaction from your family?

No. My dad only warned me when I put a photo on which I have a big cleavage.

Is your way of expressing yourself on Instagram real?

No. There are fake ones but I show if I have something. I do not show anything I do not have. What fake is that I have a showy Instagram account but normally I am not like that. I just share things in order to make people frustrated but actually these things are not that important for me. I do not care. I am not a person who tries to humiliate others by showing my wealth but in my photos it seems like that. I have lots of happy photos when I am literally very unhappy. I do not want anybody to be happy because I am unhappy. It should be like that.

Do you think everybody is like that?

Yes. Why should people show their unhappy moments on Instagram. Have you ever seen an unhappy photo on Instagram?

Are you a part of any other organizations?

Children Aid Organizaton (Mutluluğun Adresi) We make poor children's dreams come true. I didn't have a good childhood. My parents got divorced and my mom had to look after us by herself because my grandfather refused to look after us.

Can you describe yourself?

I am strong. Financially, very self-confident, I draw attention with my car and beauty. Confident, spoilt, stubborn, rich. I live well. I have lots of friends who live very badly. In terms of clothes... They are mean. The most expensive car they drive is Mercedes. They do not go out or they do not change their flats.

Have you ever been involved in any social movement?

No, I don't like it. I don't care it. As long as a person is good to me I am good with that person too. I don't have any prejudices.

3 words to describe RKOT?

Very quality, convincing, genuine, real. I know most of them 80% are real people.



Interviewee 8 – Male

Short bio: He is 22 years old and a private university student in Istanbul. He has four siblings. His parents are together and live in İzmir. His father has an insurance and car-rental company. Father who is a high school graduate looks after the family and the mother is a housewife and holds a primary school diploma. He belongs to the rich category.

Do you get along well with your family? *Yes, I do.*

Is posting photos on RKOT a reaction to them?

No. Not at all. I never argue with my family.

If you have any problems, what do they result from?

From my father's decisions. Economic decisions. He puts a limited budget for me. I would like to have more in order to have more fun. He just pays for my food. 750 TRY per month. It is not enough. I live in the dorm and I spend a lot of money for the food. But we are four siblings. Still it is a good amount of money.

Are you literally rich?

Yes. But according to what? My dad has 70 cars and 10 properties but he is still paying for the debts of the cars.

Are you happy with your life standards?

Yes, of course. Why shouldn't I? I am going to Paris next month. I go abroad very frequently why shouldn't I be happy? I spend 2000 a month. But my dad doesn't know it. I use credit cards.

Would you like to have more money? *Yes, I would.*

What would you do if you had more money?

I would be the same but would do what I want to do. I would go to the other side at night to eat kokorec if I had a car. I have a car but my dad doesn't let me use it in Istanbul. There are two types of richness: the one coming from your birth and the one you get later. It depends on family type. Especially rich families want their children to have a comfortable and easy life. But the other ones are more protective. My family is protective and I am not happy with it.

I don't want millions I just want a bit more money. I would do most of the things I want to do actually. I never restrict myself in terms of clothes and stuff. I would go and buy whatever I want to. For example, I want to drink champagne now but I can't.

Are you happy to be a Turk? *No; I'm not. All countries ask for a visa from Turks. It is costly.*

Happy with the socio-economic standards of Turkey?

No. It is bad. I can say this according to what I see on the streets.

Have you been in a societal resistance?

Yes, I have. In Gezi. But I quitted going when it went off track. It started as an issue of environment but it turned into a political interest war. That's why I quitted going. I like politics but it lost its goal. Politically any kind of viewpoint that is good for Turkey is fine for me. I have a broad perspective. I do not support left or right.

Are you happy with the government?

Generally, no, I am not. If I can't get the visa for France, they are the reason of this. I couldn't go to Canada due to them.

What do you do free time?

I swim. I love to hang out on Instagram very much because I stalk my girlfriend. we are separated now for 5 days. I love sharing my life with people. I believe that I take beautiful photos. And I like that people like my photos. I am also curious about people's lives. But I like sharing my own photos more.

Your favorite social media?

I like to read news on Twitter. But the number one is Instagram.

How often do you use Instagram?

At least once in every 5 minutes.

Why Instagram?

It is the only social media where people can share posts momentarily and which has all the features. They keep you almost always online because you do not want to miss what's going on.

Does your page reflect your identity?

It reflects my physical appearance... My life style... But not my character. Yes. kind of... it reflects my personality.

How many Instagram accounts do you have? One.**Followers?**

2164 followers and 742 following. I have to follow them. Most of them live abroad and I stay with them when I travel. I have to care about my personal interest.

How often do you follow RKOT?

I do not follow it anymore because it is not popular anymore. Everything has an expiration date. RKOT is expired.

How and why were you tagged on RKOT?

Tolga didn't get money from me. I sent him a DM. I said to him people on this site are all silly and they do not reflect their real life. He approved it and said I just get their money. Later, he started to follow my life style in the USA. When I told him how I had such a luxurious life in USA, he was so surprised. I was having a luxurious life with my own money. I promised him to buy two T-shirts if he shares my photos, but my luggage was lost. But I didn't do it for the photos. I just wanted to buy him T-shirts because Tolga became my friend and I liked him.

Why did you want to share your photo?

I wanted more followers... That's why I wanted to be tagged on RKOT. It was popular then and it was very difficult to be tagged on RKOT. It didn't accept any photos from ordinary men. You had to pay for it but I was tagged without paying anything. RKOT was only following 20 people and I was one of them.

The number of followers increased? Yes, it has. The poor started to follow me! (Laughter) I got lots of friend-requests. A lot of beautiful girls added me.

Have you ever met them?

Yes. I chatted with girls through DMs but we didn't meet because they all live abroad. I already have a lot of rich friends that's why there was no advantage of being a RKOT. People who share photos on RKOT and those who follow RKOT are lowbrows. I'm a lowbrow too (Laughter).

Any negative/positive reaction? Yes of course. One of them said I look like a waiter. People are sending messages asking ("what's the source of your money?") ("Can you give me scholarship") "I am getting

divorced, can you pay my debts”) I received such messages. One of the them from Belgium said that he didn’t have any money and needed money for education. I sent him 50 Euros. I believed him. He was sincere.

How do you understand if RKOT are literally rich?

A person who is very rich does not ask to be tagged there.

Most obvious indication of wealth on RKOT?

Maybe being abroad... In Ibiza in a place like Nikki Beach if they have 10 bottles of very expensive drinks in the photo... Or in Monte Carlo... Maybe that person is rich. Cars aren’t the signification of being rich. I was driving Mustang in the USA, which costs 100 TRY a day, I can take a photo in front of someone else’s car.

Any makes / places you prefer?

H&M, ZARA, Calvin Klein, Gucci if I like a lot, Armani. I go to Nusret a lot. Huqqa.. Four Seasons...

Common feature in all RKOT?

They are all lowbrows. Uncouth. But there is nothing to do with being rich in my photo. Just cos of girls I wanted my photo to be shared there. These two girls who liked my photo wrote to me. One of them is tagged there.

Are RKOT real?

Well. For example, S... wrote me after seeing me on the page and I met her in the USA. She is uber-rich. But she has a modest lifestyle. If I had that amount of money, I wouldn’t be like her. Some are real. Some are fake like me. It is a page in Turkey. You have to be rich in Turkey.

Are you a part of RKOT?

Since I am there, I am part of it. I am culturally rich. I do not miss any environment. I’m like a chameleon. I can adopt to any kind of environment.

What identity would you choose to define yourself?

I’m like a chameleon. I can get in tune with any kind of environment.

Is Instagram a right tool to introduce your identity to people?

I don’t think so. It is a bad environment. It makes people competitive. Maybe it is a good platform. Thanks to your short bio people can reach your life.

Do you use any other platform?

Facebook and Twitter. Not very active but I share the places where I visit. I also share my thoughts about science and politics. Especially about science.

What about Instagram to follow science?

Horrible. We generally see legs and breasts on Instagram. Shiny lives...

Is Instagram the right platform for RKOT?

For such people, a platform is needed. That’s why it is right. Thanks to this app, RKOT directly achieves its objective.

3 words to describe Instagram?

I will say bad things I guess. Lie, money, fake lives...

3 words to describe RKOT?

Lowbrow, uncouth, ego satisfaction, showing off, defiance.

3 words for yourself? *Confident and honest.*

Do you follow RKOI?

No, I don't. I first learned about the Turkish version. The followers have a real environment. It has lost its popularity just for me. There are still people who care for such things. I finished some things relevant to wealth on my mind. I gave in (laughter).



Interviewee 9 – Male

Short bio: He is 23 years old and a high school graduate. He has a brother and his parents are together. Father is an engineer and looks after the family. Mother is a high school graduate and a house wife. He runs a luxury car rental company with two partners. He belongs to the upper middle class category.

Do you get along well with your family?

Well... Yes. we don't see each other much but we are fine. I live alone. I am busy. My family gets curious about me if I do not go home on time. So I had to leave home. We have problems especially due to work. I do not care about my expenses. My parents think that I spend a lot but I don't.

Are you literally rich?

I don't know what's the definition of 'the rich'. If a person goes above the standards that he/she determines in his mind, he/she can be regarded as rich. I think for the last 4-5 years I have been above this standard. My family is not rich. They are middle class. I started from scratch thanks to my social milieu.

Happy with your life standards? Yes. gratefully.

How much do you earn/spend?

There is no specific income. We have around 150-200,000 TRY payments each month. I have 50-60,000 TRY personally. I personally spend 15,000 TRY. I don't have an entertainment life. I am busy.

Would you like to have more money? Of course.

What would you do?

I would expand my business. I would start to enjoy life. I would assign another manager for the work. I wouldn't come to work.

Would your life be different?

Yes, of course. Everybody's life would be different if they had more money. Their life standards would change. Viewpoints would change...

Happy to be a Turk?

Of course. Very much. I was born as a Turk. There is no foreigner in my family. I don't have any foreign friends. I live in Turkey. I earn my living from this country.

What do you think about the socio-economic situation of Turkey?

Nothing is clear in Turkey. Negative... Economy is bad. Euro is 4 TRY.

Have you been involved in any societal resistance?

No. never. Well. I support a political party but I am not active. Of course I support my country though. We are a nationalist country. I support public's decision.

What do you do in your free time?

Drinking rakı (a traditional Turkish alcoholic drink) with my friends or by myself is my favorite activity. If I am free, I travel to short distances. Especially alone.

Social media?

Only Instagram and Snapchat. No Twitter or Facebook. Instagram is very popular. Snapchat is not that much because you can't do advertisement there. It is just in between your friends but Instagram is worldwide. You can show yourself to everybody. My purpose is advertising my business.

How often do you use Instagram?

I don't count it. A lot. I check girls, car pages, what people are doing, where they are, etc... You can't ask what people you follow are doing. You are wondering but you can't ask and you can find its answer there.

Do you think they are like they look?

I believe most of them are not like as they look. They are not transparent. They put themselves in a different category and think that they are in that category but actually they are not. There are a lot of such people.

How many Instagram accounts? Only one.

Followers? 1200. *I only follow people I know.*

How often do you follow RKOT?

When they share a photo, when I see it on my wall, I enter the page and I investigate it again. If it comes out in 'explore'...

How were you tagged?

Via a friend. I didn't pay for it. He surprised me. B... E... did it for me. I wanted to be tagged but I didn't pay for it. But a friend of mine paid for me and I was tagged.

Why did you want it?

I like the page. I don't think there are fake ones because there are lots of people I know. Especially the lastly tagged ones are mostly my friends. I am sure that they are rich. The amount of money requested is not much. Anybody can afford it. What makes this page different is that Tolga shares photos very selectively. He shares only the people who suit that page... My photo tagged on RKOT displays me with a yellow Camaro. There is one abroad. That one wanted to share it but I didn't let. My photo was with a yellow Camaro.

Did you like it?

Of course. I gained more customers. My environment saw it. My primary reason was advertising my company to the 'rich' and I did it. I wanted to be tagged on this page because I wanted to enlarge my business circle." When they enter my profile, they see my business, I receive messages etc... So I have a bigger networking.

Girls?

No. Just for business. Cars, money, power draw girls' attention. There are people who are doing it for that but I didn't because there are 3 of them in our business sector. Women like sports cars and powerful places. When they see it, they already come.

Any reactions?

Of course. The number of my followers has increased. Around 1000. I blocked 200-300 people. I received silly messages too. People asked for scholarships. I helped some of them but most of them are liars. I found some who really need it. Most of them are liars. We have been giving scholarship for 3 months.

Bad comments?

Of course. They asked why so much showing off? Why so much ego? Actually I am not egoist but I don't have to explain it. I get angry with this attitude.

How do you understand real rich?

If it is someone I do not know, I look at the profile. Dressing style, where they go to, who they hang out with, followers, number of followers... They show their quality... If they go to places like İstinyepark, Zorlu center ... If they go to these places frequently, you understand it.

Any makes/ places you prefer?

Chanel, Louis Vuitton. People shopping from there are rich. Ulus 29, Shilai... I don't go to these places. I don't go out much.

What's the common feature of RKOT?

They have good life standards. They don't have to think about routine operations.

Are you a part of this group? *No. I don't think so.*

Is Instagram good platform for showing your identity?

No. they are mostly fake. But RKOT is real.

Is Instagram the right platform for RKOT?

Yes, Instagram is very busy and worldwide.

Are you a part of any organizations? *No nothing.*

3 words to describe yourself? *Raki, homeholic, workaholic.*

3 words to describe RKOT? *Real, original, honest, fun, attractive, intriguing.*

3 words to describe Instagram? *Busy, very intriguing, both real and delusive.*

Interviewee 10 – Male

Short bio: He is 22 years old and has a sister. He studies interior architecture in a private university but he does not like school. His parents are together and have a good relationship. Both parents look after the family. They have an architecture company both in Antalya and Istanbul. He belongs to the super-rich category.

Do you get along well with your family? *Quite good. I am a bit tense... That's why we argue. But they never argue.*

Are you literally rich? *Yes, I am.*

Happy with your life standards?

Everybody wants more. If we make more money, we can help those who need money more.

Do you help people in need?

Sure. We have to. Generally in terms of education. We have constructed schools in Antalya.

Would your life style change?

I am very happy with my lifestyle. I don't think it would change. Our economic situation has been good all the time. I was going to go abroad but I postponed it for 2 years.

Why do you want to go abroad?

I don't see any future in Turkey.

Happy to be a Turk?

Rather Proud. Not of the current Turkey though. Of the past of Turkey. It is very clear when we just follow the agenda. I am a Kemalist to the last drop of my blood.

What do you think about the socio-economic situation of Turkey?

Not good. Very bad. Our currency has no value.

Have you been involved in any societal resistance?

During Gezi I stored lots of water, gas masks, reni (medicine for stomach) and so on in my car and distributed them to people for 5 days. Mom learnt about it on the 4th day but she became very happy and proud.

What do you feel about for these people?

I felt sad. They resisted in order not to lose something but what is done is very bad. Theoretically I am a part of them but I didn't fight, I just helped. I don't want to finish school. Shall I be a soldier? On 15 July most people were used as a pawn. I don't want to be a pawn. If it was the old Turkey, I would willingly go to the army.

What do you do in your free time?

I go out with my friends, I go abroad.

Social media?

After my girlfriend became very jealous of me, and put a lot of pressure on me, I got bored and opened social media to see what's going on.

What social media do you use?

I use Instagram and Snapchat just for chatting with my friends. I have just discovered a new thing: Houseparty. You do camera chat with your friends. It's very fun. I strongly recommend it.

Facebook and Twitter?

I also have Facebook and Twitter but I never use them. Especially after grandparents' participation on these platforms, they lost their appeal. As I said after breaking up with my girlfriend, I opened an Instagram account. My friends quite liked and appreciated my profile so I liked it as well. My friends say that I share very beautiful photos. Both their appreciation and my defiance are my real reasons of sharing posts. They say "we wish everybody use it like you". Some have less money than I do but they share very uncouth photos. I never show what I have. I always share discreetly. I have only my work info.

So your favorite social media is Instagram? Yes.

How often do you log in Instagram? A lot. I cannot count.

Do you read all DMs?

No. If they start like "hi bro" I stay away from them. I was conned 2 years ago in Sahibinden.com. I lost 100,000 TRY. I see it as a benefit.

Do you understand the real rich on Instagram?

A friend is very rich. But you never understand it from his profile. He is not active. He doesn't have good photos.

How many accounts do you have?

I have one more for jewelry but I even forgot its password. Just cos of interest. I opened it 2 years ago. Very amateur though. How can you reach Turkey or the world from a showroom in Antalya? Instagram is such a platform that makes you reach everybody. I had a very nice Instagram profile but my ex-girlfriend made me inactivate it.

How many followers?

1491 followers and 511 followings. But it includes interior design pages, and there are people I have to follow due to business. It would be inappropriate if I didn't. I also follow my relatives. Facebook is a bit dated now.

Twitter?

I used it too. My dad suggested not to do. I was against the government. I do business with every kind of people. That's why I deactivated it. I get frustrated with myself. We argue about politics with my friends.

How did you explore RKOT?

I saw it on my "explore" first, then I thought that it would be good for my dream business: jewelry and I contacted Tolga and he shared my photo. For now, I haven't started jewelry business. But in the future I will focus on it.

Did you pay Tolga?

No, I didn't. But if he asked for money, I would give him. We get along very well. Maybe thanks to this account, he made a good networking. He never asked for money from me. I am popular enough in Antalya. Especially on the local media...

What's your reason to be tagged on RKOT?

First of all, because of girls. I met a few girls who reached me but I couldn't find what I was expecting. I want to have a conversation with the person I date... Especially girls who look for money reached me. I was benefiting from these girls as much as I needed but my mom said "Son, don't do such things. They are not appropriate for you". I talk about everything with my mom. I cannot have a relationship with a girl who doesn't have a reference.

What do you think about a RKOT networking?

I will offer Tolga to do such a thing. For example, I received such requests from girls. They wanted to be tagged on RKOT. So there are a lot of fake ones. I will tell him that we can establish an organization but with the real ones.

I am going to enroll in SOHO club. You have to pay 600-700 TRY per month. The aim is networking. Not for business. I don't need it. I am not modest about it. Networking is important. But don't think that I choose my friends from the rich. For example, my best friend is the doorman of our building for 20 years. I give him a monthly scholarship. He is an engineer. When we go out at night I give all my cards, money to him. I let him know first if I do something wrong.

You never followed RKOI? Never.

RKOT?

Yes, I have seen it. I normally make some pages delete my photos if they share it without my permission but I know Tolga that's why I didn't ask him to delete it. And there is this "R" sign here, it is the right of Tolga. If it wasn't there, I would get it deleted. He also shared a person's photo I know. I trust him very much. He is my reference. He is a family friend.

What has changed in your life after RKOT?

Just more girls. But they all want the same thing. Also lots of con artists. "I need scholarship etc..." I believed some of them and helped. But I can understand it better. Messages like "Good morning ağabey..." I understand that they will ask for something.

Sometimes gays send messages. There was a program called "richie" and my friend made me enroll in it. I paid \$500. A girl found me and we chatted. We will meet but I don't think anything will happen.

How do you understand if they are literally rich?

I don't check it. If I see my friends there by coincidence, I become sure. There are cultivated ones and uncouth ones. For example, T.O. is a PR. I don't believe in Dan Bilzerian either. They make advertisement like this and earn money. The advertisement method of our era is social media.

Any makes/ places you prefer?

I am not obsessed with makes. I wear from Luis Vuitton, Gucci... Burberry less. I am bored of it. I go to Nusret, Beymen, Eftelya, Arnavutköy Balıkçısı... I don't like going out at night. I am a tense person and don't like to go to clubs. In the past, I used to go to Billionaire.

Common features of RKOT?

Cars... They disinclined me from cars. Girls did too. They just look at the cars.

Are they real?

Well. Yes, (they are) real. But I don't know if the life they display is the same as the life they have. I think some are not real. But most of them seem to be rich. I am sure about the ones I know. Some of them make it clear.

Are you a part of RKOT?

If they had put me there, yes I am.

How would you define yourself?

I can reach what I want, when I want but in the frame of logic. I can drive rolls Royce but I don't because what am I going to do in the future?

Is Instagram the right platform to show your identity?

Most people can think that I am uncouth but when I talk to them they say that I am not uncouth at all. But this is something that I allow.

Do you think Instagram is a good platform to show identity for people?

It depends on people's honesty. They can turn out to be a totally different person after you meet.

Is Instagram a right platform for RKOT?

Very much. Nothing would be better than this. If it was organized, there would be a very good collaboration.

Have you ever met a person from this page?

No. I never write back to the messages like "Hi ağabey" or something on this page. But I will offer Tolga to organize a group like this.

3 words to describe Instagram?

Ego, satisfaction. It happens even to me sometime. Marketing, a big networking.

3 words to describe RKOT?

Beneficial for Turkey. No matter it is fake or not. If we do not tempt people, they don't visit Turkey. It is also joyous. Sometimes it makes you laugh, sometimes it makes you think. A beautiful page.

3 words to describe yourself?

Workaholic, emotional, and obsessive. Once I am obsessed with something, I get it.

Interviewee 11 – Female

Short bio: She is 20 years old and a student in a private university in Ankara. Her parents are both well-educated, but mother is a housewife. She is the only child and she belongs to the super-rich category.

How do you use Instagram?

I check only 5 people's profiles out of 100. My Instagram profile is livelier. Generally, I put photos of holidays especially when I am abroad. I share a post almost every day. I have a more monotonous life at school. The buildings are old. Scenes are not appealing. So the background is important.

I use only Snapchat and Instagram. My twitter and Facebook were hacked. I also post a lot of snaps. I am well-known for the numbers of snaps I share. I have shared almost 5,000 snaps so far. It is fun.

Why Snaps and Instagram?

You don't need to make long explanations or phone calls with your friends to say what you are up to. They just can see it and know what you are doing.

How did you use other ones?

I used to like Twitter but not Facebook because my mother's generation is using it. When I shared a photo, almost 250 people would like it... It is so funny. I don't like the environment on Facebook. It is a bit for older people.

Why did you like Twitter?

You can be in touch with people all the time. As soon as you post something, you receive a reply. It was fun to kill time.

How often do you check Instagram?

Every day, 3-4 times a day. I spend max 3 minutes in explore. I get easily bored. I generally follow bloggers from my newsfeed. I follow the fashion. I have only one account.

How many followers and followings?

I have 1350 followers, 310 followings. My profile is open to public. I have fake followers too.

What about RKOT?

I follow them. I don't check it every day. I only look when there is a photo on my newsfeed.

Why do you follow them? It is appealing... sports cars... nice settings...

How and why were you tagged on RKOT?

I was tagged on the page because of my car – Maserati. I am very into cars. I had an accident before that's why I drive slowly. Tolga shared my photo. My boyfriend had a fight with him because of that. I asked Tolga to delete it and after a few arguments he deleted it.

Did you like it when it was shared?

It was alright at the beginning but after a while 300-400 male followers started to follow me. That's why I was bothered. I received lots of messages. They are so funny. Generally, they say that they envy me. Especially boys. They are so funny. Once one of them said: ("Even the queen of England doesn't have the same charisma as you do")." One of them googled my name. So funny things...

Any bad comments?

No never. I have never received such a thing. But they said that they envied me. Generally, boys are messaging. But sometimes girls are texting too.

Have you ever met these people after being tagged?

No, never. I never meet people from social media in real life. Tolga got my permission to share my photo. I got in touch with him because I wanted to buy a dog. A Pomeranian. They are normally around 5000 Euro.

Did you get in touch with RKOT in virtual environment? No, I didn't. But I received some messages. But I didn't accept them.

How do you understand if they are literally rich?

I do because Ankara is a small place and I know most of them. Most of them are not. I somehow understand it. They make it obvious. For example, some are tagging the makes they are wearing. I am very interested in fashion. I understand imitation handbags. I feel like I have done masters on it. I used to watch videos about differentiating between genuine and imitation handbags when I was in high school. It is not only the money.

What is the most obvious sign of wealth?

Not taking a photo in front of a car. But maybe on a holiday, in a hotel... The photo Tolga shared was not taken while I was driving a car. He found that photo from a magazine on which I was featured. I sometimes google the person if I am so curious about this person. A more serious thing like a hotel might be a sign for this. But there are people renting a luxury car for a week and going to expensive places. So it is not convincing for me.

What makes do you wear?

I'm picky in terms of clothing... Chanel, Dior, etc...

Places?

I don't use alcohol. Nusret... My family use alcohol. Because of the accident I had, I do not drink anymore. I swore not to drink it anymore.

What is the most distinctive feature of RKOT?

All of them are posing as if they didn't know that somebody was taking their photo. It is mostly show off.

Are you a part of RKOT?

I don't have a photo on the account now but because I am in touch with Tolga, yes I feel like a part of it.

How would you define your identity?

Clever. I am successful. I always had scholarships.

Is Instagram a good platform to reflect identity?

It's a platform where people reflect themselves as what they are not. These people satisfy themselves, and gain self-confidence. But they know they pay for the followers and it is so silly. There are also people who buy likes. They buy both real followers and bots. But after a while, real followers unfollow these people.

Are you a member of any other organizations? No, I'm not.

Can you describe Instagram?

Entertaining, easy access to everything, it includes everything. It is like a part of life.

Can you find whatever you look for?

Probably you can. It reaches every aspect of life.

Can you describe RKOT with 3 words? Pretentious, entertaining, a bit fake.

Do you follow RKOI? I used to. I think that one is real.

Any similarities?

Of course... The main themes on the pages are similar like the representation of wealth, expensive cars... mansions, private jets... But it can't be the same. You know..." "The images and concepts are similar but there are some differences. For example, a guy is smoking hookah in his luxurious car in his RKOT post here in Turkey.



Interviewee 12 – Male

Short bio: He is 19 years old and a high school student. He was kicked out of a private French school. His parents are together. Father looks after the family. The father is a university graduate. His mother is a high school graduate. He has a sister who owns her own clothing store. He belongs to the rich category.

Do you get along well with your parents?

I never spend time with them. Outside life is more interesting. They complain about it. I argue with them mostly because I do not go to school. I am bored of school. It's my 7th year.

Are you literally rich? *Yes, I am.*

Are you happy with your life standards?

Right now, yes, I am.

How much do you spend?

Except summer 5000-6000 TRY. My dad gets angry because he thinks that I do not deserve it.

Would you like to have more money? Who doesn't.**What would you do if you had more money?**

If I had more money, I would live alone. My life would be different. I would gamble. I am hanging out on bet sites.

Happy to be a Turk? Yes, I'm. I am originally Zaza.**Happy with socio-economic situation of Turkey?**

No, economy is too bad. Our tenants cannot pay the rent.

Culturally? Education?

It is low. And everybody is so stressed like a bomb ready to explode. I feel like that too.

Have you get involved in any political movement?

No, I haven't. I have been to Gezi. I was on the 9th grade. I joined that mostly for entertainment. Pepper gas was fun. I didn't wear the gas masks.

Any political view?

Neither left nor right wing. I like to discuss politics but I do not have very strict rules about it. I haven't voted yet but I will in the referendum.

What do you do in your free time?

I just wander around, I do nothing. We sit in a cafe for 5 hours. Only with boys. But we have lots of fun. We are getting bigger. We do not hang out with girls. They all like me romantically and I cannot keep my relationship with them at the friendship level. They misinterpret me. My girlfriend left me.

How do you use social media?

I mostly use Instagram and Twitter. Instagram the most. I find everything on it. News, politics, love poems, humor, etc... I can't help hanging out on Twitter. But Instagram is not like Twitter. The content is over after a while, but I can spend 10 hours on Twitter. That's why I use the Instagram the most. I find everything on it. I use snapchat only for sharing stories. I do not chat via it. I quitted using Facebook after Instagram. The generation on Facebook is no longer our generation. They are older.

How often do you use Instagram?

5 times a day. Half an hour I spend a day. I have one account. 900 followers vs. 600 followings. Some accounts are fake.

Does your Instagram account reflect real you?

Yes, it is even less. .. I could have been uncouth but I haven't.

How often do you follow RKOT?

I do not particularly check it but it is in my following list. I was in Bodrum last year and I thought that if I appear on this page, I can pick up a girl. First Tolga wrote me. I paid 250 TRY but it must be more expensive now.

Why did you think that girls were going to be hooked?

After you are tagged there, the number of your followers increases. You become more popular.

What has changed after being tagged?

I have had lots of followers, and lots of messages. But next day I made peace with my girlfriend and so it was just wasted. My girlfriend caught me up. She blocked the girls I chatted with. I had 150 more followers.

Any reactions through DMs?

3-4 people asked for money. There are some still asking for money. Someone asked me If I can send a video of my car inside with the music in the background because he wanted to use it as if it was his. And I did. He will send it to the girls.

How do you understand the real rich?

I just feel it. There is no criterion. I understand it from the car, clothes, image. or I already know this person.

The biggest sign of wealth on RKOT?

Cars. Because cars are too expensive in Turkey. I will change mine (He has a BMW) when I start university. My dad bought it for me when I didn't have a driving license. But I haven't received my driver's license. It has become worse (laughter).

Have you friended any RKOT? No, I haven't.**Did people ask for help?**

Yes, they did. I believed some of them. I gave them money. Even I met one of them and we paid his debt together but later I quitted replying their messages because they started to abuse it. It was 2 years ago. I gave 400 TRY once, 200 TRY another time.

What makes do you wear?

Ralph Lauren, Polo. I used to give more importance to clothes but it fades away after a while.

What places do you go to? Any place. From the lowest, to the highest.**Do you know any of RKOT? Yes, I do. Friends from school, or friends of my friends.****What is their common feature? Being rich, their styles, cars.****Are they real?**

No. they look like rich but they are not literally rich. Especially girls. I do not find any of them real.

Are you a member of RKOT?

Of course. I am a bit bored now. But the first year it was good. It feels like he shares every photo he receives as long as he is paid. It was not like this. It is not as good as before.

Can you describe yourself?

Myself? Maniac (Laughter). Psychopath. I create an environment in which I can release adrenalin. Once I was beaten by 30 dolmuş drivers.

Is Instagram a good platform for reflecting your identity?

No because you only post photos. For example, if it unites with twitter, it would be better. There shouldn't be only photos. Only visual things are not enough.

Do you use any other platform?

Only Twitter and Snapchat but I do not share anything on Twitter, I only read what's written. Snapchat is the more uncouth account of mine. I have only 150 people that I know there, that's why I can post anything I want to there. Like a different car I drive, like a tequila shot in an expensive place because they all know me. But I do not do that on Instagram.

Is Instagram the right platform for RKOT?

Yes. You put photos on the page and you show your wealth via cars etc.

Are you a member of any other organization?

No. Only of RKOT and of a radio show just because the presenter is my friend. He is tagging me on the show. I generally hang out with older people.

3 words to describe Instagram? *Matchmaker, vanity, entertainment.*

3 words to describe RKOT? *Vanity, matchmaker, bullshit. They are just bullshitting now.*

3 words to describe yourself? *Funny, entertaining, maniac.*

Which account did you learn first? RKOI or RKOT?

I first got to know RKOI then RKOT. I still follow that one too.

Interviewee 13 – Male

Short bio: He is 24 years old. He has not finished school. He was abroad and studying architecture but didn't complete it. He is the only child. His parents are together. He has his own flat but sometimes he still stays with his family too. The father makes a living for the family. He makes his own living. He belongs to the rich category.

What do you do?

Probably you can't get much data from me because I am not like other ones in terms of life style and stuff. I am a bit different from the people there. My father is a constructor but I have a good networking so I can do any kind of job. These people bring you good work. When you are outside after a certain age, you start to get to know distinctive people... They contribute to me morally and financially.

Happy to be a Turk? Yes, quite a lot.

What do you think about Turkish economy? I find it fluctuant.

Socio-cultural situation in Turkey?

As a country, it is better compared to the past but our people are not happy with this. They want more. I feel like everybody can do whatever they want to. Those who want a happy life can do what they want but those who want more always lose. Because of my age, I don't know about 20-30 years ago. I have seen only this government and I haven't seen anything bad about it. I do not think it subdues people. Since I only know this, it is the best for me. I do not see any dictatorship. I haven't seen any negative things abroad. Maybe we are having some problems as a country but I do not think these result from our government.

Have you get involved in any political movement?

I went outside on "15 July". It is completely about national identity. It's a kind of showing gratitude to your country." Not because the government calls for people. But yes I will vote "yes" in the government.

What do you do in your free time?

I have lots of free time because I do not have a regular job.

Do you hang out on social media?

Of course. It is impossible not to. Because of smart phones.

Which platforms?

I'm most active on Instagram because on others there is generally written things. Instagram is not like that... It is completely visual...

Why visual media?

Even though I respect people's opinions, especially on social media, I am bothered by nonsense comments and humor. When you see such posts from these people, you automatically get distanced from them. We also get distanced from the people who are close to us because of this kind of behavior. For example, on Facebook, we have lots of family members, friends... When you see posts sharing their personal comments and stuff, you automatically get distanced from these people.

For example, you see such things (posts including political and ideological opinions) on Twitter too. Actually, there are also very nice posts there but people cut off nose to spite the face... In every aspect of life... Like politics... Everybody has an opinion and sometimes, really bad ideas come out and it prompts me to Instagram because Instagram is more about only my friends' and immediate environment's posts. It is far away from comments and personal opinions. Everybody has an idea about anything and it prompts me to Instagram because it is a platform of only my immediate friends. It is far away from comments and personal opinions. It is more about visuals. That's why I prefer Instagram.

How often do you use Instagram?

Constantly. Sometimes once in 10 minutes, sometimes in 2 hours, sometimes in 6 hours but I am constantly active during the day.

How many Instagram accounts do you have?

Only one for myself, for some businesses with my work partners we have a few. I have 1500 followers and 700 followings. I only follow people who I know.

Does your Instagram account reflect real you?

I don't know, I try to reflect myself as much as I can but somehow people's viewpoints and comments differ. But I think it does because I share things from my daily life. I do not try to show the environments differently. But some photos of mine look too pretentious (luxurious) for some people or some find it very cheesy as if I was a charver.

How do you know that?

I don't know... This is what I feel... They do not say anything about that. From the comments, likes, conversations in a circle of friends... For example, when you share a luxurious content, they say "wow", "take us there too". But of course I avoid sharing such photos. I deliberately do that although I have lots of such kind of photos because I am not picky in that sense. I go for any kind of place. From the cheapest to the most expensive. I am in between.

How did you get to know RKOT?

I think it first appeared in Iran and then I met Tolga through a friend. They asked me to share a photo there. I said ok. My friend was sharing his own photos and wanted to share mine too. He paid for it. My friend organized this. He got in touch with Tolga that's why I didn't have any contact with him.

Why did your friend want to share your photo?

He was sharing his own photos and wanted to share mine too. I said ok. But I didn't know you have to pay for it. They said to me that there is such an account where there are beautiful girls following it and that this is very popular abroad. I also heard about it. That's why I am convinced about it. Because I know that it is very popular abroad, I accepted to share my photo here in Turkey but Turkish version is different. Let me tell you that.

How is it different from RKOI?

People abroad do not do this in order to display their wealth. In our country, it is more pretentious. Of course there are modest ones but not all of them.

I think the abroad version is more pretentious? *No. I think the opposite. RKOT is more ostentatious of course. There are modest ones too but fewer. Other RKOI are not as fictional as the Turkish leg. Their photos are more spontaneous and inartificial but ours are not. There are those who are sharing photos including rental yachts and cars.*

Who is your friend tagged there? *I had better not share his/her name now.*

Why did she share her photos?

I don't want to talk about her but of course it is nothing but just vanity/showing off. I also received lots of messages but my goal was different from the result.

How do you understand if the person is literally rich?

From his watch for example. From a luxury consumer good that belongs to that person. I do not like wearing watch for example. You can't understand if the car belongs to that person. You can't understand this from the make of the phone either. A friend of mine uses i-phone 6 but he is richer than me.

On Instagram?

From the places they visit you can understand on Instagram. But some do not like to share it like me. It is not difficult to understand. In a man for example, the most expensive thing that he can own is a watch. That's why watch is more indicative than a car. For women, you can understand from her handbag.

What's the biggest sign of wealth on RKOT?

When I look at the page, I see that there is a criterion to be tagged there. They do not share the photos under a specific quality level. Due to this, you can't get anything from the page. For example, I had menemen with the mayor of Istanbul but I didn't share it. If there were such scenes shared on this page, I would tell you these indicators but there is a criterion on the page, that's why you can't see such photos. Maybe private jet... The others are more normal.

What are the common features of RKOT?

I don't know how to say because I am one of these people but I didn't share my own photo but some share their own photos. Most of them are in purpose of proving themselves as the rich. I don't think they get photos posted in order to make themselves happy. They do it to prove their existence to the others.

Are they real?

I believe that most of them are real. I do not pay a lot of attention to that. I don't know if I follow the page. Why should a person open a fake account and share photos there for no reason? They already want to prove themselves because it is like an open sesame.

Are you a part of RKOT?

No. I'm not. Definitely not. I don't know them. I feel like I am different. For example, in my photo, I only display the watch on my wrist but others display all their property. It makes a lot of difference.

Is Instagram a right tool to transfer your identity?

I do not think so because you only share visual content but your thoughts and what you say is always more different than how you look.

Is Instagram a right environment for RKOT?

For RKOI yes. But for RKOT it depends. Because it is fake. By fake I do not mean fake rich I mean fake life styles.

Do you use any other social media? No, I don't.

Any organization, foundation?

Ye,s but I am not active. I do not have any task or responsibility. I just financially help.

3 words to describe Instagram?

I can say "either seem as you are or be as you seem" fake and real are combined. As an invention it is gorgeous. Perfect. It is not dangerous for people. There are lots of people making a living thanks to Instagram. We also see that.

3 words to describe RKOT?

There is nothing I can say about it. What I have said so far is valid for this question too. I only got my photo shared there. Apart from that I do not have any connection with this group and I do not see myself as a part of this group. But if it is used in a good way, it is a good platform in terms of introducing themselves.

3 words to describe yourself?

I have few but good people around, competitive (not only financially), I am a dreamer but also realistic too.

Interviewee 14 – Male

Short bio: He used to live abroad to study but he dropped out and returned Turkey just a few months before the interview. He is 27 years old and works in family business. His parents are high school graduates. Mother is a housewife. He belongs to the rich category.

Do you get along well with your family?

Yes, I do. We are like friends.

Are you literally rich?

I don't want to talk about it really. I'm not such kind of a person.

No but it is important for the study.

Yes, I think so. Well, at least people say so.

Would you like to have more money?

Maybe... But I can already do whatever I want to. So I'm happy with my current financial situation.

Are you happy with Turkey's socio-economic situation?

Not much. I don't know but I think the economy is bad.

Are you happy to be a Turk?

Yes, a lot. That's why I preferred to come back to Turkey. I didn't want to stay abroad. I'm much happier here.

How do you use social media in your free time?

I usually use it for entertainment. Probably I am not a correct subject for your work. I'm not like the others. But still if it will be beneficial for you, we can interview of course.

What social media apps do you use?

I use Instagram usually. Although I have Facebook and Twitter accounts, I mostly use Instagram. On social media, the aim of people is gathering under the same roof. Instagram is easy to use on the phone and it provides people with this opportunity. That's why it is more popular. It is more user-friendly on the smart phone. And It is more private. Only your circle of friends can see it.

How often do you use Instagram?

When I have free time. But like in every hour.

How many different accounts do you have?

One. I have 6500 followers and 220 followings. 100 of them are my friends. The others are footballers, corporate companies of my friends.

How often do you follow RKOT? Once a month. Not very frequently.**How/why were you tagged there?**

In America. I was a student there. I really don't remember how I was tagged even though I met Tolga later.

Any changes after being tagged on RKOT?

The number of my followers has increased. Nothing has changed in my life. What can change in my life when I am tagged on RKOT? But the number of people who are adding you is increasing because they get curious about what you are sharing on your profile.

What's your reason to be tagged there?

There is no reason. I had a girl friend from Instagram but not from RKOT. I do not know if I met someone from RKOT. Of course there is an effect because there are lots of followers of the page. but don't know if I met someone from this page.

Any negative reaction?

Yes. Sometimes. But I generally received messages through which people asked for money.

How do you understand the real rich on the profile?

I don't know. I'm really not that kind of a person. I think I will not be a correct subject for you. But cars, private jets...

Are you into designer's clothes?

Yes, I am. I like taking care of my physical appearance. I wear from Armani, Gucci, Fendi, etc.

Any places you prefer?

I go to any place. But I go to expensive places too. Nusret, for example.

What's the common feature of RKOT?

Really. Don't confuse me with them. I'm not like them. They like showing off and they are extravagant.

Are they real? *Yes, but not all of them. I don't really care actually.*

Are you a part of this group?

No, I'm not. But I look like them in my RKOT posts. But I'm not like them. You know... They are...

Do you think Instagram is a good platform to reflect your identity? Why?

Not exactly. Up to a certain extent because you display what you want to show there. So you can choose it to reflect your identity but it wouldn't be the same.

Do you think Instagram is the right platform for RKOT?

I don't know. I think it is. It's visual. They show what they want to show. So it serves for their purpose.

Are you a member of any other organizations? *No, I am not.*

Can you describe Instagram in 3 words?

Flashy, easy to use and social.

Can you describe RKOT in 3 words?

I don't know... Yes, I am tagged there too... But they are uncouth I think.

Can you describe yourself in 3 words? *Confident,*

Which one did you get to know first? RKOI or RKOT?

I got to know RKO first. Then I learned about RKOT. I think RKOT is not as original as RKOI. But of course they are similar.

P.S. This RKOT did not want to talk about politics and ideology. Even though he seemed indifferent to RKOT and differentiated himself from them during the interview, he was tagged a few more times on the profile after we talked.



Interviewee 15– Male

Short bio: He is 28 years old. He studies in Italy and had masters in architecture. He is the only child. His parents are divorced couple. Every member of the family makes a living by themselves. Parents are good friends. He works in architecture and tourism sector in his family businesses. His father owns one of the most famous beach clubs in Turkey. He belongs to the rich category.

Do you get along well with your family?

Yes. I have some minor problems with them because of lack of communication.

Are you literally rich?

Having lots of free time is the biggest richness for me. I can say that we have a family business to be run on a lot of money but we have lots of expenditures too. ...I have a BMW.

Happy with your life standards? Yes, I am quite happy.

How much do you spend a month?

It depends. I don't waste money but I use my money logically. I spend 20,000 TRY in the summer but 5,000-10,000 TRY in the winter.

Would you like to have more money?

Of course. I would like to do philanthropy. Maybe due to being an architecture. I have traveled a lot. Of course I would like to help people but my priority is street animals. It is one of my dreams. Actually I have lots of projects on my mind.

Would your life style change if you had more money?

I would travel with my friends. I would work too. I would make investments, but what I eat, what I wear wouldn't change. If I had that much money, I would buy a better car, I wouldn't wait for the sale to buy a sneaker from Nike. I accepted your request because I empathized with you.

Happy to be a Turk? Yes, I am.

Happy with socio-economic situation in Turkey?

Unfortunately, not. I'm not a supporter of the government of course. Especially the unfair distribution of money has increased a lot. It is not pleasant to see the corruption in such a young country. I am political; not apolitical. I was involved in local elections because my father was a candidate but he wasn't proposed as a candidacy... Well... That's also a reflection of corruption I have mentioned. Even the opposition parties are not very consistent with each other. My grandfather was the mayor of Ankara. I haven't changed my opinion about CHP but it is inevitable to see CHP lacks arguments. Of course I am not happy with the government but I am not happy with the opposition party either.

Have you get involved in any societal movement?

Yes. I was in Italy during Gezi Park and I organized the march in Milano with the mayor of Milan. I even joined the funeral of Uğur Mumcu⁶ (a socialist journalist who was killed in an unidentified murder) when I was 5. I can even define myself as quite radical."

What do you do in your free time?

I am a golf player. People say I am good at it. I used to play golf in Italy in the first league as the captain of the team. Social media is not my free time activity. It is an obligation because I am also the moderator of social media accounts of Flyinn. I started with foursquare, and tomatoes. With the more minimal ones. Then Facebook, Twitter and Instagram followed them. I am the moderator of all of them. It is the obligation of our age. For example, we work with lots of professional parties like press relations, public relations but we haven't found anybody yet to give the responsibility of social media.

Maybe you will give it to me when I finish my thesis?

I wish there was a person who could follow every single thing shared on social media as well as me so that I can hand over the responsibility of moderating social media. If there was a person who can interact with every

⁶ A left-wing Turkish investigative journalist assassinated by a bomb placed in his car in front of his home.

follower and reply to them as studiously as me, I wouldn't wait for a second. I would immediately hand it over to them. I also manage all social media accounts of my dad because he is an international architecture. According to google statistics, for last year, our company is the one which has the highest interaction rate in Turkey. But I mean organic and inorganic interaction. On Facebook, we pay for the adds.

What do you mean by that?

Organic... You pay for it. Inorganic... It's for free. But on Twitter and Instagram it is very easy. On Facebook, it is very cheap to advertise something but you should find the right target audience. Twitter and Instagram are not like that. They are much more costly. They are not as effective as Facebook.

Which social media apps do you use? Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Pagesmanager.

What's the most obvious sign of wealth?

I don't know. I didn't think about it. Yachts, cars, houses... They do not mean being rich for me. It is materiality but not being rich.

Any makes / places you prefer?

No, it doesn't matter... I eat kokoreç in the industrial area or I go to expensive places too. I do not have any strict borders. I have been to Nusret almost 20 times but I haven't taken a photo.

Common features of RKOT?

But I will answer this... I can say that these people are a bit more materialistic. And a bit more... For example, if I go to Las Vegas with my friends, I just try to collect memories, I don't get my photos taken from my back on the top of an expensive place. That is materialism.

Are they real?

There must be real ones. I know lots of people who try to increase the number of their followers or interactions. I have done the same at the beginning too probably. I have many friends from the high society, but you can't see the photos of them on this page. If materialism means being rich, they can be regarded as rich yes but I do not think a person who gets his photo taken in a Mercedes is not as rich as me. I wouldn't change my life with theirs. It is very simple actually: Money does not necessarily mean everything.

Are you a part of RKOT?

I don't see myself as one of them. No. My parents sent me one of the best primary schools in Turkey. So I know many people from there but you can't see their photos on this page. Recently in an interview, the owner of the Paper Moon said that "the bourgeois has disappeared even in Bourgeois. There is a kind of nouveau-rich who don't know even how to hold a spoon. Bourgeois has disappeared... Middle and high class as well. The rich have become richer. The poor have become poorer. I am not ridiculing this page because it contributes to me indirectly because it shares my work place and a person who sees it realizes that I am the owner of the beach they have gone to, for example. It's at the basic level. But still... For example, the watch I am wearing is my mom's gift for my secondary school graduation. It costs 4,000 Euro but I do not want a new one. I wouldn't pay 14,000 for a watch. I wouldn't pay 60,000 TRY for a pair of shoes either. I buy food for street animals.

Is Instagram a right platform to reflect your identity?

It might be (the right platform). Well... You can have an idea about my personality looking at my profile.

Is it better than Facebook and Twitter?

Twitter might be different... It is difficult to express yourself with a particular word limit but in a photo, a scene can express lots of things...

It is quite hard to express yourself by writing. I know this because I am an architect. But in a photo, a composition can express lots of things. Well... Both are hard... But both would describe what you mean. You can understand what kind of a person I am according to the caption under the photo.

Do your Instagram identity and Twitter identity match with each other?

They do. I do not show myself as someone I am not.

Is Instagram the right platform for RKOT?

I don't know... You know RKOI London. It is better than Tehran. And there are some closed RKOI groups. In Northern countries. There are some in Italy, too. These accounts are for fans. So RKOT is not the same as them. In this version, it is more like for commerce and advertisement. Individuals' commerce and advertisement. They want to show themselves. With beautiful cars, houses, restaurants, clothes... They want to be seen in specific places and to share their stories on Instagram. We could have met in Morini, ordered macaron and taken a photo of it from the top and written "toplantularca" underneath it. So people do their self-selling... I do my own self-selling too but in a different way. I do more unusual things. Like posting a photo of a golf training. Not a photo of my new trainers with winking emojis or "after sauna" poses. But after winning a game, I can share the photo of the sports center. It might be the most expensive one or a cheap astro-pitch in Zeytinburnu. So it is not such a right platform. But if the goal is commercial, it is right but RKOT has got distanced from its original purpose at the beginning but still it works for a different purpose.

Can you describe yourself in 3 words?

I think my Instagram profile says quite enough about me even though it is humorous. Architecture and environment engineer, ostentatious, flashy, multi-faceted, fascinating and a golf player. It is a kind of humorous.

3 words for RKOT?

Young wealthy people who are in pursuit of interaction. I can't say uncouth. It is a bit heavy. Canvassing shouldn't be regarded as uncouthness. Eventually I also advertise my own business. But I am not materialist like them. I approach it in a more humanistic way.

3 words for Instagram?

A big reality of life. Maybe in Turkey, it is not that much but in the world especially in North America, the country dominating the world, it is a platform where everybody socializes and interacts with each other. If you ask my personal opinion, it is better than Facebook and Twitter. It is the building block of our age. It is inevitable. Maybe 10 years later it will disappear. Even my parents have recently opened Instagram accounts. My grandmothers too. They are not that active but still. My grandma tags me on Fazıl Say's posts. My maternal grandma shares beautiful travel destinations. That's it. They are in their 70s. All people with smart phones use it. Have you ever sent a letter recently? People's socializing method is in their pocket now. There are few apps you can use to socialize with this pocket tool. If we were in Russia now, you would ask for an interview about We-contact but here Instagram is more dominant in our geography. If you were a Philippine in Dubai, you would use Facebook. Instagram is the only social media where people can share most momentarily and which has all the features of other social media. It is quite easy to use, fun. I look at "explore" too. They share things according to your immediate environment's preferences, they post things.

I never follow someone who is not following me or corporate persons. I like BMW very much but I do not follow, I just visit the page. I only follow GS just to increase the number of GS followers. That's why I like Instagram and Twitter rather than Facebook you can reach any one even if you are the prime minister or the president of the country. Facebook is better for companies and corporate businesses. I can tweet Obama for example and he can reply to me if I send him a good message.

Interviewee 16 – Female

Short bio: She is 20 years old and has a brother and a sister. She is the oldest child. She is a student at a private university in Istanbul. She is studying industrial engineering. Her parents are together. They get along well. Her mother is a housewife. Her father makes a living for the family. Both are high school graduates. She does not get along well with her brother since he is jealous. She belongs to the rich category.

Are you happy with your life standards? Yes, I am.

How much do you spend a month?

It generally changes but I shop a lot. I spend 7,000-8,000 TRY a month. On shoes and handbags. My dad gives this money. I also use credit card. My boyfriend buys me gifts. I do not ask for anything from him. He buys me flowers.

Does he get you shoes/handbags?

I wouldn't let him do that. I am not such kind of a person because I am against such behaviors.

If you had more money, how would your life be like?

My current goal is to finish the school. After finishing it, I am planning to settle down in the USA. If I had more money, I would shop more. I would buy clothes.

Cars? Jewelry? A flat?

I am not obsessed with jewelry but maybe a house. I have a car (BMW) and live with my family. But I stay in my own flat since it is closer to my school.

How did you meet B...?

Through social media. Probably on RKOT.

Are you literally rich? I think I am.

What's the standard for being rich?

Brands... I generally buy from Beymen but if I like something I can buy from any brand. I especially buy handbags. 2-3 handbags a month. If I had a chance, I would travel more. I try to travel as much as I can. Education is very important for me. I want to do master's in the USA.

Happy to be a Turk?

No. I am not happy to be a Turk. I do not conform with the society since it is patriarchal. Of course my family does not treat me like that but... still... I don't like Turkish men's attitudes towards women. If I had a chance, I would want to be from another country... Like any Scandinavian country. Even though I do not have any problems in the society because of my family's attitude, I don't like the way Turkish men behave."

What do you think about socio-economic situation in Turkey?

It is not that good. Some live in prosperity. That's something but when we look at the general public the life standards of Turks are not high enough.

Is it important for you?

Politically I am a little bit into it. Our government is not a secular and modern government. We are becoming like Iran and it has a big impact on society. It is retrogressing.

Have you get involved in any political movement?

I received lots of offers on that aspect but I have never thought about it because you have to dedicate all your life to it. From CHP youth section. I have lots of friends involved in it. As I said it requires lots of time and effort and I do not want to establish my life on this basis. I do not have such kind of aspirations for my future. I want to run my own business. On automotive industry. I am very interested in it.

Have you attended any radical movement?

I was in Gezi of course. Almost every day at the beginning. But later, it got more dangerous... Police got involved. So we had to withdraw.

What did you like about it?

Certainly I was politically there. I was there against the government as a political party and as an ideology cutting trees. Not because of fun. I went there with my Kemalist identity.

What do you think about these people resisting?

Well. I can say that there were people who were really resisting but later it turned into provocation. Those resisting resisted well (laughter). They never exaggerated. I supported them as much as I could as a woman. I ordered food for them from "yemek sepeti".

What do you do in your free time? I play tennis and do plates.

Are your friends from your social class?

I have a big circle of friends. Kind of... I have friends from middle class too. I have friends from every environment.

How do you use social media?

I was more active on social media. Until last week, my social media was closed. It took a lot of time of mine. I was busy with school and I closed my accounts. Then because of the pressures coming from my friends, I had to reactivate it. From my close female friends.

How many years have you been using the Instagram?

Since the beginning of 2014. I have a FB account but I am not active on it... Everybody is on Facebook so it is not as attractive as Instagram... On Facebook there are news, comments, and some other stuff. But on Instagram there is only photos. That's why I like it better. I do not share a photo on Instagram every day. But I've been active on the story on Instagram. I also use Snapchat.

Why is Instagram the best?

On Facebook, for example, there are news, comments and stuff. Because there are only photos on Instagram, I like it better.

Is the news boring for you?

For the news I check Facebook. I get to know most of the news from Facebook. But on Instagram, I can follow fashion designers, famous people, bloggers. I also look at travel pages a lot.

How many times a day?

All day. Constantly. I have one account. 1643 followers and 297 followings. I only follow people I know and the pages I like only. I keep my profile closed.

How often do you follow RKOT?

When they post a photo, it appears on my page and I look at it. I do not like the photos I just look at them.

Why did you start following RKOT?

A friend of mine was following this page. His photo was shared there. He mentioned me that. Then I started to follow it. I had already known other RKOI. I was following the original RKOI.

How were you tagged on RKOT?

It has been a while. I talked to Tolga. He was following me. I sent him a photo. I was in the USA then for the summer school. I can't remember who initiated it because he shared my photo twice. I think I sent him my photo.

What was your biggest motivation to send this photo?

I was tagged in a Mustang in Las Vegas... Another one was in Arizona in a helicopter. I think I wanted to increase the number of my followers. For example, you can see such things on my stories too. But I share once in 3 days.

Why RKOT?

There was a make-up blogger tagged on the profile. Ummm... Errr... I think I wanted to come out of my shell.

You wanted only rich people?

Well. Not only for rich people. Because I also shared my photo with a make-up blogger too. It doesn't mean that I see all people there just because my photo was tagged there. The number of the people who I see from that profile is limited. Well. Not because of the need of sense of belonging to a specific social class.

What has changed in your life after being tagged?

B... started to follow me after being tagged on RKOT and we started dating. For example, I think that I wouldn't share my photo, if I had known then what I know now because I received lots of requests, DMs... Almost every day. I receive messages like "I am a student... Can you help me financially?"

Are they real?

Some are real but some are not. I even do not believe that they are students.

Checking their profiles? Of course I am...**Have you ever helped them?**

Yes, I have. A friend of mine from school knew a person so I helped that one. Otherwise, it is impossible for me to know who really needs money.

Any reactions from the audiences?

I received both positive and negative reactions. Some people wrote that ("what has changed in your life after sharing that post? What was your objective of doing that?"). Once someone commented under the photo saying ("The cars in your photos are just rental!"). Tolga replied to that saying "if you can, you should rent a car and share it as well". I was asked for a date by lots of boys after being tagged on RKOT. I met my boyfriend B. through this page.

How did he convince you?

After I talked to him on the phone, I liked him. I was really against the romantic relationships on social media. I checked his profile and gave him my phone number. I didn't get in touch with any other people there...

Was it effective in your decision that he belongs to the same social group?

Yes, maybe. I believe that such things are important. Well. I have had a certain level of life standard so far. I do not want a life standard below this. My family does not, either. It could be equal or better.

How did you become sure about his wealth? Through his profile.

Is it difficult to have a distant relationship? *Yes, it is but he will settle down in Istanbul.*

How do you understand the real rich on RKOT?

I do not search for these people. I generally check women's profile.

Biggest sign of wealth? For me, travelling abroad.**Cars?**

Mmm... Well... Cars too. But I do not have such a thing. But for us... Handbags...Traveling abroad, cruising on a yacht in summer.

What's the most obvious sign of wealth on RKOT? Cars.**Common makes and places on RKOT?**

Rolex watches. Places didn't draw my attention. Generally, cars because generally men's photos are posted on the page.

Places you prefer going to?

Sunset, Shilai. I used to go to Huqqa. Not anymore. The profile of the customers has changed. I use alcohol. I go to Nusret too but I eat only salad.

Any common features of RKOT?

Well... Emm. They (other RKOT) give a message: I have a standard (high) and I should display it. Maybe for the purpose of vanity.

Are they real?

I think 50% of them is real. Well. I believe that there are people who just pretend. But I cannot say much about it because I do not check the page very carefully."

Are you a part of this group?

Well we can say that... But right now, I can say that I'm not anymore. I wouldn't do it now. I see myself a part of it though.

How would you define yourself? I have a tattoo. I would say that I am a wanderer.**Is Instagram a good tool to reflect your identity?**

Right now yes, it is (the right platform). Because you can show/display what exists. It is the best platform for now. It is the best platform for now. Also on Snap, you can show where you travel to. As I said I share my momentary posts on Snap because I travel a lot.

Why is Snap better than Instagram for you?

I think Instagram is boring after a certain point if you constantly share a post. It loses its desirableness. Snaps are short but to the point. This feature makes it more desirable and fun.

On snaps, posts disappear. That's the purpose! It is momentary so you can share constantly. I share stories on Instagram now because of this feature.

Is Instagram a right platform for RKOT?

Yes, I think so. For example, they can't share posts on snap like that because they have to be together all the time so that they can share moments. Instagram is permanent. It is a popular environment and it reaches masses.

Are you a member of any organizations?

Right now no. But I used to be a member of Interrail. I used to use it a lot. I was active on Facebook. I follow interrail from Instagram but not as a member.

3 words for Instagram? *Popular, very active.*

3 words for RKOT?

Luxurious, wealthy lifestyles, it seems very joyous from outside, a little bit virtual. But mostly quality.

3 words for yourself?

Mysterious, they see mysterious me on Instagram because I do not share posts on Instagram everyday... I am a wanderer. I am also laid-back and ambitious.

Interviewee 17 – Male

Short bio: He is 28 years old and a university graduate. He is a civil engineer. He went to Maltepe Military High School and Military Academy. He has a sister. His parents are together. They are both teachers. He lives in Istanbul, Etiler with a flat-mate. He has a well-paid job. He belongs to the upper middle class category.

Why did you leave the military school?

I am an injured party of Fetö. I was expelled from the school because I was a Kemalist.

Do you get along well with your family?

I get along well with my family but I do not spend a lot of time with them. Our conflicts result from my investments. Apart from that we do not have any problems.

Are you literally rich?

I do not think I am financially rich... I have a well-paid job in a very good company. I live in Bebek in a very nice apartment with my flat-mate. I spend 8-12,000 TRY per month. I have lots of friends... There are lots of people I am in touch with... That's why my life is going on very well... Thus, socially, I feel very rich. I am not like those rich people though I earn more than average in Turkey.

What do you mean?

My circle of friends is very beautiful. They are the most elite people of Turkey. They are from Bogaziçi University. All of them play football. I am the administrative manager in this team. I mean intelligence by elite.

Happy with your life standards?

Recently I have been spending a lot. I also do my own business. I also own a sandwich shop.

How much do you spend a month? 8,000-12,000 TRY.

Would you like to have more money?

Of course. Why wouldn't I? Who wouldn't? If I had more money, I would do different things with my friends. Like seeing a football match a month. I would live abroad.

There are two kinds of wealthy people: the jet set and other wealthy. There might be people who have more money but who do not belong to the jet set. That's such a different thing. I sometimes join the rich people in their environments with my friends but their sense of entertainment is different from ours. Maybe people you interview with can have fun from going to night club and popping up an expensive champagne but it is not my style. It wouldn't be my sense of entertainment.

Happy to be a Turk?

To be honest, due to my former identity as a military man, I am a nationalist but a Kemalist not a chauvinist, fascist or racist. I am happy to be a Turk but I am not happy that other people are Turkish. We have a big problem in education in Turkey. If we can sort this problem out, everything will be better in Turkey. I do not think that we can deal with this problem with the current ways. Democracy is too much for this country. There must be something like elitism. I don't know if you have ever heard something like this? First of all, we are a poor country and in order to be more productive we should be ruled by educated people. There shouldn't be equity of votes in the elections. I do not think that the value of my thought should be the same as a person's who has never read a book. I don't know how correct this idea is... I support especially Celal Şengör in this aspect.

How often do you check Instagram?

In the past, it was around twice a day but after I was tagged on RKOT, I have become more popular and I visit it more. So 5-6 times a day. I spend half an hour or an hour. Because I like to meet beautiful people, I am curious about them and there might be such interesting people there. I just look at stories and photos of my people but I never check explore. I think people spend more time there.

Visiting RKOT's profile?

Very rarely. Once a week. In the first few days I got likes then it stopped.

What has changed in your life after being tagged there?

I learnt how to use the social media after being tagged there. I learnt how to use Instagram. I learnt when and what kind of a photo I should share. Not thanks to this page but thanks to using Instagram more frequently and understanding how it works.

What kind of posts do you share the most?

I share the moments when I look natural and happy in a different environment. My RKOT photo is a photo of mine while skiing. It's not about being wealthy but maybe skiing is a sport which belongs to wealthy class. maybe because of that. I wanted to share this photo due to my interesting clothing.

Why and how were you tagged on RKOT?

I wanted to have a bigger social environment of women in Istanbul. I didn't have many friends here because I was in Russia. I thought girls might like me and I can have some connections with them." because I do not like to add girls and stalk them.

Have they added you?

Yes, they have. almost 50 girls. If 20 of them are beautiful, it means I have met 20 beautiful people thanks to this. I have seen 5-6 of them.

Why do you think they contacted you?

Of course because I am rich. The smart ones have stayed but those who are not have left. I become honest about myself to the person I chat with before we meet so that she can know who I am. The girls started to follow me, message to me, and comment on my story and I found myself in an interaction. After that photo, I appeared in explore a lot so they saw me there and added me because it received lots of likes. Maybe by coincidence. There were boys who added me but they are not RKOT. They are generally university students asking for money. A lot of people. I mean 5-6 people. I didn't have money when I was a student but I never asked for money from anyone. Nobody can make me believe in it. A person who literally needs money wouldn't find someone from RKOT and ask for money. I do not think this person is hardworking.

Do you use other social media?

Not Snapchat and Twitter. I use Facebook only. For following the news. I do not share much there just articles and stuff.

Why not Twitter?

Actually I would want to but I am a bit late for that if I want to write something and people to read it, I have to put lots of efforts. I want a lot of followers. 150-200 followers is too little.

Why Instagram?

I find Instagram very successful. For example, if you need some information on a topic, Instagram is putting this information in front of you without blurring it. On Facebook you waste lots of time to find what you are looking for. It is not complex. Very easy. It includes features of both Snapchat and Facebook. So why should I use Facebook? Instagram already has the feature of the snap. So why should I use Snapchat? In addition, you can't find articles, news and so on Instagram. It is better... If it also dealt with them, it would lose its ultimate focus. There is such a beautiful thing called story on Instagram. but people do not know how to use it. A story should show an incident from the beginning till the end. There must be a chain of stories during the day. I follow National Geographic and they have great stories. A story should show an incident from the beginning to the end. There must be a chain of incidents during the day. Sharing something every day is so silly. It should be so special that people will follow you. Otherwise, you will be in the back rows.

How many accounts do you have? One.

Do you think Instagram is real?

If you are a liar, you can share fake photos. It is as real as real life. Even a person in real life might not be real. You can escape from reality anywhere.

How many followers and followings do you have?

650 vs. 625. After RKOT, I've had 50-60 more followers.

Common features with other RKOT?

I might have nothing in common with them. Let me check the page. Most of them are not making their own money but spending their father's so I do not have anything in common.

Can you understand if they are really rich?

Just looking at this page you can't understand it. You have to check their profiles too. For example, I am checking one now but a person who is rich can't be like this because a rich kid does not ski like this. His outfit is not a skiing outfit first of all. Maybe he is a nouveau-rich.

What's the most obvious sign of wealth among RKOT?

Cars, places they go to, actually I can go to any place in Istanbul even though I am not rich. Clothes and cars.

How do you understand the real rich on RKOT?

For example, in an event, if there is a kind of combined costume in a friend circle, I can say that he is rich. If he has 2-3 photos with the same car, you can believe that he is rich. Though I would believe it because I never do such a thing.

Are there any makes that show wealth?

Yes, Prada, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana.

What kind of music do you listen to?

Electronic music and house music. I frequently listen to Barış Manço, too. I used to play drums. I used to listen to Yavuz Çetin, Metallica, System of a Down. I listened to anything I like. I do not like Turkish Pop Music.

What place do you go to?

Backyard in summer, Salvador for beer. I have been to Nusret once and I paid 600 TRY.

Any negative comments or messages? No I didn't get any.**Are you a part of any organizations?**

Internations.org. A similar social media network. Expats are socializing there. I join their parties in every 2 weeks. We organize breakfasts, go skiing. I attend their events twice a month.

Have you been involved any social reaction or resistance?

Yes, I unfurled a banner during "Gezi" in a Zülfü Livaneli⁷ concert in Moscow. I appeared on the newspapers. In my worldview, being rich just because your father is rich is gross. My friends and I ridiculed the fact that I was tagged as rich kid because the opportunities are not equal. Even an idiot can be rich just because his dad is rich. It should be like this: If more universal values appear, we can get rid of this. Everybody should compete under the same circumstances.

What about Turkey's socio-economic situation?

⁷ A left-wing Turkish political singer/composer.

We are totally dependent on outside financial sources. I just checked Turkey's dollar reserves and found out that it has 86 billion dollars. In the world there are individuals who have this amount of money. Only the USA by itself can collapse in a single day but we are strong because of our young generation and geopolitical position. It doesn't mean that Turkey is rich because there are rich people in the country. I live in Etiler in a beautiful place but it doesn't mean that everywhere is like this.

3 words to describe yourself? *World citizen, hardworking, entertaining.*

3 words to describe RKOT?

People living in virtual life. They are real but not in real life. They are eye-catching, virtual, womanizers, money chasers.

Is Instagram right to reflect your identity? *Yes, it is.*

Is it the right platform for RKOT?

Yes, it is such an intelligent idea. I paid for it too. 300 TRY.

3 words to describe Instagram? *Modern accumulation of your photos for the future generations.*

Interviewee 18 – Female

Short bio: She is 24 years old and a civil engineer. Her father has an engineering company in Canada and she works with him. She lives and studies in Canada. She has a younger sister. Her parents were together. But her mother had cancer for 8 years and she passed away just a few days after the interview. She belongs to the rich category.

Who looks after the family?

Dad is working in construction sector and we left Turkey when I was 10 years old. I studied there so we all work.

What is your parents' education?

They both are university graduates. Dad is a ship engineer. I work with my him.

Are you really rich?

Yes, I'm.

Happy with your life standards? Yes. I am.

How much do you spend a month? \$5,000-10,000

Would you like to have more money?

No I wouldn't. I can do whatever I want to do.

If you had more money what would you do? We have a goal with my sister We want to open a hospital for people who have cancer.

Are you happy to be a Turk? Of course. But I am also happy to be in Canada.

What do you think about socio-economic situation of Turkey?

The rich are very rich and the poor are very poor. There is no in between.

Have you been involved in any social movement or resistance?

No I haven't been involved in any. I live abroad so I couldn't.

What do you do in your free time?

I just go to school. Nothing much really. Apart from that I socialize with my friends.

What social media apps do you use?

I use Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat but I use Instagram the most because it is different from Facebook in terms of content. On Facebook people generally write something and also on Facebook my friends are those who I know but on Instagram people that you do not know can follow you or you can follow a person that you don't know in person. That's why you can receive messages from anybody on Instagram. I like it. I do message this people but I do not see them in person.

How often do you use Instagram?

Very frequently. All the time. I can't help looking at it.

How many accounts do you have? One. I have 10.000 followers and 400 followings.

Does your Instagram account reflect real you?

Yes, it does because I share the photos of real me. I do not share the photos that do not show my real life. I share the photos of places I visit.

How often do you check RKOT profile?

Not much. I am not that interested in it. Tolga is my friend. That's why I follow the page. But if a photo pops up on my wall, I look at it of course.

How and why were you tagged on RKOT?

Tolga messaged me first. He asked if he could share my photo on his page because there was nobody tagged on the profile from Toronto. And I said okay because I want Turks to be known in a good way all over the world. That's why I let him share my photo. If it was just a fashion blog, I would let it use my photo as well. But I do not want to be part of any group because people do not respect you in Turkey.

Any changes in your life after being tagged on RKOT?

Yes. Kind of. I received messages from people and men were complimenting through DM because I am a woman.

Any negative reaction?

No. Not at all. In contrast, I have received lots of beautiful messages about my mother's illness from people I don't know. They all sent me their good wishes and prayers.

How do you understand the real rich on the page?

Cars might be a sign for that. But some put fake photos. But if they have a corporate company or something, I understand that they are really rich.

Are you into designer's clothes?

Not much. Sometimes I wear designer's clothes. But I never buy cheap shoes.

What's the common feature of RKOT?

Most of them are egoist. They all like vanity.

Are they real? Both yes and no.**Are you a part of this group?**

Maybe. In some photos I look like them. But it's not because I want to look rich. I just share what I find beautiful.

Do you think Instagram is a good tool to reflect your identity? Why?

I think the authenticity of the photos are important. What they put and what they show is what it is, I believe. Some are really good at fake photos though.

Do you think Instagram is the right platform for RKOT?

Yes. Instagram is a very popular social media tool. If they (RKOT) didn't appear there, they wouldn't be this popular.

Are you a member of any other organizations? No, I am not.**Can you describe Instagram in 3 words?**

Vanity and fun. Having good time. You can also see how others live. For instance, famous people do not live as you think.

Can you describe RKOT in 3 words?

Career. Because they all have a particular career. Vanity and money.

Can you describe yourself in 3 words? *Natural, hardworking.*

Which one did you get to know first? RKOI or RKOT?

I don't know RKOI. I only know RKOT.



Interviewee 19 – Male

Short bio: He is 26 years old and a high school graduate. He has 2 brothers. His parents together. Father has a high school diploma and looks after the family. Mother has a secondary school diploma and is a housewife. He is the administrator of the RKOT profile. He belongs to the middle class but he is climbing the ladders thanks to his business he opened in Cyprus.

Do you get along well with family?

Super. We are like friends with my dad. But we sometimes have problems because of my obsession with technology and the internet.

Are you happy with your life standards?

We are a middle class family. We came to Istanbul in 2007 and we had only two sofas and a TV then. In 2008 we bought a car, Opel Corsa, in 2010 we bought an Opel Astra then Volkswagen. and it is getting better and better. When I look at my past, I can see the progress. Right now we have a car which costs 100,000 TRY, a flat costing 400,000 TRY. We have a work place which costs 2,5 billion TRY. It will get better. I bought a BMW. This one is very beautiful.

How much do you spend a month?

I never spent money because I was hanging out with rich people (RKOT). I was only paying for the petrol for 2-3 years.

How do these people like you? How do you gain their trust?

I show them money is nothing.

Are they convinced?

Of course they are. Because I never ask for money even if I need it. For example, one of them was here last time, he liked me so much because I am an honest and honorable person and I never asked for money so he got me dinner and drinks. He is offering me to go on holiday together. He will get me a visa for 3-4 years. He tells me that we can go whenever I want to go. A few months ago, I went to Monaco with another RKOT. We went to Cannes and stayed in the best places. It was my first time abroad and I started with the best. Can you believe it? They are also judge of character. They understand who you are, why you approach them.

Are you happy to be a Turk?

No, I am not. Our country is not valuable. Especially abroad. I also understood it one more time when I was going to France. The police only stopped me and asked me lots of questions for minutes just because I am a Turk. On the way back, it was the same police officer again, I started to smile when I saw him, he burst into laughter because he remembered me. I couldn't speak French and got help from a lady.

Is it the only thing that makes you feel like that or are there other reasons too?

There are other things too. I am a Turk living in Cyprus but they treat us like noncitizens. They challenge us in everything.

If you had more money, what would you do?

I like 3 things in life: cars, women, and a private farm house.

Wouldn't you like to travel?

Of course but not all over the world. There are specific countries I'd like to see: Thailand, America, and Sweden.

Are you happy with socio-economic situation in Turkey?

I don't think that it is good because minimum wage is too low. Not enough for families.

Have you been involved in any societal resistance?

I didn't support Gezi because I realized that how harmful it was. After it was over, I went to Taksim. Then again I realized that how hazardous it was to the country because I believe that the resistance shouldn't have been via war but via elections. It is still harmful to the country. The number of the tourists is smaller now. The government has made some mistakes too: like closing the places which carry alcoholic drinks in Taksim.

So you are not interested in politics?

Not at all. I have nothing to do with politics or football. I am not interested in any of them. It does not make any sense to me. Politics and football do not make me gain anything. There are other things I can do instead of them.

How do you spend your free time?

I am on my phono all the time. I drive around by car. If I had a girlfriend, I would hang out with her but I do not have a girlfriend.

What social media apps do you use?

Instagram. I also Facebook but Instagram makes more sense. You meet more quality people on Instagram. You can understand who they are from the photos they share but on Facebook it is not like that.

Why can't you understand it on Facebook?

On Facebook there are more low class people. On Instagram, the lower class can't survive and they cannot have lots of friends. That's why Instagram is more logical.

How do you understand?

From the photos, and the comments written under the posts.

How many hours do you spend on Instagram? 3-4 hours.

How many accounts do you have?

Three: RKOT, Tolga Yuca and a funny profile with 20,000 followers. I think it is not much. I don't spend time for that.

How did you come up with the idea of RKOT?

I was interested in wealth and tabloid magazine. I was in high school and didn't work. We used to buy Posta⁸ and I was always watching magazine programs. I was following some famous and wealthy people. And I was already good at the internet world. For example, I was googling the 'the best villas in Istanbul', and searching for the location of these places from the GPS afterwards. I shared these photos that I found on the internet without any demand. Then I realized that there was a demand. I have earned 45-50,000 TRY so far. Tomorrow I will share 2 photos and will be paid 800,00 TRY. But I never charge girls.

But why don't you ask for money from the females?

They don't need it. Just with a gesture, they can get what they want.

Can you categorize these people?

Rich people have enough of everything. They can get lots of girlfriends. You can have whatever you want so life is meaningless to you. Such people look for something different and new. Or there are other ones who cannot have a girlfriend they want to even though they are very rich. Of course there are people who I like a lot. And those who I do not know closely. Most of them have problems. I do not know what it results from but I think having a lot of money is damaging them. They have a shitty life. They don't know how to eat well, how to travel well, how to wear well. Do you think a man can share the same photo 15 times deleting it over and over? Idiot.

⁸ A popular Turkish newspaper known with its poor content which is full of tabloid magazine and visuals.

Who did that?

One of the RKOT. M... We talk and decide to organize his profile. We make a good profile including 150-200 photos... A week later he calls and says "I am bored" and a week later he opens it again. They are weird. They are not normal.

Are you giving consultancy?

Yes, I am. I also get paid by B... monthly. He was an oik. We got him a blue tick from Instagram. You know only famous people can get it. We get in touch with America and pay for it. For example, he thanks me every day. he says "Tolga people didn't use to treat me like this before. Even younger people have started to call me "ağabey". You showed me how quality I am." We created him from the beginning. There was one more guy like that. Imagine... You have a car which is the only one in Turkey and you have only 150 followers on Instagram. After me he has got 150,000 followers. He used to have only 1 watch and was wearing it all the time. I said "what the fuck". Now he has the best watches in Turkey. For example, one of them is around 1,5 billion TRY. For example, S... is a real trouble. We had a fight for no reason. We don't talk to each other. I say again. They are so weird.*

What is your criterion to share a photo?

If a person represents wealth in the photo, I share it even if this person is not wealthy... I share a very 'special' (rich) person's photo for free but I wouldn't share the photo of a low class person's photo for free.

How many real followers do you have?

144, 000. All of them are real. Recently Onedio.com featured my page and 450,000 people read that news and visited my page.

Can you see how many people visited your page?

Yes. You can. Instagram provides it.

What's the percentage of the rich in this group?

85-90%. For example, there is M. K. have you met him? He is so crazy.

Why are you saying that?

He is very rich... very...

Are you a part of this group?

I am not a part of this group but I am making a progress to be a part of this group and I am doing quite well. When we moved to Istanbul, we only had a TV and a flat, now we have established our business here in Cyprus⁹ and it is going well. I bought the most beautiful car of my life. A BMW...

Is Instagram a good tool to show who you are?

Definitely. It shows what you have. The fake one is understood. Even if you do not understand it from the profile once you meet this person, you understand it from clothing styles, the places they want to meet at.

Can you describe yourself in 3 words?

I think I am intelligent. ...We came from Kars... From a small village of Kars. I had a strong Turkish accent when I first arrived in Istanbul but later I corrected it.

Can you describe RKOT in 3 words?

⁹ A few months later after the interview, he moved to Cyprus with his brother to run a café/restaurant.

I am sometimes surprised to see that there are such wealthy people in Turkey. Some show it some do not. For example, Koç family. They have a modest life style. I wish they would appear on the social media modestly. Sabancı is not like that. They give money to be advertised.

Do you follow RKOI? Yes, I do.

Are you inspired by RKOI?

My page is independent from that. I try to share fewer photos which are good quality. Of course, I started it by being inspired from this page. I saw it and said to myself "it is good" but it doesn't work the same way as it does with RKOI. Here in Turkey, things are different. For example, I shared the photos with golden frames at the beginning but I received lots of reactions from the members. They asked me to take the golden frames out. It is not like in England. They found it cheesy. Or when I shared the photos with provocative captions, I received negative reactions from the owners of the photos... They asked me to delete the caption. In Turkey everybody wants to be 'cool'. So the same system is not working in here.

Why don't you use provocative hashtags and captions in the photos like RKOI?

It is not like England. They don't like it when I share provoking or too ostentatious things. They found it too uncouth. When I write a provoking caption or a comment under a post, they call me and ask me to delete it. Most of them are chasing women. If there are any who do not, it means they are gay.

But these people have lots of money why should they try to find women on Instagram?

Because they have had enough of everything. There are women in their lives but this platform is different for them. They are satisfying their egos. They show off. Most of them already know each other because most of them go to good schools and know each other from childhood. They are in a competition with each other. My page is very beautiful. It is inspirational especially for young people...

Can you describe RKOT in 3 words?

I think they are alone. Most of them have just a few friends. They cannot be happy with simple things. For example, I try a lot to get something and I get pleasure out of it. They don't. They don't have real friends.

Why do you think these people are on this page?

Most of them know each other because most of them go to good school and know each other from childhood. They are in a competition with each other in terms of cars.

Most people said that at the beginning there were only real rich but now there are people who do not belong to this class?

No, there are still rich ones but I also share the photos of low class as long as they show wealth in the photos.

Did they ask you to bring them together?

No they didn't. I am not sure if my page helps them to get together. If it does, it would be just because of their interest in cars. They might DM each other. Apart from that, I don't think they want to come together because they do not hang out with each other. They do not know and trust each other. Most of them asked me "who you were" If I hadn't approved your identity, they wouldn't have accepted your interview requests.

How do you tag a RKOT?

For example, sometimes I reject to share the photo even though I am offered money because the clothing style is bad, the background is ugly. B... was an oik. I introduced him to a girl. He spent lots of money for her.

Interviewee – 20 Male

Short bio: He is 17 years old and has a sister. He is a high school student and getting ready for university. His parents are together. Father is the distributor of the biggest Turkish domestic appliances company. He is a high school graduate. Although the mother is a lawyer, she does not work. He belongs to the rich category.

Are you literally rich?

Yes. Literally but I cannot show it now because I am too young. But in a year time, I can show it because I will be 18 and my dad will buy me the car I want. For example, our house costs 20,000,000 TRY but nobody knows it because I haven't shared it but I will next year. But I do not live luxuriously all the time. I eat both from Nusret and food courts on the street."

Are you happy with your life standards?

Quite a lot. I am not old enough yet I believe that I will be more satisfied with my life standards in the future. I am still at high school. My dad didn't get me a very good car, just a BMW because I do not have a driving license. He promised me to get me the car I want. An E8 or Porsche. He will get one of them. My exam result was good and he will get me the car soon. He will also get a flat too.

Do you get along well with your family members? Yes. I never argue with them.

How much do you spend a month?

Around 12000 -13000 TRY with credit card. 2,500 TRY as cash.

Would you like to have more money?

Well... Yes, I would. Actually my dad buys most things I want but I could be better in Turkey. If my dad's business was categorized in Turkey, it would be better than average. For example, our house costs 20 million TRY, but if we were richer, we would live in the Bosphorus.

Would places that you visit change? No, because I go wherever I want to.

Happy to be a Turk?

I'm happy to be a Turk. I'm Kurdish but I love Atatürk very much. My family loves Atatürk, as well. They vote for CHP.

What do you think about Turkish economy?

It is bad. Foreign currency has gained more value, that's why construction companies are going bankrupt. My dad is also losing money because we work with foreign countries.

Will you vote for "yes" in referendum?

I will vote "yes" in the referendum. It might come out "no" but Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is rebellious. If it results in "no", he can attack PYD¹⁰ or other sides, so the economy and the country will go worse. Actually it is more about fear. That's why I will say "yes". RTE is against Atatürk but I do not say "yes" for him, I say "yes" for the conjuncture, for my country and myself. My family do not vote for AKP but I do. They don't know about my decision.

Have you ever been involved in a societal movement?

No, never.

How do you use social media?

¹⁰ The Democratic Union Party: A Kurdish democratic confederalist political party established on 20 September 2003 in northern Syria.

I use Instagram and Snapchat. I use Snapchat every day. My friends on my Snapchat list say that I wander a lot.

Why do you like Snapchat?

Because it is momentary and it is more fun.

How often do you use Instagram?

I use it 50 times a day but I do not share photos because I feel lazy about taking photos. But recently I have been sharing lots of posts. I have just shared one today.

How many Instagram accounts do you have? One

How many followers do you have?

I have 900 followers and 360 followings. My profile is open to public and people see it when I share a post. So they do not need to add me and I do not add people who I do not know.

Does your Instagram profile reflect real you?

No, it doesn't. Because I do not have any posts on Instagram that show my father's car, our house, our summer house. If I posted them, not RKOT but RKOI would share them. Of course, I will share these kinds of posts when I get my new car. I was busy with the exams. I was too young, such things did not even occur to me. I'm still young but I will share them in the future. Then my posts will reflect real me.

How often do you follow RKOT?

I used to follow them before. Tolga knows me well. I like Tolga. But I can't follow them anymore. It is not true that a person who has a BMW, or a Mercedes or an Audi can share posts on the profile. Then, anybody would share posts on the profile. But I think that it is so stupid to pay for sharing a post.

But you said that you also paid for it?

Yes, I did. But I was 16 years old then. I was young. I don't do it anymore. I don't think there is a person at my age who has the same car as mine. A car which costs 300,000 TRY for a 16 years old boy! That's why I was supposed to share a post, and I shared it.

What was your motivation to be tagged there?

I had only one intention: to chat up girls and it happened. Nothing else. 20 girls added me. I talked to them but nothing happened. There is a girl called L... I met her but she is too old for me. Like 6-7 years.

Why Instagram?

Because you share only photos. There are no silly things, no opinions. There are no childish, stupid things.

What has changed after you were tagged?

Nothing has changed in my life. I even wanted to delete the photo because I thought that it was so silly to share a photo in a BMW. Because there is a specific quality level of the profile. So that car was not appropriate for that profile. It should have been at least an E8 or a Bentley. The photo did not reflect me well because I am not a person who drives a car which costs 300,000 TRY.

Any reactions?

Well, I receive a lot of reactions from Snapchat because I travel a lot. You can even check it with Tolga, he follows me on Snapchat. This summer I traveled between Bodrum and Çeşme without a single day break. I went to the beach club and the night club every day. I don't want to look down on people but I never hung out at the stand in the night club, I was always in the private lodge. I don't spend so much in Istanbul but in summer I spend a lot. For example, this summer I spent at least 150,000 TRY in three months. Dad never gets angry about the money thing because I'm the only male child.

How do you understand the real rich on RKOT?

From their profiles. From the shoes they wear. For example, if someone visits my profile, they can understand it from my outfit. Also, they can understand it from where I sit in a place. If someone posted a photo from this place we are sitting at right now, I would tell that they are rich but if they shared a photo from an ordinary table for two, I wouldn't think that this person is rich.

What is the obvious sign of wealth on RKOT?

Houses. I'm thinking of sharing one from our house in Tarabya. Cars, clothes, houses, yachts.

Are they real?

There are a lot of those who are not real. If I opened the profile now, I would show you who is not real. The post should be convincing. Number plates of the car... There must be a tag, or something.

Are you a part of RKOT?

Not now. My opportunities are appropriate for that but I'm still too young. That's why...

How would you describe yourself? Snob. I can't get along well with unnecessary people.

Is Instagram a right platform to reflect your identity?

No, it is not because you can give a wrong impression there. For example, H.... He is a very good person normally but he seems arrogant there. I love him very much.

Is Instagram a good platform for RKOT?

Yes, it is. No offence but rich people do not harm anybody... They may have a bad idea about you but they don't get jealous of you. For example, when my friends see my house, they don't get jealous because they have the same thing and they are fun. But Instagram is the right tool because there are photos.

Are you a member of any organizations? No, I'm not.

Can you describe Instagram in 3 words?

Entertainment, meeting new people, and ego-satisfaction.

3 words for RKOT?

A very creative and beautiful profile. But I wish he didn't share posts for money... Or no. He can share posts for money but he shouldn't share the photos of those who have a BMW or Audi. The worst house in the photos should cost at least 25,000,000,000 TRY. The worst car should cost 800,000 TRY.

3 words for yourself?

I like spending money on clothes and cars. This is the first thing about me. Secondly, I like travelling abroad. I travel a lot with my family. My favorite destination is Amsterdam. This year, we are planning to go to lots of places again.

Which one did you learn about the first RKOI or RKOT? RKOI.

CURRICULUM VITAE

İlkay Tuzcu Tıgh

PhD - Media and Communication Studies

Galatasaray University

ilkaytuzcu@gmail.com

Education

- 2014 – 2019 PhD in Media and Communication Studies,
Graduate School of Social Sciences, Galatasaray University,
Istanbul, Turkey.
- 2010 – 2011 Visiting Graduate Student in Women Studies,
Applied Linguistics Graduate Programs and Women Studies,
Portland State University, Portland, U.S.A.
- 2008 – 2012 Master's Degree in Communication Design,
The Faculty of Fine Arts, Istanbul Kültür University, Istanbul, Turkey.

Thesis: Film Afişleri Tasarımında Göstergeler:
Prof. Yurdaer Altıntaş'ın Film Afişleri Çözümleme Örneği
- 2001 – 2006 Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching Department
(Highest ranked student)
The Faculty of Education, ELT Department,
Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey.

Employment

- 2016 – Present Academic Writing and Speaking Instructor at Özyeğin University,
The School of Languages, Istanbul, Turkey.
- 2012 – 2016 English Language Instructor at Özyeğin University,
The School of Languages, Istanbul, Turkey.
- 2011 – 2012 English Language Instructor at İstanbul Bilgi University,
English Language Programs, Istanbul, Turkey
- 2010 – 2011 Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant
at Portland State University, Foreign Languages Department,
Portland, USA.
- 2008 – 2011 English Language Instructor at Istanbul Kültür University,
Foreign Languages School.

2006 – 2008 English Language Teacher at Private TED Colleges,
Karabük, Turkey.

Scholarships

- TÜBİTAK National Scholarship Program for PhD Students, 2014-2018, The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), Ankara, Turkey.
- Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship, 2010-2011, Portland State University; Portland, the USA.
- EU Comenius Teacher Training in Service Activity, 2007, Salzburg University; Salzburg, Austria.

Awards

- Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship Certificate of Achievement, 2010-2011, Portland State University; Portland, the USA.

TEZ ONAY SAYFASI

Üniversite : T.C. GALATASARAY ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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Unvanı, Adı Soyadı

İmza

Doç. Dr. Michel BOURSE

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Murad ÖZDEMİR

Doç. Dr. Feyza AK AKYOL

Prof. Dr. Rengin KÜÇÜKERDOĞAN

Prof. Dr. Can BİLGİLİ

Enstitü Müdürü

Prof. Dr. M. Yaman ÖZTEK