

## TELL ME ABOUT THE IMAGE OF THE PERSON WHO CONSUMES HOME-PACKED MEALS: AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### Abstract

It is a common and usual behavior in a variety of cultures for consumers to bring their home-packed meals to the settings like school or workplace where they spend their entire day. Besides this behavior is not common and usual in Turkish culture, anecdotal evidence shows us that there could be a negative perception toward these consumers, and they could be excluded or bullied in settings like school because of this behavior. In this research, we conducted four focus groups with university students with an aim to understand the barriers in bringing their home-packed meals to school, and their perception toward the person who sticks to this practice. According to findings, university students mentioned their hesitation and shyness since the society is not accustomed to this practice and lack of a suitable place to consume their home-packed meals on the campus as the main barriers. Also, the most mentioned point about their perceived image of the people who bring home-packed meals was that they could be people who care about their physical appearance, beauty, and health. The second most mentioned point was that they could be people who have insufficient financial resources.

**Keywords:** Consumer Behavior, Home-Packed Meal, Food Preparation, Focus-Group, Healthy Eating, Transformative Consumer Research

**JEL Classification:** M30, M31, M39

## ÖĞÜNLERİNİ YANINDA TAŞIYAN KİŞİ İMAJİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA: ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİ ARASINDA SAĞLIKLI BESLENME DAVRANIŞINI TUTUNDURMAK İÇİN ALTERNATİF BİR YOL

### Öz

Tüketicilerin evde hazırladıkları öğünlerini tüm günlerini geçirdikleri okul, işyeri gibi ortamlara götürmeleri pek çok kültürde oldukça yaygın ve alışılmış bir davranıştır. Türk kültüründe ise yaygın ve alışılmış olmamasının yanısıra anektodsallık kanıtlar, bu kişilere yönelik olumsuz bir algı olabildiğini, hatta okul gibi ortamlarda bu tüketicilerin zaman zaman dışlanma ve zorbalığa maruz kalabildiklerini göstermektedir. Bu araştırmada üniversite öğrencileriyle yapılan dört odak grup çalışmasıyla yanlarında evde hazırladıkları öğünleri getirmelerine yönelik engellerin neler olduğu ve bu davranışı gösteren kişiye yönelik algıları anlaşılmasına çalışılmıştır. Bulgulara göre, üniversite öğrencileri yanlarında öğünlerini getirmeleri konusunda, toplumun bu duruma alışık olmaması ve bu sebeple de çekinmelerini en büyük engel olarak göstermişlerdir. Bir diğer sıklıkla vurgulanan engelin ise getirdikleri öğünleri tüketmek için uygun ortamın bulunmaması olduğu görülmektedir. Yanında öğünlerini getiren kişinin kim olduğu konusundaysa en sıkça vurgulanan nokta fiziksel görünüşüne, sağlık ve güzelliğine önem veren kişiler olurken, bir diğer sıklıkla atı çizilen nokta ise ekonomik sıkıntılar olmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tüketici Davranışı, Evde Hazırlanmış Öğünler, Yemek Hazırlama, Odak Grup, Sağlıklı Beslenme, Dönüştürücü Tüketici Davranışı

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## 1. Introduction

Obesity is one of the biggest problems of nations and healthy eating is the main advice given in fighting obesity (World Health Organization, 2018). In order to help changing the individuals' behavior toward a healthier direction, and prevent obesity, many countries try to make healthy eating arrangements and try to disseminate the idea of healthy eating in society.

Obesity and healthy eating issues are so important that they do not affect only the well-being of individuals but also the well-being of society. Thus, the solutions to these issues should not be left solely to health specialists, nutritionists, or policymakers, but marketing and consumer researchers should also take their responsibility for these issues. The idea that consumer researchers should also focus on social problems was institutionalized by the Transformative Consumer Movement (TCR) by David Glen Mick's question about what consumer researchers are doing for social problems, and his call to consumer researchers to take actions for consumers' wellbeing and to help alleviate social problems (Mick, 2006). Since then, Transformative Consumer Research has been "a movement that seeks to encourage, support, and disseminate research that contributes to the well-being of consumers, environments, and societies across the world" (Transformative Consumer Research, 2020) and food and healthy eating-related problems have been one of the important research areas in Transformative Consumer Research. By this research, we also try to focus on a social problem and give support to the Transformative Consumer Research movement.

Concerning obesity and healthy eating, literature underlies a link between away-from-home food consumption and obesity (Bleich et al., 2007; Cutler et al., 2003), and organizations like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2015), supports preparing meals at home instead of eating out to reduce obesity. But consumers generally express the lack of access to healthy food options in away-from-home settings (Stankevitz et al., 2017) and eating out as a barrier to healthy eating (Kumar et al., 2016). Especially for people -like students or working people - who mostly spend their entire day out of home, it can be challenging either to find healthier alternatives or to make healthier choices in their daily environment. As a strategy to cope with this, motivating consumers to bring their healthy food alternatives –either cooked or bought previously - to the places they spend their entire day can be suggested. Although it is not possible to claim that home-packed meals are always healthier, it can be an important practice when reaching healthy food options is not possible in school or work environments. Thus, promoting the bringing of home-packed healthy food alternatives to school or work - especially when healthy options are either not available or limited in these environments- can be one possible solution to fight obesity and help the food-related well-being of consumers.

Unfortunately, at this point, we can face the cultural norms, practices, and habits of consumers. Although bringing home-packed meals to school or work is very common in some countries and accepted from the point of cultural norms, it is not a very common practice in Turkish culture. Also, we can see that conflicting messages have been sent to consumers about home-packed meals through the media over time, which could have an effect on consumers' home-packed meal perceptions. From one perspective, Turkish movies have created an adult figure who consumes home-packed meals because of economic hardship.

From another and more recent perspective, especially social media plays an important role in the creation and dissemination of a different culture and lifestyle where people are motivated to bring their home-packed meals to any setting by the hashtags like #sefertasihareketi, #sefertasiharekatı, #evdenyemekhareketi, #evdenyemekgetirenler, for reasons like eating healthy, protecting the environment or saving money. Because of these conflicting messages that consumers get about home-packed meals over time, it is not possible to know their perception about bringing home-packed meals to school or work environments. But it is possible that consumers could have some negative perceptions about bringing their home-packed food and some negative image perceptions about the people who bring their home-packed food with them, because of the aforementioned reasons. If this was the case; the image perception should be improved to motivate consumers to bring their healthy food alternatives freely to any setting they spend their days.

Thus, the aim of this research is to examine whether consumers bring home-packed meals to their environments, the barriers stopping them to use this practice, and to understand consumers' perceptions toward the individuals who bring previously cooked/prepared or bought food with them for consuming as a meal or snack. Since we conducted our study with a student sample, we are mainly showing the students' behavior, barriers specifically related to this group, and their perceived image of the people who consume home-packed meals.

In sum, it is important for policymakers to direct the consumers' behavior toward healthier eating and promote healthy eating in order to fight with obesity issue. At this point, the contributions of researchers from marketing and consumer behavior are also important. In the field of consumer behavior, mainly, Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) especially focuses on these kinds of social problems, examines them, and tries to offer solutions that will contribute to consumer well-being. Thus, first of all, it is important to understand consumers' practices, and perceived image about the person who brings home-packed meals especially in cultures that are not used to this practice. So, the findings of the study would be useful for the marketers, policymakers, and researchers since it would only be possible for these groups to determine the right strategies and communication messages after understanding consumers' current practices and perceptions. In accordance with the aim of the study, four focus groups were conducted, and the findings were evaluated to understand the consumers' behavior and perception.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Unfortunately, reaching healthy food alternatives is not possible on every setting such as the places people spend all of their days like universities or work environments. That is why; bringing home-packed meals can be a good strategy.

But although this practice is very common and usual in some cultures, in some others like Turkish culture, it is not so common and usual, especially among adults. Though we can see just by observing people (i.e. students, employees) that this is not a common practice, we can also see how uncommon this practice is just by examining the consumer movements and challenges pursued in different countries through social media. For instance in Turkey, we see movements in social media –especially in Instagram- targeting adults like #sefertasihareketi, #sefertasiharekatı, #evdenyemekhareketi, #evdenyemekgetirenler, which try to promote the idea of bringing people's home-packed meals to the places where they spend most of their days such as work or school.

On the other hand, a challenge named “*Bring a Healthy Lunch Box to Work Challenge*” pursued in Australia tried to direct and motivate adults to bring healthier lunches and increase the number of healthy food choices in lunch boxes based on the recommendations of Australian Dietary Guidelines (Matwiejczyk et al., 2015). Although both of these activities pursued in Turkey and Australia were targeting adults, the main difference was, while the focus of the Australian Challenge was to make the ingredients of adult lunch boxes healthier, Turkish movements were just trying to motivate people and to make adults get used to bringing lunch boxes/home-packed meals.

There could be many reasons why such a practice is uncommon in Turkish culture, and one reason could be related to the perceived image of the people who consume home-packed meals. Search we have conducted in Internet forums and social media showed us that people could have conflicting perceptions about this practice and about the adults who pursue this practice. It is possible to see the reflections of these conflicting perceptions in anecdotal evidence. For instance, in Internet forums, people are mentioning their discomfort about bringing home-packed meals by asking questions or telling their experiences of being bullied because of bringing home-packed meals (Gizli Üye1, 2019; Gizli Üye2, 2019). Some people also mention that they are found weird by their colleagues because of their usage of the practice, moreover, some people use bad/negative words for people who bring home-packed meals (tam bir canavar, 2019). On the other hand, in the same Internet forums, there are positive comments about this practice and positive image perceptions toward the people who bring home-packed meals (Yanında Yemek Taşımak, 2015).

This conflicting image perception about the person who brings home-packed meals makes it an important issue to be investigated. Thus, in this research, we are mainly focusing on the research question of what is the image of the adult who brings and consumes home-packed meals. Investigating the answer to this question is important at least for two main reasons. The first one is; consumers' bringing and consumption of home-packed meals can be a good and important behavior to be promoted when considering environmental and waste issues, healthy eating, and economical reasons. The second one is; if there is a negative image perception about the adults who bring and consume home-packed meals, this could be very damaging and uneasy for the consumers who, for one or another reason, need to bring and consume home-packed meals at school or work. Thus, understanding this perceived image would also help marketers and policymakers to transform this image to a more positive direction. In sum, investigating the answer to this question and trying to create and implement strategies accordingly could help consumers' physical and psychological well-being.

## **2.1. Food Consumption Meaning and Home-Packed Meals**

Belk, Bahn, and Mayer's (1982) theory focuses on the idea that people make inferences about other people based on their consumption choices. Accordingly, people use consumption to express messages about themselves.

The learning process about the meaning of material goods and consumption practices start by childhood; from an early age children start learning that material goods and practices have “social meaning” and gain a perspective that the meaning of consumption is more than fulfilling a need but also about achieving social goals such as acceptance and happiness (Ward, 1974; Dittmar and Pepper, 1994; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998, Elliott, 1999; Roedder, 1999; Ji,

2002; Roper and La Niece, 2009). This understanding evolves as children grow and also shows itself in adults as a tendency to adopt socially accepted consumption practices (Chavda et al., 2005). Food consumption practices also carry social meanings, which have an effect on the acceptance or rejection to a social group.

It is seen in literature that there are researches examining the children's food-related practices and the relation of these practices with social meanings. Metcalfe et al. (2008) investigated the contents of the lunchbox taken to the school by primary school children. It was seen that the lunchboxes of children carry cultural elements, in which children are socially accepted or rejected based on the contents of their lunchboxes. Burgess and Morrison (1997) reported in their research that, children who think that the content of their lunchbox is not appropriate, felt unable to open their lunchboxes in front of their peers because of actual or anticipated ridicule. Other research pointed that the time spent during school mealtimes have a social value for children, in which it is found that, children perceive mealtimes as a time to spend with peers and the liking of the mealtime has a positive effect on the liking of the school (Baines and MacIntyre, 2019).

Also, Karrebæk (2012) reported that food is used as a cultural element and not only peers but also the teachers involve in the process of including or excluding children to the social groups based on the food items in their lunchbox. The “rye-bread”, which symbolizes “children’s very acceptance of majority norms”, is found to be appropriate to bring to school and the children who do not bring this appropriate food type is excluded from the group of respectable students (Karrebæk, 2012). Moreover, children were treated as if they were responsible for their parents’ actions of preparing the lunchbox with inappropriate food items (Karrebæk, 2012).

In sum, it is seen that the effects of lunchbox and mealtimes of children have been investigated not only from the point of healthy eating but also from the point of psychological outcomes.

On the other hand, there were not many pieces of research examining these issues with an adult sample. Only the small number of research conducted with an adult sample showed us that they mainly focused on the content of the employees’ packed lunches and the nutrient composition of the packed vs. worksite canteen lunches (Raulio et al., 2009). We have not come across research investigating the food choices or food-related behaviors of adults in work or school environments from the point of cultural issues, acceptance/rejection to social groups, or the downstream consequences such as liking or disliking the work/school environment, just as the research conducted with children sample.

Besides, although university students have completed their childhood and adolescent years, they are a group of people living in their 20s, they are at a new stage of their life and are very much affected by their peers and social community. Also, it is very important for this group to eat healthily, have a healthy body and mind. But the researches conducted with this sample are mostly descriptive and give us only perspectives about their eating habits and what they eat. Yet, just like the children, meal times in the university can be a time for the university students to socialize, and their behaviors related to food might not only affect their physical well-being, but also their psychological well-being by the creation of an image perception about them and their acceptance/rejection to social groups.

Anecdotal evidence shows us that there can be bullying among university students toward a student who brings his/her home-packed food.

A user in Ekşisözlük has expressed his experience with a university student who was continually bullied by her peers because of bringing home-packed meals to school and consuming them and finally decided to quit school because of this bullying (firatsuyukanakiyor, 2019).

### 3. Methodology

We used an exploratory research method to understand whether students bring home-packed meals to school, the barriers that prevent them from bringing home-packed meals, and their image of the people who bring and consume home-packed meals. Since we could not find any previous research directly related to our research question and since the aim of our research was not to test specific hypothesis but to understand consumers' views deeply, we found it appropriate to use exploratory research.

Moreover, we decided to use a focus group approach when considering the advantages of the method and its appropriateness for our research topic; our research topic was appropriate to discuss in a group setting, it was easier to reach many participants even with a single focus group and the intergroup interaction could give us the ability to reach detailed findings.

We conducted focus group interviews in May 2018 with the students of a university located in the northwest part of Turkey. Students were given information about the aim of the study and invited to join the study. Focus group research information such as day, time, and place were given to the students who were willing to attend the study. In focus group compositions, we tried to keep groups balanced from the point of homogeneity-heterogeneity. Focus group sessions have been continued till to the point where the participants kept mentioning similar issues and where we believed that new focus group sessions will not lead to new findings. In that way, four focus groups have been conducted with 30 participants. Details about the participants are given in Table 1.

In focus group interviews, we used a previously planned semi-structured question form to guide us about the issues we will discuss and the flow of the focus groups. We also used projective techniques to reveal participants' perceptions about the image of the person who brings and consumes home-packed meals. In focus group interview forms, we adopted a funneling approach where we started with general questions and ended up with more specific questions targeting the objective of our research. Accordingly, our focus group interviews flowed under three main parts.

The first part of the focus group was the introduction part; questions about knowing the participants and their demographic information were asked; such as their name, level, and area of study, where they live, etc. The second part examined students' habits about bringing home-packed meals to school, what they bring, and their barriers to bringing home-packed meals to school.

The aim of the last part was to understand the image participants have in their mind about the person who brings and consumes home-packed meals. By this aim, we asked participants to create collages that represent whatever they have in their mind about the image of the person who brings home-packed meals, by using the visuals from the magazines and newspapers, which had been previously brought to the focus group room by the researcher.

After participants completed their collages, we asked them to explain their collages to understand the image they have in their mind about the person who brings home-packed meals.

During the focus group interviews, we tried to strictly follow focus group procedures (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016) and create conditions suitable for focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were conducted in a meeting room in the University, which is adequate for the number of participants, away from the noise, and has an oval table. The focus group interviews were held in two sessions for two days. Pen, paper, water, and name cards were given to the participants. All focus group sessions were recorded and each session took around 80 minutes. During each focus group meeting, the focus group moderator was accompanied by at least one assistant who was previously trained to take notes of the sessions and help with the recordings.

Five to ten participants were included in the focus group interviews. At the beginning of each focus group meeting, participants were informed about the subject of the focus group, and they were informed that while the data collected by the focus group interviews will be used for scientific purposes, their identities will be kept confidential. Finally, it is mentioned that the focus group interview will be recorded and their consents were asked. To make participants comfortable in expressing their thoughts and encourage them to involve in the discussions, it was mentioned that we are only interested in their opinions and there are no right or wrong answers. Lastly, to make everyone address each other more comfortably, participants were asked to write their names on to the cards in front of them.

On the other hand, the moderator tried to behave suitably to focus group procedures too. She opened the discussion with open-ended questions, tried to avoid the verbal or nonverbal approval/disapproval statements, tried to understand the reasons underlying the opinions of the participants by asking "why" questions. Also, she tried to keep the discussion in its focus and let every participant participate equally and express his/her opinion (Gibbs, 1997).

#### **4. Data Analysis and Research Findings**

After the focus group interviews, the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed. So, first of all, the data were coded according to the aim of the study. After all focus group interviews were coded, the data under the same code were brought together. In coding, a procedure proposed by Strauss ve Gorbin (1998), which was about coding according to the concepts derived from the data based on a general framework, was followed. In other words, data were coded so that it can be placed under the themes (a framework previously determined by the researcher) (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2016).

Then, the next step was finding the themes or thematic coding. Although, based on the study framework the researcher has defined some themes at the beginning of the coding procedure, new themes have emerged after combining the codes and examining their similarities and differences. At this stage, the coded data have been re-examined and new themes have been added where necessary. Finally, all data were organized based on the codes and themes, and findings were interpreted.

7 participants (2 Male, 5 Female) attended the first focus group, 10 participants (3 Male, 7 Female) attended the second focus group, 8 participants (3 Male, 5 Female) attended the third focus group, 5 participants (1 Male, 4 Female) attended to the fourth focus group (see Table 1 for details).

Focus Group No	Participant No	Name	Gender	Area of Study and Level	Day/Evening Classes	Place They Live
1	1	Emre	Male	Business Ad. 4	Day	Apartment (With friends)
1	2	Gizem 1	Female	Business Ad. 3	Evening	Dorm (Private)
1	3	Berkcan	Male	Business Ad. 3	Evening	Apartment
1	4	Gizem 2	Female	Business Ad. 4	Day	Dorm (Public)
1	5	Gizem 3	Female	Business Ad. 2	Evening	Apartment (with a relative)
1	6	Bilge	Female	Business Ad. 2	Evening	Dorm (Public)
1	7	Bahar	Female	Business Ad. 2	Evening	Dorm (Private)
2	8	Simge	Female	Economics 2	Evening	Dorm (Private)
2	9	Dilber	Female	Economics 2	Evening	Dorm (Private)
2	10	Esmâ	Female	Public Ad. 2	Evening	Dorm (Public)
2	11	Esra	Female	Business Ad. 3	Evening	Dorm (Private)
2	12	Gözde	Female	Economics 2	Evening	Dorm (Private)
2	13	Uzay	Male	Business Ad. 3	Evening	Apartment
2	14	Fatih	Male	Business Ad. 4	Evening	Apartment
2	15	Belma	Female	NA	Day	Apartment (with her family)
2	16	Mazlum	Male	NA	Day	Apartment
2	17	İrem	Female	NA	Day	Dorm (Public)
3	18	Mert	Male	Business Ad. 4	Day	Apartment
3	19	Sinem	Female	Business Ad. 4	Evening	Dorm (Private)
3	20	Zeynep	Female	Economics 1	Day	Dorm (Private)
3	21	Semih	Male	Business Ad. 3	Evening	Dorm (Private)
3	22	Büşra	Female	Business Ad. 3	Evening	Dorm (Private)
3	23	Gizem 4	Female	Business Ad. 4	Evening	Apartment
3	24	Meliha	Female	Business Ad. 4	Day	Apartment (with her family)
3	25	Furkan	Male	Economics 1	Day	NA
4	26	Ozan	Male	Business Ad. 4	Day	Apartment (Alone)
4	27	Gamze	Female	Economics 2	Evening	Dorm (Public)
4	28	Meliha Berfu	Female	Business Ad. 4	Day	Dorm (Private)
4	29	Damla	Female	Public Ad. 2	Evening	Dorm (Private)
4	30	Kübra	Female	Health Management 3	Evening	Dorm (Public)

#### 4.1. Types of Foods They Bring

In the first part, we questioned whether students bring home-packed meals or any food items to the university.

According to the results of this part, we can say that students do not bring home-packed meals to the university on a frequent and regular basis. It was seen that only a small number of students bring their home-packed meals to the university, only for specific periods such as the times they go to the gym or they took exercising seriously. Their nutritional needs were the main determinant for them to bring their home-packed meals for these specific periods. Among the food items, they bring during these specific periods were chicken, meatballs, rice, veggies, and salad. Uzay, Esra, and Gözde stated this like that:

Periodically... for instance, during the periods I was doing fitness I used to cook my food, put it into a food container and bring it, and I used to eat it here at the dining hall with my friends... rice and chicken. (Uzay, M)

From time to time, when I am doing sports... broccoli, veggies, and chicken. Other than that, I was not bringing much. (Esra, F)

I used to bring but I do not bring regularly. Salad or I fry some meatballs... these kinds of things. (Gözde, F)

On the other hand, the examination of what sort of food products they bring showed us that, mostly they bring snack-type food items. Among the food items mostly mentioned are; fruits/dry fruits, nuts, and packaged foods such as chocolates/wafers/crackers. Lastly, some fewer numbers of students also mentioned bringing homemade pastry products such as cakes and Turkish 'poğaç'.

#### 4.2. Barriers to Bringing Home-Packed Meals

After examining whether students bring home-packed meals and what sort of foods they bring, it is revealed that students do not bring home-packed meals frequently, they only bring snacks from time to time. Then, we tried to understand why they do not bring their home-packed meals.

When students are questioned about the reasons why they do not bring home-packed meals, they mentioned a variety of obstacles in which we have grouped under four categories namely; *barriers about supplying foodstuff, barriers about preparation, barriers about carrying/transportation, barriers about consumption.*

**Table 2:** Barriers to Bringing Home-Packed Meals

Barriers about Supplying Foodstuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulties about accessing foodstuff</li></ul>
Barriers about Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of place to prepare</li><li>• Laziness</li><li>• Finding it laborious, lack of time</li></ul>
Barriers about Carrying/Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk of spilling</li><li>• Lack of food containers</li><li>• Finding it laborious</li></ul>
Barriers about Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The society is not accustomed to it and shyness</li><li>• Lack of suitable place for consumption</li><li>• Concerns about gaining weight</li><li>• Staling</li></ul>

#### 4.2.1. Barriers about Supplying Foodstuff

Difficulties about accessing foodstuff. Accessing foodstuff was mentioned as one of the barriers in bringing home-packed meals.

If I were in the center (city-center) or in a place closer to the center, I would bring too. I like fruits a lot too, or I consume nuts too. I would bring these, but I am too far from the center. Because the place that I stay is not in the center -the dorm we stay is closer to the school-. That is why I cannot bring, because we do not have these kinds of stuff in the dorm... things like nuts. (Gizem2, F)

#### 4.2.2. Barriers about Preparation

Lack of place to prepare food. One of the reasons why students –especially the ones who do not live in the home setting and who do not have access to the kitchen- are not able to bring their own meals is that they do not have a suitable environment for preparing food.

....We can not prepare because we do not live in a home setting. (Simgé and Esmá, F)

Because we do not have facilities to cook in the dorm. (Simgé, F)

I do not have any facility... I am not able to do anything in the dorm. (Esmá, F)

No, I do not bring, because there is no place to cook, I generally eat at the dorm. (Sinem, F)

As one of our friends said, we do not have a chance to bake cakes or patty, but we might bring if we had such a chance... but for now, mostly packaged snacks. (Büşra, F)

Laziness. Students have mentioned an internal factor as another reason that stops them from bringing their home-packed meals and they pointed their own laziness.

I would bring it if I did not feel lazy about it. Everything here that my friends have mentioned is true such as; what would others think, what if it smells or laziness. All of them are true. But, personally, I am not the type of person who cares what others think about me. I would definitely make and bring if I did not feel lazy. (Ozan, M)

The first thing is laziness, and as I said, people (she mentions other people's views). ...  
I feel lazy. ... I think it is because of laziness. (Damla, F)

But laziness comes into play again. (Gamze, F)

*It is Laborious and Lack of Time.* Although some of the students have attributed the obstacles to themselves as we have mentioned under laziness, some of the students have attributed the obstacles to the process itself and they mentioned that the food preparation process is laborious and they do not have time for it.

Also, time, preparing the food and so... A little bit challenging too, so let me say like this; it is student life... we go to our home or dorm late at night, we go to bed very late at night or around morning. When you wake up around the afternoon (the next day), will you either do breakfast, get ready (for school) or prepare that meal? For these things, you really need to have time and a regular life. That is why I think students do not do it. (Esra, F)

So, actually, this bringing food from home thing really makes sense to me. But, for instance, if I had a class at 9 a.m., when it is already difficult to wake up, preparing food and bringing it or so is very difficult for me. (Zeynep, F)

For instance, the class is at 9 a.m., I will lose time while trying to prepare a sandwich and I will be late for the class. So, I just snack some muesli and leave (for school). (Berfu, F)

#### **4.2.3. Barriers about Carrying/Transportation**

*It is Laborious.* Besides preparation, some of the students also mentioned the challenging nature of carrying/transportation of home-packed meals.

Bringing also sounds laborious to me; put them (into food containers), carry them and bring them...( Bilge, F)

Carrying them.... they will stale... and I will leave (the house) early in the morning, prepare it first and then leave.... who will deal with this... (Ozan, M)

*Risk of Spilling.* Some of the students mentioned the risk of spilling as a reason why they do not bring their home-packed meals.

For instance, one of our friends brought it but it spilled. (Bilge, F)

It can spill into our bag. (Berkcan, M)

It is very risky on the bus. (Bahar, F)

Even a can of tuna fish of my friend's spilled. (Gizem1, F)

*Not having food containers.* Finally, one student pointed out the lack of food containers needed to bring their home-packed meals to the school.

We need food containers for this... (Berkcan, M)

#### 4.2.4. Barriers about Consumption

*The Society is not accustomed to it and shyness.* The mostly mentioned factor that stops students bringing food was students' being shy about bringing food. First of all, Ozan mentioned that, although this practice is very common in different countries, in Turkey it is very uncommon, and the society is not accustomed to it.

Not in this university but I used to see this when I was in Vienna. I have never seen this in Turkey. I mean, there is nothing like let me bring my food with me and eat (in our culture). But, it was very interesting for me when I was there, people used to bring stuff (food) with onion and eat them during the class or in the lunch break. Mostly, I mean 90 percent of the time, they bring themselves (home-packed meals). 90 percent (of the time)! So there would be very few people eating in the cafeteria or canteen of the school. (Ozan, M)

Many of the students stated that people in the Turkish society are not used to bring their home-packed meals with them, that is why the person who brings his/her home-packed meal generally hesitates from society's perspective. For this reason, people who bring their home-packed meals are shy about consuming them and try to consume them without anybody seeing them.

There could be diffidence/discomfort... Two types of diffidence are possible. The first one is the person's diffidence toward him/herself, actually shyness. Also, there could be diffidence from the people around. I mean... I am bringing this but what would they think? (Is it something to be ashamed of?). This could happen. The other issue is, I bring this, and I eat this in front of them. I mean... I am not offering them (not sharing with them). (Mazlum, M)

There could be thoughts like going to primary school with a lunchbox. We have grown now, and we can eat outside with our friends. For instance, if Simge brings, I could bring, and we could also eat together. But we have never done this before, if this was like that, I think everybody could bring without any hesitation/discomfort. .... they eat by isolating themselves (talking about the people who bring home-packed meals). For instance, I had a friend... we were sitting at a table and she asked me whether there would be a problem if she came and eat there. I said come and eat, there will not be any problem. There can be discomforts/hesitations like that. (Dilber, F)

Today one of my friends brought home-packed lunch, and I saw him/her when I came back to the classroom to get something I forgot. He/she was just eating, sitting there and eating, trying no one to see him/her.... Because of not seeing anybody around bringing or eating home-packed lunch, she/he could be perceived as weird or could feel himself/herself weird. I mean it is all about habits. Otherwise, I do not think that anyone would say anything. (Esra, F)

Actually, I have a lot of people around me bringing home-packed meals both to work and school. They are all dealing with exercising. But a person who brings this to school eats this in hesitation/discomfort. The person who pays money (for his/her meal) eats it in happiness, but the person who eats his/her home-packed meal eats it in hesitation/discomfort just like if it does not belong to her/him.

Because she/he sees it like as if there is something negative originated from the people around. As if she said (mentioning Dilber's sayings), if there were an environment in the school... Because I also try to bring sometimes but I also eat like as if it does not belong to me (not my meal). (Semih, M)

Büşra: Well, there is a sense of hesitation/discomfort or a fear of being perceived as odd.

Mert: I agree.

Büşra: I mean not as a word, but sometimes even a look/stare is enough.

...but may not bring because of hesitation. Let me give an abstract example, we have sandwiches in our dorm; a foodstuff not smelly at all, composed of just some bread and cheese. Why won't a person bring (to school) from them? Why she/he buys from the canteen here and buys pita from here? Because she/he cares about other people's point of views. (Gamze, F)

Kübra (F), on the other hand, states that the hesitation consumers show, as a consequence of the society's perspective, is actually a result of people's influence on each other, and Ozan (M) also agrees with this. She also focuses on the idea that it is possible to disseminate bringing home-packed meals.

Kübra: ... My conclusion is, it is all about herd psychology. Nobody around brings home-packed meals and nobody eats from home, it is like a trend.

Ozan: Yes, that is also a reason.

Kübra: If a few people bring, like 4-5 people, then it will increase in time. But as I said, we observe the others...

Damla, on the other hand, explains how uncomfortable she is about this issue and mentions that she wants an environment where they can easily bring their meals from home without being disturbed by the perspective of the society.

But I wish, it was not like that, I wish our peers won't think in this way, so we can all together bring (our home-packed meals) with us. Sometimes I really want it so much, because what we eat outside is really unhealthy. As I said, I gained 9 kg. in two years because of eating out. Well, I do not know, I feel sorry. ...Just as the perspective of these people, if there won't be any pressure of the society... (Damla, F)

Lack of Suitable Place for Consumption. Another point that is most prominent about students not being able to bring their home-packed meals was the lack of a suitable environment for consumption. Students mentioned that they are uncomfortable about consuming their home-packed meals in inappropriate places. They pointed out the reasons for their discomfort, originated from consuming a foodstuff in an inappropriate place, by mentioning a variety of reasons such as the smell of the foods, stare of other people, possible food cravings of other people. They also stated that students could bring their home-packed meals and consume more easily if there were a suitable place for consumption. Their ideas and concerns were mentioned as below:

I also think that students do not bring their home-packed meals, because of the seating areas here, for example, the canteens or the Stone cafe (a cafe on the campus), the managers of these places would bother. Also, I think that there is not that kind of a seating area -in that capacity and style- in the school. That is why I think students do not bring home-packed meals from home to eat in school. (Mert, M)

Group: Yes, yes.

There is no such place. (Mert, M)

For instance, even when I go to the canteen downstairs and eat there, the manager of the canteen stares at me (talking about the home-packed food she brought). I mean, I do not hesitate (feel shy), I think that I have self-esteem, but when he stares at me like that when I am eating, I feel kind of choked (pointing out her throat). (Gözde, F)

But as said, if an area is designed to eat the home-packed foodstuff, in every faculty for instance, both the involvement would increase and maybe people would get conscious about it. It could be more logical in this way. (Zeynep, F)

It is important to prepare the environment (mentioning how to start consuming if you have brought something from home). I mean someone could crave your food (because you eat), and it won't be nice. If there were a suitable place... (Gamze, F)

For instance, after we eat in the classroom, if someone says that there is a smell in here... I think this is embarrassing. For me, it is embarrassing. (Kübra, F)

Concerns about Gaining Weight. Another point about the reasons of students not to bring home-packed meals was far from our predictions. Some of the students mentioned their concerns about gaining weight when they bring home-packed meals.

We have seen that both Bahar and Bilge mentioned this without giving any details:

Because of gaining weight. (Bahar, F)

both weight and .... (Bilge, F)

Gamze, on the other hand, stated this in a more detailed way:

.... even if I eat it (home-packed lunch) I will eat something else too. Because probably it will happen like that; let's suppose that my class begins at 5 p.m., I will feel relaxed thinking that I have a sandwich, and I will eat it at 8 p.m., then since I will burn that snack in the time period, I will eat again around 9 p.m. That is why I do not bring home-packed food. ....I do not want to bring, not to eat too much. (I want to) get hungry and burn fat. (Gamze, F)

Staling. Finally, Ozan expressed that even if they prepare and bring home-packed food to school, they face the issue of going stale.

... for instance, let's suppose that we have prepared a sandwich and brought it to the school, it will stale till lunch break. (Ozan, M)

### 4.3. The Image of the Person Who Brings Home-Packed Food

According to the analysis of the previous questions, it was seen that in general students do not bring home-packed meals to the school. Among many reasons they have mentioned for not bringing home-packed meals to school, two of them were mostly prominent. Firstly, they mostly mentioned that they are shy and hesitant about this practice since the society is not accustomed to it and secondly, they mentioned their problems about finding a suitable place in the school environment to consume their meals.

Then, in this third part, we asked participants “who do you think is the person who brings home-prepared meals?” to understand the image they have in their mind about such a person. We asked them to use the magazines and newspapers in front of them and to create a collage expressing the image they have in their mind about the person who brings home-packed meals. After they have completed their collages, we have started a discussion about their collages and let each participant talk and explain their ideas about their collages.

After participants have created their collages about the perceived image of the person who brings his/her meals, and explained their collages in the focus group sessions, we have seen that they have a variety of images in their mind. We have grouped their perceived image under nine groups; 1) *those who care about their physical appearance, beauty, and health*, 2) *those with insufficient financial resources, those trying to save money, misers*, 3) *those who pay attention to hygiene, those with obsessions*, 4) *those with health issues, and those who want to lose weight* 5) *those who stick to their habits*, 6) *those who have no access to food around*, 7) *those who do not want to socialize*, 8) *those who have time issues*, 9) *those who want to show off their mastery*.

#### 4.3.1. Those Who Care About Their Physical Appearance, Beauty, and Health

Talking with participants about their collages and analyzing the data have shown us that, the image that is very prominent in participant's minds was the groups of people and professions that care about their physical appearance, beauty, and health. Participants mentioned professional sportsmen/sportswomen, amateur sportsmen/sportswomen, models, actors/actresses, and ballerinas under this category.

*Professional Sportsmen/Sportswomen.* Ozan explained with his following statements that, since professional sportsmen/women have to be careful about their physical appearance and health they could bring their home-packed meals with them.

Let's start from here (pointing an image in his collage); we have this guy; this person loses 8 kg. in 40 minutes in one race. I mean he is exposed to such physical difficulties. That is why he has to be very careful with his food. This man can bring because he has to be punctual and has to eat exactly what is arranged for him. So this guy can bring. Here is a basketball player (showing another image in his collage). He has to maintain his physical conditions. These guys willingly lose or gain weight so, this guy can bring. .... Here we have a volleyball player (showing another image in his collage), she is a champion. Of course, to take care of her body, to maintain her weight, etc... How could she jump or block if she put on weight? (Ozan, M)

*Amateur Sportsmen/Sportswomen.* Some of the other participants mentioned that people interested in sports –even if not professionals- might bring home-packed meals to support their exercises and to stay fit.

I mostly have a sportsmen/women (amateur) in my mind. Because if a sportsman/woman brings him/herself up to a point, she/he has to be careful with his/her food. Fatty foods will never help him/her to get his/her desired body proportion. But both with specific food items and with exercising practice, he/she can support that body. ...Here is a person who is exercising (pointing an image in his collage); this person both has to bring his/her home-packed meals and has to be very careful with his/her food. She/he has to pick (specific foods) to be able to have that body. (Semih, M)

... I imagine as a fit (person). A person who exercises has to take care of herself/himself, has to think about the level of fat. For this reason, she/he can bring (home-packed meals). Sportsmen/women also have to take care of themselves to stay fit. (Berkcan, M)

I mostly visualized people who are taking exercises and eat healthily. Maybe it is because I am one of them. Well, there is this thing that, a person who takes exercises and eats healthy can not eat whatever she/he finds outside. They can be fatty, salty. I visualized it like that since these people make their own food. ....I mostly chose a man or woman who has a fit body. (Esra, F)

I mostly thought about young people who exercise. .... People who take exercises for a healthy life could bring (home-packed meals). Stuff like cereals... (Simgе, F)

I thought about a person who is sportive since they do not eat from out to maintain their body proportion and with the fear of putting on weight. (Gizem4, F)

I pasted a sportsmen/women. I have a friend here, in our class, who is very fond of fitness. I remember him bringing a chicken and eat it. It (this image) is very alive in my mind. I think they have a special week for gaining muscles, that week I saw him eating 10 eggs and boiled chicken breasts here, to build some muscles. (Gamze, F)

A sportsman who takes care of his body (by showing his other image in his collage). As my friends have mentioned, he (eats) a whole chicken, 10 eggs, etc. in a day just, for (building) his body. (Ozan, M)

This lady is already in good shape (showing an image in her collage). Plus, a person riding a bike in nature (showing another image in her collage), I think she has an interest in sports. Frankly, a person who is interested in sports is anyway careful about what to eat and what not to eat. (Berfu, F)

Model, Actor/Actress, Ballerina. Participants also stated that professions such as models, actors, and ballerinas, which they think should be fit, also come to their mind when they think about the person who brings home-packed meals.

It can be a sportsman/woman, it can be a model. In order not to harm physical appearance. (Emre, M)

Models and sportsmen/women evoked in my mind. Since models have to have specific and standard (body) proportions, I believe that they have to have a more balanced and regular diet. That is why; they will bring their food. I mean, instead of consuming something fatty outside, they could bring their food with them.

Gamze: First of all, I pasted Marilyn Monroe... She comes to me like a person who pays attention to her body shape, is organized, and who does things for herself. She is not lazy, she sacrifices some other things and cares about her food. This means that she is disciplined. ... That is why I pasted this. (Sinem, F)

I pasted a model. It is because of (her concerns like) “I should not put on weight so that they won’t make fun of me.” Also, a ballerina.... (For instance), if I am a ballerina, I cannot be over a specific body shape; I mean I cannot break my rules. How would you move if you put on weight? (Gamze, F)

This is a model too (pointing to the visual in her collage). Models pay attention too, of course. So, I think she would be bringing (her home-packed lunch) for this reason. (Damla, F)

Liv Tyler (pointing another visual in his collage). She is an actress that we love; she is the daughter of dear Steve Tyler. She has to pay attention to her body; otherwise, she cannot find a job. Likewise, Didem Soydan (a model). She also has to pay attention to his body shape. (Ozan, M)

Similarly, although some of the participants do not emphasize occupational groups such as sportsmen/women, actors/actresses, and models, we see that they have still underlined people who want to look fit and who care about their health and beauty, as the people who bring home-packed meals.

Or maybe she/he is a person who pays attention to his/her health but cannot find healthy stuff. For instance, this is like that in my sister’s workplace. My sister works in Mecidiyeköy in İstanbul, and many people bring home-packed healthy, fatless food to consume. (Gizem 2, F)

Generally, our professors do this a lot. Our professors who pay attention to their weight and who want to stay fit do this. (Gizem 3, F)

Here, I wanted to mention being fit. ...she/he may find being fit very important... (Bilge, F)

A fit woman or a man who takes exercises (sportsman) comes to my mind... Here, in my collage, I pasted beautiful ladies. I mean... ‘Healthy’; this is the first thing that it evokes in my mind. It evokes a healthy person or evokes being healthy. (Gözde, F)

Besides, Büşra has associated healthy eating with skin beauty and she expressed her thoughts like that:

For instance, there are some people, also here in my friend circle too, they are obsessed with acnes. Skin beauty is related to healthy eating. I have friends who think like: ‘I should not eat this, this has calories’, etc. (Büşra, F)

Moreover, participants mentioned that they have acquired this image through TV shows, movies, and the Internet.

I also imagined a healthy body. I thought of a person who pays attention to exercising, generally eats fruits and vegetables. ...My thoughts are shaped by the information given through the Internet, (TV) shows, and so on. I put these things here by the imagination they have given to me. (Dilber, F)

### **4.3.2. Those with Insufficient Financial Resources, Those Trying to Save Money, Misers**

Another point students have mentioned about the person who brings home-packed meals was that they could be people who do not want to spend their money out because of having insufficient financial resources, trying to save money, or being a miser.

Bilge has pointed out that food prices are higher on the campus and mentioned that people could bring their home-packed meals to avoid this cost. Similarly, Fatih and Büşra have mentioned that people who bring their home-packed meal could be the people who are having financial difficulties or who are trying to save money.

For instance, the prices here on campus could be nearly twice (the normal supermarket prices). Let's say a package of a biscuit is 1 TL. but here (on the campus) it can be as high as 2 TL. For some people, this could be an unnecessary cost and bring it from outside. (Bilge, F)

I also put here people with low income. People might not eat from outside or eat in a restaurant because of their low income. Thus, they can bring their home-packed food to compensate for this situation and to save money. (Fatih, M)

I thought about economical issues. If I prepare and bring this, it would be cheaper and would be more economical. (Büşra, F)

Gizem4 and Gizem2 on the other hand stated that the image of a mother or a housewife, who is in financial difficulty, comes to their mind.

I do not have one, but I have multiple (images in my mind). In general, I visualized a mother, who can bring home-packed food for her child. Or she can bring home-packed food instead of buying from outside because of economical reasons. ...Her financial situation could be bad and may not want to spend that money outside. (Gizem4, F)

As far I observe, housewives generally bring for themselves or for their kids. I see this in parks and gardens. (Gizem2, F)

Moreover, Gizem2 stated that, besides their financial difficulties, she perceives the people who bring home-packed food as misers.

I think most of the people who bring home-packed food are misers. This is a joke of course, but all the food we buy outside is more expensive than the food we make at home. For instance, you can buy a sandwich around 10 TL. when you are out, but if you buy some tomatoes, cucumber, and bread you can make your own sandwich around 4-5 TL. That is why I think most of this bringing home-packed food thing is because of the miserliness of people. Also, she/he can be a local.

What I mean by "local" is that maybe she/he is not a miser, but she/he does not have sufficient financial resources, does not have a habit of eating out. I think these kinds of people can bring home-packed food. (Gizem2, F)

Mert, on the other hand, created a profile of people who are in financial difficulty and at the same time who has to work outside physically.

My idea is that it is about economical conditions... To use his economical conditions well... Actually, this is not very clear in the visuals, but a man cannot eat a lot there (he means the outside working conditions), I mean economically. Moreover, since people who work physically will get hungrier than people who work on their desks, I think they will bring their home-packed food. (Mert, M)

#### **4.3.3. Those Who Pay Attention to Hygiene, Those with Obsessions**

Another view of the participants about the people who bring home-packed food is that they could be people who pay attention to hygiene and they could be obsessive. In the mind of the participants who are mentioning this profile, there is a different image than the previous ones, in a way that; although they are not in financial difficulty, they have negative thoughts about the healthiness and hygiene of the food products sold outside. Thus, they try to behave cautiously by bringing their home-packed food.

Büşra explains this situation in a way that; people who take exercise and want to eat healthily do not trust the food sold outside because of the concerns about hygiene and hormone content.

... Then the hygiene issue as our friend Gizem4 said. Thoughts about in what conditions they are being prepared and then mistrust again. As I said before, because of thoughts about whether the food contains hormones (mentioning the food sold outside), a person can buy from a place where she/he trusts and bring home-packed food. I mean a person who wants to eat healthily. (Büşra, F)

Some of the participants associated this with a mother figure, who concerns about the healthiness and hygiene of the food outside.

... can be a mother, to feed her kids with healthy food. She might not trust the food healthiness of the food outside. (Emre, M)

This is a mother too (pointing a visual in her collage). She works, she is in the middle of a hustle and bustle; she also thinks about her kids, she takes her home-packed food to the workplace too by thinking that I should not eat from outside. Because some mothers are obsessed, they do not eat outside. For instance, my mother, she would not eat out as long as she has to. (Damla, F)

A mom, especially a mom with babies pays very much attention to what she eats because the babies are being fed by her. That is why she always has something (foodstuff) with her to avoid eating harmful stuff. (Ozan, M)

On the other hand, some of the participants associated the person who brings home-packed food with white-collar workers and CEOs who are picky in health and hygiene issues.

This lady is –in my opinion- a lady who only focused on her career. You know, there are people like that among managers who are very picky. I pasted this because I do not think that she would eat out. (Damla, F)

Once, my dad gave an example; that his boss brings his home-packed meals whenever he goes to work. His income is quite higher than ours, but he brings his home-packed meals. He does not prefer eating out, because he finds it very unhealthy... He said that it was stupid to spend money on eating out. That is why (for me) this person has an image like a CEO. (Esmâ, F)

In the first place, I also thought about the CEOs, they are more creative people, I cannot say suspicious, but you know they can be pickier. And in general, this means healthy eaters. (Mahzun, M).

#### **4.3.4. Those with Health Issues, and Those Who Want to Lose Weight**

Another image participants have in their mind about the person who brings home-packed meals is that they can be people with health issues and they can be people who want to lose weight.

At this point, first of all, people with health problems have been mentioned.

...and there can be old people, because of diabetes, the doctor might have forbidden. So, they might bring their home-packed meals to work. (Emre, M)

Mr. Turgut (shows his other visual in his collage- Turgut Özal; one of the former presidents of Turkey), as you know he used to be a little chubby with lots of health issues. He had to pay attention to his food. Even when this guy was at the top of the country, he was eating the food that his wife cooks at home. For instance, he has never eaten in the Parliament. (Ozan, M)

This guy is someone old (she points to another visual in her collage). In general, people after a certain age, cannot consume foodstuff containing a lot of sugar or fat because of illnesses such as cholesterol or diabetes. That is why I did not think that this old guy would consume a fatty hamburger or a foodstuff with lots of fat. I know from my elders that people try to consume very carefully or even do not consume a lot, do not consume fatty stuff after a certain age. So, I thought that he would cook his own meal, and this evoked in my mind. (Berfu, F)

Moreover, some of the participants expressed that a person bringing home-packed meals evokes a person who is trying to lose weight.

... a person trying to lose weight comes to my mind. (Gözde, F)

Only here, there is something different (showing one of the visuals in his collage), a person who is trying to lose weight could bring home-packed meals. Mostly liquids, I mean water, or nuts... If she/he takes these kinds of things, she/he could be like that (pointing a slim image in his collage). (Semih, M)

...or she/he can be an overweight person. (Bilge, F)

#### **4.3.5. Those Who Stick to Their Habits**

Also, some of the participants think that people who bring home-packed food are the individuals who are loyal to the tastes and brands they are used to.

... or maybe there are tastes that she/he is used to. She/he could not give up (those tastes) and since she/he cannot find them here (on campus)... because she/he cannot find them here... For instance, there can be a salad that a person eats all the time, but she cannot find it here (on-campus). (Bilge, F)

For example, there can be something specific about the food she/he is looking for. It can be a taste/flavor or spice that she/he cannot find here (on campus), so he/he might think that ‘ok, I will make and bring’ ...she/he can be a person who likes eating but cannot find out what she/he is looking for, she/he can say that ‘I will make it’. Or maybe even she/he is following the cooking programs, she adds something (new) to his/her food and brings (home-packed) food. (Meliha, F)

It can also be about eating the habitual stuff. For example, being a brand addict. For instance, you go for a picnic or something like that, and you think like ‘Let me bring the brands I know so that I do not have to consume other brands.’ (Büşra, F)

#### **4.3.6. Those Who Have No Access to Food Around**

Also, it is seen that participants have other images in their minds; such as a traveler, shepherd, woodsman, and a person who deals with animal husbandry. They stated the unavailability of finding food around the working environments of these people as an underlying reason for these images.

... And a traveler. Since I like traveling too, I used to carry my food in my backpack. If I am going to go camping, (I carry) whatever I will eat. (Berkcan, M)

Here there are some people who are working (pointing to one of his visuals in his collage). For instance, a person who has climbed the mountain should have food with him/her. As my friend said, since there will not be any cafe, restaurant or anything like that around, she/he has to stay there with the food she/he has brought. (Semih, M)

For instance, I pasted here woodsmen (showing one of his visuals in his collage). There are woodsmen, and there is a person who is dealing with animal husbandry. There is not any place around these people like a restaurant, cafe, foodcourts or so. Since it is difficult to find (food around), these people would bring their own food. (Mert, M)

I also pasted a shepherd (explaining her collage). They also bring their own food, they also have limited means. (Esmâ, F)

#### **4.3.7. Those Who Do Not Want to Socialize**

Another point that has emerged as a result of focus group interviews was that people who bring home-packed meals were perceived to be the ones who do not want to socialize with other people.

What comes to my mind is that (this behavior) reflects the personality of the person. I mean, for instance, people who have closed themselves to the external influences.... or how can I say... these people might not want to go out with their friends to eat something too. Or hanging out alone could sound more rational and safer to them.

It evokes these kinds of personality symbols in my mind. ...Like that (shows her collage). Actually, in general, I associate these kinds of things like not eating out, or different activities, with personality. For instance, if a person is bringing home-packed meals, I think this person would be picky in their friendships too and might want to communicate with only a small number of people.

Maybe having less or a minimal lifestyle is more joyful for him/her. This person could possibly be a student. (Zeynep, F)

#### **4.3.8. Those Who Have Time Issues**

On the other hand, we see that bringing home-packed food leads to inferences about 'time'. But there was no unity in inferences about time. Although some of the participants perceived the people who bring home-packed meals as people who are very busy, some of the participants mentioned that their perception is just the opposite, in which they perceive the people who bring home-packed meals as people with a lot of spare time.

Gizem1 explained this situation by the examples of sportsmen/women, actors/actresses, and models in which she pointed out that these people bring their home-packed food because of their time constraints.

Also, sportsmen/women or actors/actresses come to my mind, because they might not find enough time and they have to go out immediately. Models come to my mind, or people who love exercises and take exercises all the time. (Gizem1, F)

... Yes but don't they need a lot of time for this? (mentioning the preparing food). For instance, think about yourself, you are at school from morning to night, you wake up early in the morning and go home late at night, and you are tired. How can you prepare something in the morning every day? (Gizem2, F)

#### **4.3.9. Those Who Want to Show Off Their Mastery**

Lastly, two of the participants have associated bringing home-packed food with people's desire to show off their food preparing and cooking mastery to other people. Thus, they mentioned that people bringing home-packed food would be behaving in this way by show-off intentions.

For instance, I have the ability (to cook) and I would bring it so that my friends can taste it. (Dilber, F)

... and it can be because of showing off. I mean... It is like saying that, 'I can make (these foods) and I can give you the recipe' (Bahar, F)

### **5. Conclusions and Discussion**

Even simple practices such as consuming home-packed meals in settings like school or work may not be very common in every culture. Our search on Internet as anecdotal evidence showed us that, consumers using this practice may be perceived with a negative image, expose to social exclusion and ridicule.

In this research, we examined Turkish consumers' perceived barriers toward consuming home-packed meals and their perceived image about the person who brings and consumes home-packed meals from the perspective of university students. This research showed us that, university students usually do not bring their home-packed meals to the university setting, but they rarely bring fruits/dry fruits, nuts, packaged foods such as chocolates/wafers/crackers, and homemade pastry products. Students mentioned a variety of barriers about supplying, preparing, carrying, and consuming the foodstuff as preventing them to bring and consume their home-packed meals. Among these barriers, two points were mostly underlined.

The first one was, although they desire to bring their home-packed meals they had hesitations because the society is not very accustomed to this practice and they felt themselves shy about it. The second one was the lack of a suitable place on campus to consume their home-packed meals.

On the other hand, an examination of their perception about the person who brings home-packed meals showed us that, they have a variety of perceptions about such a person. But mostly mentioned points were that such a person could be the one who cares about his/her physical appearance, beauty, and health or who has economical problems.

It can be seen that the findings of the study support both the anecdotal evidence and the previous literature. Just as mentioned in anecdotal evidence, when students think about such a person, they visualized a person who is in financial burden. Although they also mentioned a positive image about such a person, that such a person could be the one who is exercising, taking care of his/her physical appearance, beauty, and health, they mentioned their hesitation and discomfort in bringing their home-packed meals because of the possible negative perceptions and behaviors of other people. In sum, we can conclude that just as the research conducted with different samples (Metcalf et al., 2008; Baines and MacIntyre, 2019; Karrebæk, 2012), university students associate their food consumption choices and behavior with the perceptions of other people about them and the behavior towards them (e.g. staring at them).

A variety of parties can use the findings of this research to take the necessary actions. First of all, it is important both for marketers, activists, and public policymakers to use different communication channels to give the message that the consumption of home-packed meals does not have to be associated with economical hardship. Especially, movies, shows, social media, and challenges in social media such as the “*Bring a Healthy Lunch Box to Work Challenge*” conducted in Australia (Matwiejczyk et al., 2015) can be useful to disseminate the idea. Also, it is important for university managements to create spaces on the campus for students to consume their home-packed meals comfortably. Marketers can also help this movement by both offering tools facilitating the carriage of the home-packed meals and healthy meal options that are easy to prepare.

As with every research, this research has some limitations. Usage of the university students as the sample of the study and usage of university students representing only one university are the limitations of this research. Thus, future research should examine the issue in different universities and different settings like the workplace.

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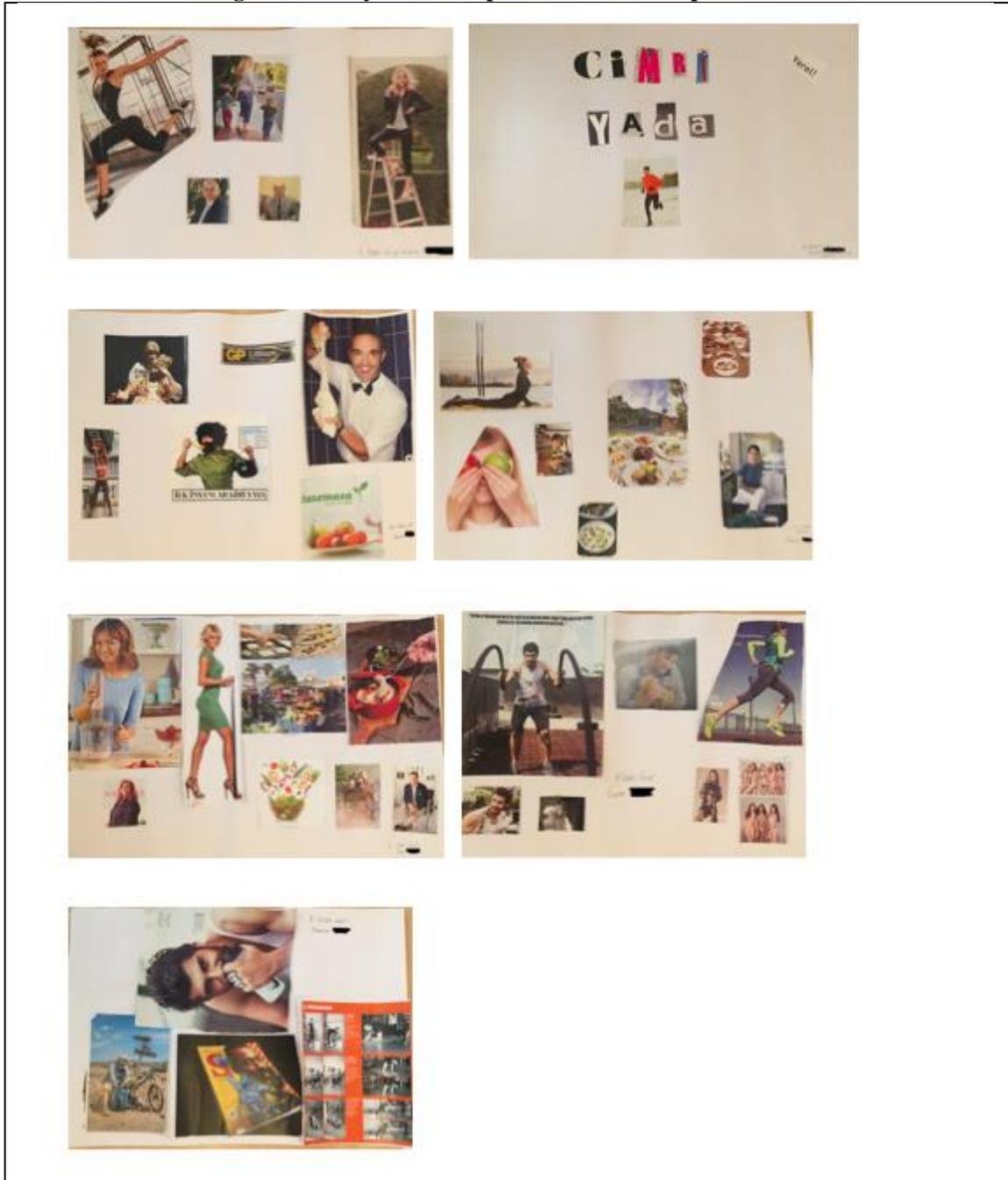
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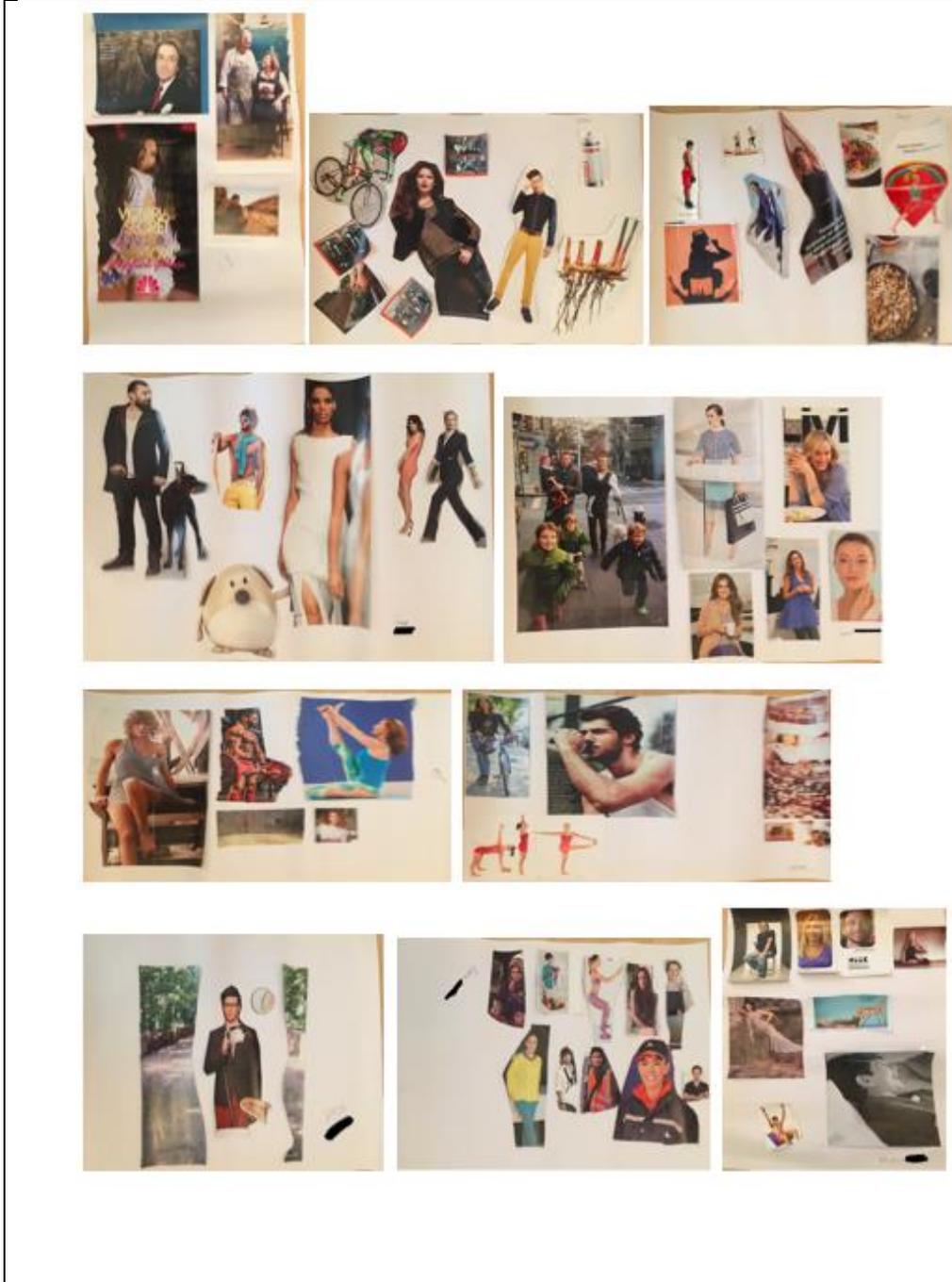
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## Appendix: Collages Created by the Participants

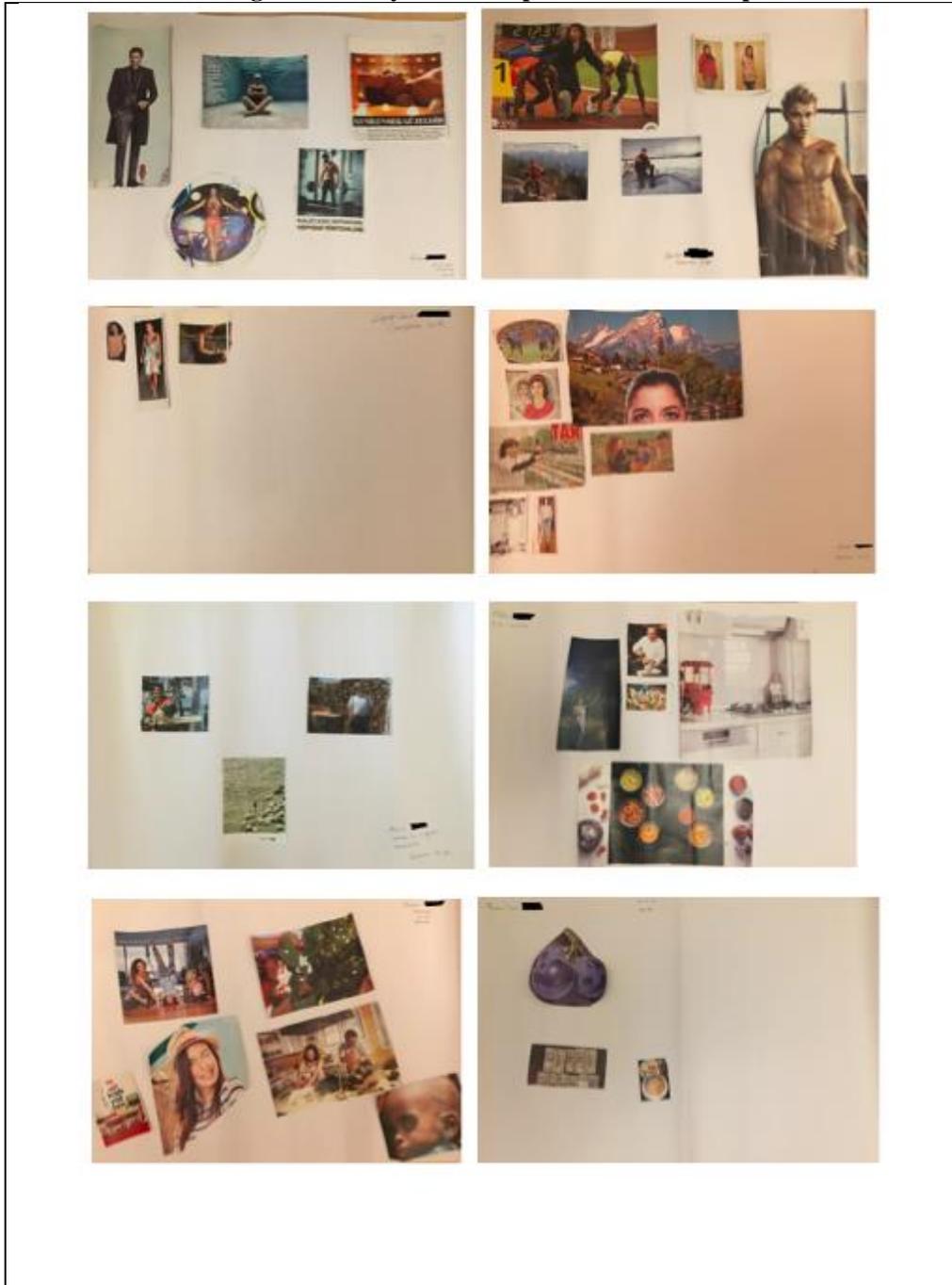
### Collages created by the Participants of Focus Group 1



**Collages created by the Participants of Focus Group 2**



**Collages created by the Participants of Focus Group 3**



**Collages created by the Participants of Focus Group 4**

