



How Does Consumer Materialism Relate with 4-Factor INDCOL?

Tüketici Materyalizmi 4-Faktörlü INDCOL ile Ne Denli İlişkilidir?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to present the findings on the relationship between individualism-collectivism (INDCOL) and consumer materialism (MAT) concepts and to discuss the predictive use of INDCOL. Data of a doctoral dissertation with a sample size of 633 participants was used for SEM analyses. The analysis revealed a positive relationship between horizontal individualism (HI) and MAT as anticipated, however, vertical individualism (VI) is unexpectedly found to be negatively related to MAT. Also, the results did not reveal a significant relationship between vertical collectivism (VC) and MAT, and the horizontal collectivism (HC) factor could not be validated. The result of the HI-MAT relationship confirms the understanding that materialism has roots in an individualistic sense of modernity, when VI-MAT is discretely found negative. Therefore, it is comprehended that the INDCOL construct needs to be reconsidered for predictive use, since vertical/horizontal terms are found to be liable to cause problems on the conceptual inferences of individualism/collectivism. Thusly, associating the INDCOL concepts to behavioral theories is recommended for future research.

Keywords: Vertical/Horizontal, Individualism, Collectivism, Consumer Materialism.

Özet

Bu çalışma bireycilik-toplulukçuluk (INDCOL) ve tüketici materyalizmi (MAT) kavramları arasında kurulan ilişkiye dair sonuçları sunmayı ve INDCOL yapısını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla bir doktora tez çalışmasında 633 katılımcıdan oluşan örneklemden elde edilen veri setinden yararlanılarak yapısal eşitlik modellemesi ile analiz yapılmıştır. Yapılan analiz yatay bireycilik (HI) ile MAT arasında beklenen pozitif ilişkiyi desteklemiş, ancak dikey bireycilik (VI)-MAT ilişkisi beklenenin aksine negatif yönlü ölçülmüştür. Ayrıca dikey toplulukçuluk ile MAT arasındaki ilişki anlamlı bulunmazken, yatay toplulukçuluk (HC) geçerli bir faktör olarak belirlenmemiştir. HI-MAT ilişkisine dair sonuçlar materyalizm ile modernizm arasında kurulan birey odaklılık temelli varsayımları doğrularken, VI-Mat ilişkisinin negatif yönlü olması olağandışı bir sonuç olarak görülmektedir. Böylece yatay/dikey ayrımının bireycilik/toplulukçuluk kavramları açısından kavramsal anlamda sorunlu olduğu ve bu nedenle INDCOL yapısının yordama yeterliği açısından tekrar değerlendirilmesinin gerekli olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Buradan hareketle, INDCOL kavramlarının gelecek çalışmalarda davranış teorileri ile ilişkilendirilmesi önerilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yatay/Dikey, Bireycilik, Toplulukçuluk, Tüketici Materyalizmi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hofstede (1980) raised the cultural dimensions theory to define cultural sets and differences worldwide. Among these dimensions, individualism and collectivism concepts have been widely popular in the literature. The concepts served a great amount of studies on cultural differences of human groups (Probst and Lawler, 2006) and offer an understanding of human behavior in terms of cultural explanations. Scholars focused on creating scales to measure individualism and collectivism using survey methodology, and proposed two and four factor versions of the INDCOL scale yet reported different validity findings (Li and Aksoy, 2007; Oyserman et al., 2002; Öztürk et al., 2019; Wasti and Erdil, 2007). Nevertheless, the scales did not always demonstrate a consistent tool for research and more emphasis on the concepts is needed. In the context of Turkish samples, the previous studies present validity and reliability problems of the individualism-collectivism scales as well (Li and Aksoy, 2007; Sakal and Yıldız, 2015; Wasti and Erdil, 2007). This paper aims to report findings of a survey with four factor INDCOL scale, using data of a doctoral dissertation on consumption behaviors of a Turkish sample (Topçu, 2019). The data is used to examine the relationship between INDCOL factors and consumer materialism and to discuss the use of 4-factor INDCOL construct in terms of validity and predictive power.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Individualism, collectivism and consumer materialism concepts are defined in this section. It is aimed to clarify how they are addressed in the paper since the concepts are scholarly approached from different viewpoints in the literature. The consumer materialism concept, as put forth by Richins and Dawson (1992), has a more consistent background. However, use of INDCOL constructs indicates various measurement and conceptual problems, which is determined a major problem by the paper.

2.1. Consumer Materialism

Materialism has the scholar meaning of giving importance to objects, possessions, and observable assets when elucidating a phenomena. In consumer studies, two main approaches of materialism have been depicted by Belk (1985), and Richins and Dawson (1992). Belk explains consumer materialism as personality trait, whereas in Richins' approach, materialism is collection of definitions, meanings and beliefs, which constitute a value system to judge a person's coping with the life via possessions. As conceived of in this paper, consumer materialism refers to a set of values in which the individual is oriented by consumption. Richins and Dawson (1992) proposed a construct to determine materialistic values by addressing success, centrality and happiness dimensions. In brief, the concept asserts that materialistic consumers relate with possessions as they signify how successful, how important and how happy someone is (Richins, 2004).

2.2. Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism-collectivism dichotomy, as one of the pillars of Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions, defines a set of cultural differences of assumed national identities. Early scholars interpreted individualism as a result of modernism, democracy and urban life while the term also indicates an individual perspective, independence, self-orientedness and success (Triandis, 1995). Collectivism, on the other hand, is perceived as social dependence and liability (Oyserman et al., 2002), which also implicates sacrificing personal goals or aims. According to Chiou (2001), the terms point out emphasis on survivability and self-independence by individualism; and social solidarity by collectivism. Even though, the terms imply a dichotomy, scholars revealed a more complex set of meanings and common points of the notions (Öztürk et al., 2019). Hence, it can be difficult to distinguish the concepts clearly. For example, relevance with the kinship complicates the attitude: is it collectivist or it also has the sense of favoring the self to refer as individualism

when the person is focused on the wellbeing of his own kin. Or may selfish behaviors in favor of own group be perceived as collectivism when in contact with the other?

The INDCOL concepts emerge differently under different circumstances, as Triandis and Gelfand (1998) note the significant variations of the individualism in the US and Sweden, and the collectivism in Korea and Israel. Hereby, horizontal and vertical variations of the constructs are defined to scrutinize the individualism-collectivism concepts further. Horizontal term adds the concepts sense of and paying attention to togetherness, when verticalness refers to forming hierarchy. Thus, vertical individualism (VI) has a strong focus on one's own superiority or interests as against others, when horizontal individualism (HI) is oriented to and has the sense of specifying the self before others. Likewise, when horizontal collectivism (HC) refers to embracing a wider group of people around, vertical collectivism (VC) is thought to be in line with acknowledgement of imparities in the group. Thus, INDCOL terms are expected to form relationships with consumer materialism (MAT) in this means and demonstrate a tool for consumer research by predicting materialistic tendencies.

When consumers tend to stress their uniqueness, success and self-interest, it is expected that this would be observable as consumer materialism as a value system. Thus, Wong (1997) documented a significant relationship between individualism and materialism. In this study, it is expected to measure significant positive relationships and define a stronger relationship between VI and MAT, than the relationship between HI and MAT.

h1. HI is positively related to MAT.

h2. VI is positively related to MAT.

h3. The relationship assumed in h2 is stronger than it is in h1.

Collectivism is mentioned with sacrifice for the good of the group, therefore it is associated with abandoning the primacy of material values (Singelis et al., 1995). Thus, it is the sense of being member of the group that satisfies the person, instead of consumption or possession, as Wong (1997) documented negative relationship between collectivism and materialism. However, while HC is interpreted with the lack of the sense of hierarchy within the group, VC includes the sense of inequality (Triandis and Gelfand, 1998). Consequently, it is expected to measure negative relationship between HC and MAT, but due to the hierarchical sense for the VC concept, a significant relationship with VC is not anticipated.

h4. HC is negatively related to MAT.

h5. VC and MAT are not significantly related.

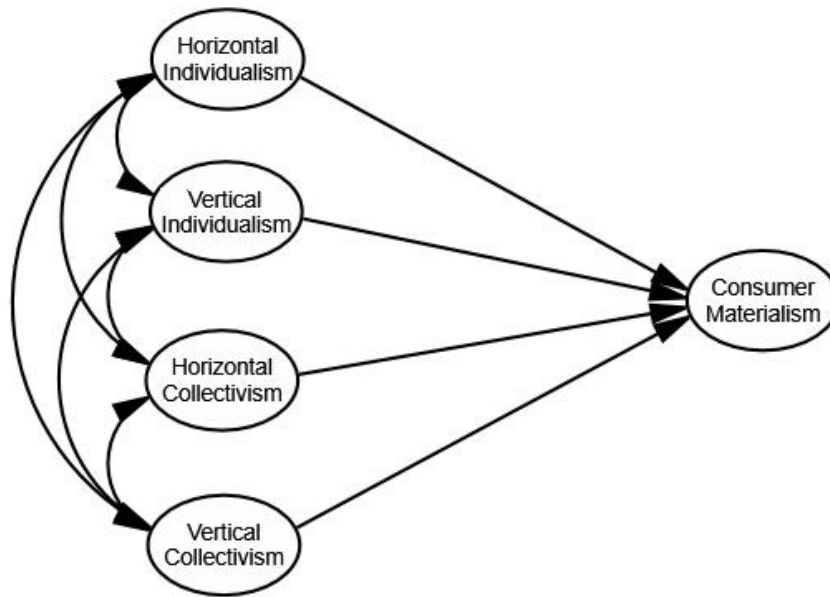


Figure 1. Research Model

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was formed to test the hypotheses. Highly reliable 9-item consumer materialism (MAT) scale was well adopted from Richins (2004), but 4-factor INDCOL was more difficult to settle since previous studies present differences in wording of items and different findings of the validity and predictive power of the scale. On that account, items in previous studies Singelis et al. (1995), Triandis and Gelfand (1998), Li and Aksoy (2007) and Wasti and Erdil (2007) were reconsidered and rewritten with the help of two academics, a linguist and a group of master degree students. Ultimately, a 12-item four factor INDCOL scale was formed. Eventually, the data is gathered from 21 items of a 7-point Likert questionnaire (See appendix 1 for original Turkish items and English equivalence).

3.2. The sample

Online data gathering was preferred for speed, lack of paperwork and willingness of the respondents to join the survey. Also, as Hewson and Stewart (2016) noted, it employs a way to make inferences on a wider group. The questionnaire was directed to e-mail addresses obtained from websites of various universities in Turkey. Thus, the data was collected in April 2019 and 633 valid forms were obtained for analysis.

As presented in Table 1, the sample consists 322 female (50.1%) and 311 male (49.9%) participants. The participants marked their age groups as n=87 (13.7%) for 20-29, n=237 (37.4%) for 30-39, n=173 (27.3%) for 40-49 and n=136 (21.5%) for 50 and more. For monthly income n=234 (37%) marked 5000 Turkish Liras (₺) and less, n=321 (50.7%) selected 5001-10000 ₺ and n=78 (12.3%) selected 10001 ₺ and more. The participants submitted their level of education as n=144 (22.7%) have mid- or high-school, n=178 (28.1%) have bachelor and n=311 (49.1%) have post-graduate degree.

Table 1. Demographics

		%	Fre.
Gender	Female	50.1	322
	Male	49.9	311
Age	20-29	13.7	87
	30-39	37.4	237
	40-49	27.3	173
	50+	21.5	136
Monthly income	0-5000 ₺	37	234
	5001-10000 ₺	50.7	321
	10001 ₺ and more	12.3	78
Education	Mid/high school	22.7	144
	Bachelor	28.1	178
	Graduate school	49.1	311

3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to validate factor structure. Two items loading on MAT (mat2, mat4) were extracted due to factor loadings lower than 0.6. HC was extracted completely and not available for further analysis due to low item loadings and factor validity problems. Therefore, 4-factor INDCOL construct could not be used and the analyses were conducted using 3 INDCOL factors (see Figure 2). The new model was validated as shown in Table 2 and presented very well fit values of min/df=2.256, CFI=.976, NFI=.957, SRMR=.05, RMSEA=.045 and PClose=.865 as presented in Table 3. Thus, the model was prepared to test the hypotheses via path analysis.

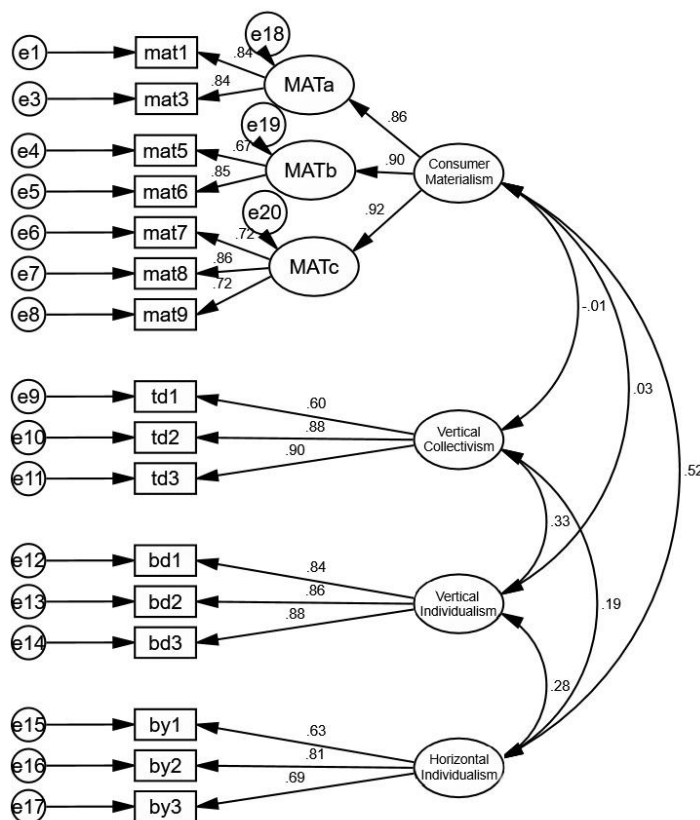


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Table 2. Measures of Reliability and Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	Max R(h)	MAT	VC	VI	HI
MAT	0.92	0.797	0.275	0.925	0.893	-0.006		
VC	0.84	0.650	0.111	0.894	**	0.806		
VI	0.89	0.736	0.111	0.894	0.028	0.333***	0.858	
HI	0.75	0.509	0.275	0.774	0.524	0.193***	0.280***	0.713

Table 3. Model Fit Values

CMIN	DF	CMIN/DF	CFI	NFI	SRMR	RMSEA	PClose
214.292	95	2.256	0.976	0.957	0.050	0.045	0.865

3.4. Path analysis results

To test the hypotheses, the path model was run in IBM Amos (see Figure 3). The analysis revealed a distinct and significant relationship between HI and MAT ($\beta=.57, p<.001$), therefore h1 was supported. However, the relationship between VI and MAT was estimated negative ($\beta=-.1, p<.05$), meaning that h2 and h3 were not supported. Since HC was extracted, h4 could not be tested and therefore is not supported. The results indicate that the relationship between VC and MAT was not significant, therefore h5 was supported. The findings are presented in Table 4.

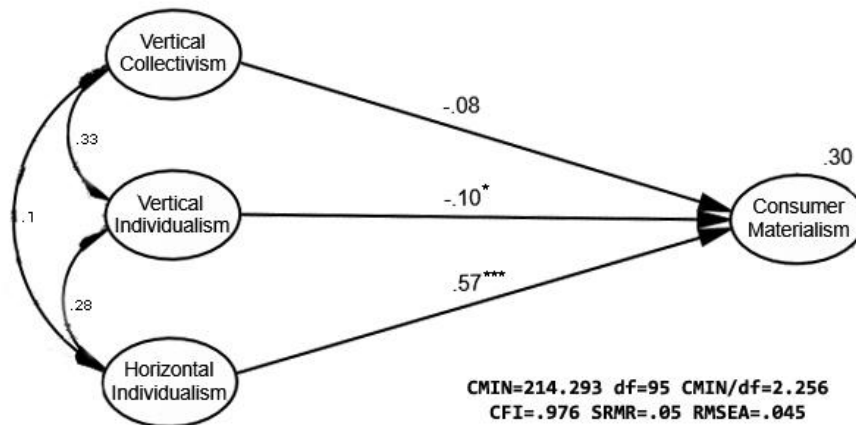


Figure 3. Path analysis

Table 4. Regression weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Std. Est.
MAT	<---	HI	.453	.049	9.320	***	.569
MAT	<---	VI	-.082	.037	-2.237	*	-.105
MAT	<---	VC	-.085	.048	-1.776	.076	-

*p<0.05, ***p<0.001

CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION

This study aimed to present an example of use of INDCOL construct in predicting consumer behavior. Primarily, HC factor could not be measured and tested, similar to measurement problems of VI in Wasti and Erdil (2007) and vertical-horizontal conceptualization in Li and Aksoy (2007). Therefore, consistency of 4-factor INDCOL scale is not supported and found questionable, confirming conclusions of Öztürk et al. (2019).

Since HC is not validated, the relationship between HC and MAT could not be measured, and the findings of relationships between 3 INDCOL factors and MAT are presented. Among validated INDCOL factors, the relationship between HI and MAT was supported, as consistent with the literature (Wong, 1997). Self-concept is mentioned in the literature with terms like happiness, or popularity etc. (Özyürek et al., 2020), whereas Belk (1988) stated that, possession is used to construct the self throughout one's life. This relation arises in the childhood and provides answers to the question of "who I am", as the individual not only creates but also reflects and pursues the self via consumption (Kleine et al., 2003). Consequently, this finding is interpreted as a reflection of modernity, consistent with the literature (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995), as materialistic tendencies of modern human is associated with individualism by definition. But unexpectedly, a negative relationship was measured for VI. Even though, the relationship of VC and MAT is not significant at $p < 0.05$, both vertical INDCOL factors are found to have a negative slope towards MAT. This draws attention on what the term "vertical" implicates. Vertical terming in INDCOL is explained with highly materialistic notions such as success, competition, hierarchy and social status (Öztürk et al., 2019). In this sense, it is questioned if constructing of INDCOL with verticalness meets what it implicates. As Taras et al. (2010) cautions, INDCOL constructs seem to reflect conceptual problems as signifying distinct concepts, different than what they aim. Consequently, conceptual errors blur individualist/collectivist attitudes which are intended to be quantified. Hence, it is concluded that 4-factor INDCOL does not constitute a predictive construct for survey based consumption research.

Implications of this study are in accord with Öztürk et al. (2019) on the need of INDCOL construct to be reconsidered. They also offer a six factor construct consisting of "success, uniqueness, freedom" for individualism and "family, with-in group destiny, interpersonal relations" for collectivism. But with the aim of overcoming methodological and conceptual errors, this construct also has the potential to induce errors since the bond with the set of assumptions of Hofstede (1980) becomes indistinct and problematic. Thus, a broader focus on what constitutes INDCOL terms is regarded as essential.

Additionally, it is kindly offered to scholars to reconsider the boundaries of favoring the self and group from different perspectives. It is considered necessary to relate the terms with behavioral theories for predictive power of the constructs. For instance, associating the topic with group behavior theories or memetics to make use of more consistent set of meanings, assumptions and antecedents may provide more opportunities for future research. On the basis that culture itself is defined on how human groups tend to behave, solve problems, or make choices (Hall, 1961); relating cultural concepts and behavioral antecedents commits more accurate and convenient conceptual research designing.

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APPENDIX 1: Items used in Turkish and English equivalent

Item used	in English	
Mat1	Pahalı evleri, arabaları, kıyafetleri olan insanlara özenirim.	I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
Mat2	Sahip olduğum şeyler, hayatın benim için ne kadar iyi gittiği hakkında çok şey anlatır.	The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.
Mat3	Başkalarının hayran olduğu şeylere sahip olmayı seviyorum.	I like to own things that impress people
Mat4	Bir şeylere sahip olmayı çok da önemsemem.	I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.
Mat5	Bir şeyler satın almak beni mutlu ediyor.	Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure.
Mat6	Hayatımda lüks şeyler olmasından memnun olurum.	I like a lot of luxury in my life.
Mat7	Şu anda sahip olmadığım bazı şeylere sahip olsam hayatım daha iyi olurdu.	My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have
Mat8	Daha çok şey alabilsem daha mutlu olurum.	I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
Mat9	Bazen almak istediğim her şeyi alamamak beni rahatsız ediyor.	It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like
By1	Başkalarına bel bağlamaktansa, kendi kendime yeterim.	I'd rather depend on myself than others.
By2	Çoğu zaman kendime yeterim, başkalarına nadiren ihtiyaç duyarım.	I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.
By3	Genelde kendi işimi kendim görürüm.	I often do "my own thing."
Bd1	İşimi başkalarından iyi yapmak benim için önemlidir.	It is important that I do my job better than others.
Bd2	Kazanmak her şeydir.	Winning is everything.
Bd3	Rekabet doğanın kanunudur.	Competition is the law of nature.
Ty1	Bir iş arkadaşım başarılı olduğunda, bundan gurur duyarım.	If a coworker gets a prize, I would feel proud.
Ty2	İş arkadaşlarımdan maddi ve manevi olarak iyi durumda olması benim için önemlidir.	The well-being of my coworkers is important to me.
Ty3	Bence mutluluk yakınlarımla vakit geçirmektir.	To me, pleasure is spending time with others.
Td1	Anne-baba ve çocuklar mümkün olduğunca birlikte kalmalıdır.	Parents and children must stay together as much as possible.
Td2	Bazen istediklerimden fedakârlık yapmam gerekse bile, aileme bakmak benim için görevdir.	It is my duty to take care of my family, even when I have to sacrifice what I want.
Td3	Hangi fedakârlığı gerektirirse gerektirsin, aile üyeleri birbirleri ile dayanışmalıdır.	Family members should stick together, no matter what sacrifices are required.